



Montmorency Conservation District
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The Conservation District's Role in the Watershed

Michigan's Conservation Districts are local units of State Government that utilize state, federal and private sector resources to solve today's conservation problems. In their early beginnings, Conservation Districts focused their programs on rural America; assisting farmers and ranchers in conservation measures to prevent their soil from blowing and washing away.

As land use patterns change and the land is continuously being divided, new landowners are created who may have little or no knowledge of land and resource management. It became clear to Conservation Districts that their role must evolve in order to serve this new and expanding clientele, in addition to serving their agricultural customers.

Programs carried out by Conservation Districts are as diverse as the landscape in Michigan. In southern Michigan, many of the programs deal with conservation needs of the farm community, while in northern Michigan, there is more emphasis on water quality, forestry, wildlife, and recreation.

Montmorency Conservation District has been involved with the Thunder Bay River Watershed for over 50 years. The District partners with the United States Department of Agriculture's Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Michigan Water Stewardship Program (formerly Groundwater Stewardship Program), Michigan Agriculture Environmental Assurance Program (MAEAP), Huron Pines RC & D, the Northeast Council of Governments (NEMCOG), and others to implement conservation practices and to protect and improve the watershed.

Through grants the District has been able to hire crews to inventory the river system for pollution sources, erosion sites, and road/stream crossings; write a management plan; and repair erosion sites.

Other local District outreaches include: 1) The Thunder Bay River Watershed Walk –an education outreach to Montmorency County high school students. Its goal is to teach selected students the role of the watershed in our county and the importance of protecting this important resource; 2) Conservation Field Day – exposes elementary students of our county to conservation concepts; 3) Conservation Update – these weekly articles highlight various aspects of conservation and hopefully make property owners more fully aware of the complexity of the resources they own and the relationship they have to the land and water around them.

If you own property in a watershed or like to hunt, fish, hike, garden, farm, eat, or do anything else involving natural resources, you benefit from the work of Michigan's Conservation Districts.

Additional information:

Michigan Association of Conservation Districts training module:

The History and Future of Conservation Districts

<http://macd.org/district-resources/training.html>

USDA – Natural Resource Conservation Service

<http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/programs>

Michigan Water Stewardship Program

<http://www.miwaterstewardship.org/>

Michigan Agriculture Environmental Assurance Program

<http://www.maeap.org/maeap>

and

http://www.michigan.gov/mdard/0,4610,7-125-1567_1599_25432-12819--,00.html