




KALAMAZOO  
CONSERVATION  
DISTRICT

# ANNUAL REPORT

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2024  
EDITION



# **Our Mission: Protecting Soil & Water for Generations; not only today's generation but future generations.**

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Kalamazoo Conservation District is a governmental agency established under state law to carry out programs for conservation, use and development of soil, water, and other related natural resources at the local level. Established in 1946, KCD is an independent county level resource assisting Kalamazoo County residents in resolving natural resource concerns. The District is self-funded serving the public with revenue obtained through an annual tree sale, plat book sales, grants, sponsorships and donations. At KCD, we partner with local organizations, and federal and state agencies to coordinate the implementation of various conservation and environmental programs throughout the community. We have capabilities in protection, development and management of natural resources.

# Annual Report 2025

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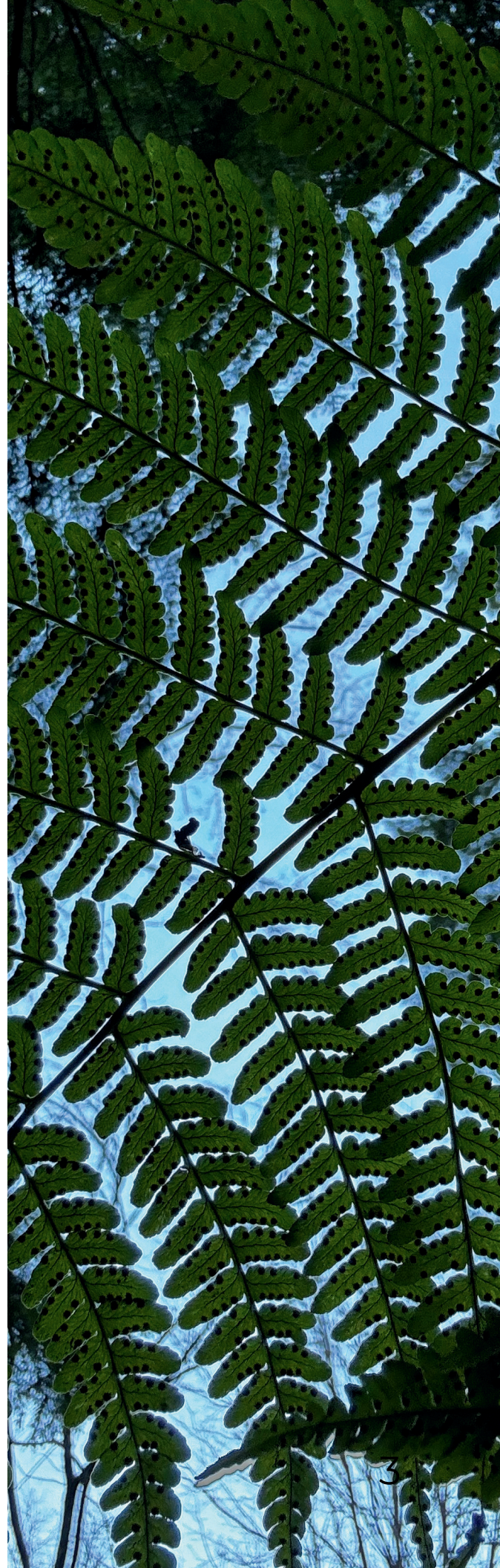
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Thank you Sponsors!



## **Kalamazoo Conservation District Board of Directors**

Ed Cagney, Chairperson  
Tricia Keala, Director

David Benac, Vice Chairperson  
Lynn Coville, Director

## **Kalamazoo Conservation District Staff**

We would like to thank Elizabeth Rochow and Linda Zabik for their years of commitment to the Kalamazoo Conservation District.

Congratulations, Elizabeth, for her well deserved retirement, after serving KCD as District Manager for 6 years!

Congratulations, Linda Zabik; former Conservation Assistant has obtained a position at Western Michigan Geological Survey!

Chandra Kinney, NEW District Manager  
James Benjamin, MAEAP Technician  
Michael Martinez, Conservation Technician

Sara Huetteman, BCK-CISMA Invasive Species Coordinator—at KCD every Tuesday  
(Otherwise housed at Barry CD)

Patrick Gordon, Produce Safety Technician—housed at Berrien CD

## **Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) Staff**

Di'Shun Melbert, District Conservationist  
Lucy Gregersen, Soil Conservationist

Allison Marshall, CTAI-at KCD twice a week (Otherwise house at Branch CD)

## **2025 Board Schedule**

January 10  
February 6\*\*  
March 14  
April 11  
May 9  
June 13  
July 11  
August 8  
September 12  
October 10  
November 14  
December 12

The KCD Board is scheduled to meet at 8 am on the second Friday of the month at the District Office. Please check the district website for up-to-date meeting information.  
\*\*note changes to the schedule.

These meetings are open to the public and everyone is welcome to attend!

## Dear Friends of the District,

Big changes have been made over the year 2024, with a lot of good things happening at the Kalamazoo Conservation District! For KCD, April showers brought our annual tree seedling sale which resulted in over 13,400 seedlings being planted in Kalamazoo County in 2024! During the summer months, thousands of passenger scrap tire were collected. These events provided by the District continue to be a popular program helping county residents recycle old car tires. KCD is pleased to announce that we are continuing work on the MDNR Wildlife Habitat Grant in order to continue improving oak habitat in the Gourdneck State Game Area, and reinstate public access since the tornado damage took place. In September, the District invited the community to join us in a forestry management workshop, providing the community with information on invasives, forest management practices and program details. Throughout the year, KCD continues to actively provide land owner assistance through MAEAP (Michigan Agriculture Environmental Assurance Program), NRCS (National Resource Conservation Services), BCK-CISMA (Barry, Calhoun, Kalamazoo—Cooperative Invasive Species Management Area), and our Produce Safety Programs. We hope you enjoy reading about our programs, partners, and accomplishments from 2024. Everything we do is made possible only with the support of our Kalamazoo County residents! Whether you work with our technicians, purchase trees at our sale, or participate in any of our other programs or events, we thank you for joining us in our conservation efforts.

Chandra A. Kinney, KCD Manager



K A L A M A Z O O , M I C H I I G A N

**ROOTED IN CONSERVATION**  
**SINCE 1946**

# MAEAP

## Michigan Agriculture Environmental Assurance Program



The Michigan Agriculture Environmental Assurance Program is an innovative, proactive program that helps farms of all sizes and commodities voluntarily prevent and minimize agricultural environmental risks. That's why the Kalamazoo Conservation District continues helping farmers enroll in MAEAP - the voluntary and confidential program that assists farmers in identifying and adopting practices that reduce soil erosion and water runoff into ponds, streams, and rivers, and to stay in compliance with state and federal laws. Through this program, conservation districts can recognize and reward top stewards of the land in four systems: 1) Farmstead, 2) Cropping, 3) Livestock, and 4) Forest, Wetlands, and Wildlife Habitats.

Joining the conservation district in February 2024, James Benjamin has been actively training and serving as MAEAP Technician in Kalamazoo County. Having grown up on a Corn, Wheat, and Soybean farm, and with diverse work experience in commodity farming, market gardening, community garden management, and nursery management, James has been busy meeting farmers and exploring the great farming diversity within Kalamazoo County.

In terms of reporting numbers, fiscal year 2024 saw 7 new system verifications, 18 system re-verifications, 49 system risk assessments, and 98 risk reductions. In addition, \$3,000 in cost share funds were distributed to Kalamazoo County farms helping with risk reduction practices including items like: spill kits, analyses of drinking water for nitrates and bacteria, manure and soil nutrient testing, backflow prevention, irrigation uniformity improvement, secondary containment systems, etc.

The MAEAP Field Event, "2024 Forestry Workshop Event", was held on September 12th at Kalamazoo Nature Center. This program featured three presentations followed by an educational nature walk. NRCS District Conservationist Di'Shun Melbert, presented on forestry management, while our BCK-CISMA invasive species specialist Sara Hutteman, spoke about the importance of invasive removal, and our MAEAP Technician James Benjamin provided MAEAP program information and updates, focused especially upon the Forest, Wetlands, & Habitats System Verification.

With year one now behind him, MAEAP Technician James Benjamin is looking forward to an even better 2025, visiting more farms in Kalamazoo County and seeing more good work accomplished through partnership.

If you are interested in learning more about MAEAP and MAEAP verification, please contact the office!



## NRCS National Resource Conservation Services

*Each year the Conservation District works directly with the USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service to recruit agricultural producers for the Federal Farm Bill Programs such as Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP), and the Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP). These programs not only offer valuable technical assistance to Kalamazoo County farmers and landowners, helping them become better stewards of the land, but also contribute to the local economy by bringing in thousands of federal dollars to fund conservation practices.*

*This money has a direct impact on the success of local farms, businesses, and contractors. In April of 2024, the Conservation District brought on Michael Martinez as the District's Conservation Stewardship Technician. His position is funded by utilizing a National Association of Conservation Districts grant, which KCD was able to acquire for 2024-2025. Michael works closely with NRCS in providing technical assistance and Federal funding opportunities to Kalamazoo County farmers and landowners, focusing on CSP. His work further strengthens the District's partnership with NRCS as well as additional advancement of the District's mission to conserve Kalamazoo County's natural resources and serve our local community members.*

*NRCS and KCD have consistently worked together over the years to increase conservation in the county and funding for conservation. In Kalamazoo County for FY 2024 NRCS obligated Contract \$1,335,389 with obligated acreage equaling 4,225.2. Moving forward in 2025 Kalamazoo County NRCS, will continue to work with the KCD to bring more cropland acres into conservation, incorporate the Seasonal High Tunnel Initiative to better serve urban/small farm producers, and address the invasive species plaguing our forested acres.*

*Contact Di'Shun Melbert for more information.*



## BCK - Cooperative Invasive Species Management Area

Barry Calhoun Kalamazoo Cooperative Invasive Species Management Area (BCK-CISMA) is a partnership spanning three counties. It brings together land managers and owners to inform the public and use best management practices on the landscape, focusing on invasive species. Our close connections with the state's invasive species program allow us to stay informed about the latest environmental and economic threats and access an extensive network of experienced managers. This allows us to react quickly and effectively to new invasive species findings. In 2024, we continued to educate, monitor, and manage invasive species, including mile-a-minute weed, red swamp crayfish, spotted lanternfly, knotweed, phragmites, giant hogweed, black swallowwort, and woody invasive species. The CISMA strike team spent 60% of the field season controlling mile-a-minute weed across 380 acres in eastern Calhoun County. Mile-a-minute weed is an annual plant, meaning it dies at the first frost and won't grow back from that same root system. However, its fast growth and extensive seed bank will significantly affect our edge habitat, meadows, and agriculture fields, posing a threat to the environment and the hunting and agricultural economy. With support from the Michigan Invasive Species Program, the BCK CISMA has been working to find the extent of this plant in Calhoun County, surveying over 10,000 acres in 2024 alone. The crew managed the mile-a-minute weed vine on 59 sites through mechanical and chemical means to prevent it from spreading further into the mitten state. The fallout of this species would affect the environment and the economy. Fifty acres of invasive species control was completed under contracts with landowners, businesses, and governmental units to control knotweed, phragmites, giant hogweed, black swallowwort, and a mixture of woody invasive species. The other Michigan Invasive Species Grant Program-funded project is the control of Red Swamp Crayfish. This crustacean dominates the food and bait trade and has made its way from Louisiana to the inland lake of Vicksburg, MI. From May to October, the strike team visits Clark Park weekly to monitor traps and hand-grab individual crayfish from Sunset Lake and its outlets into a tributary of the St. Joseph River in Kalamazoo County. Over 600 adult red swamp crayfish and hundreds of babies were removed from the Sunset Lake area this summer. Spotted lanternflies are a statewide concern because of the damage they cause to the stems/trunks of grape vines, hops, stone fruit, and hardwood trees. They puncture the outer layer with straw-like mouthparts to remove sap disrupting the flow of nutrients and exposing it to other diseases and pests. Two new populations were found in Southeast

Michigan in Monroe and Wayne Counties. We had no detections of spotted lanternflies in 2024 in Southwest Michigan, with multiple CISMAs monitoring for them. New accomplishments include a small grant from The Stewardship Network to expand our tool crib, including two additional knotweed injectors, hand saws, brush grubbers, and stand-up weeders. A large patch of giant hogweed was treated in Barry County, the first in our service area. This plant's sap can react to the sun and create blisters on the skin, typically easy to identify due to its large size, growing up to 15 feet tall with a large cluster of white flowers similar to Queen Anne's Lace but a foot in diameter. We offer free site consultations to assist landowners in understanding their options for controlling invasive species. On select species, the CISMA strike team can provide treatment i.e. targeted herbicide application for a fee, see the latest list of species at [barrycd.org/invasives](http://barrycd.org/invasives).



# Produce Safety Program

Our Produce Safety Technician provides many tools to help growers of SW Michigan. The focus of the program is to assess risks involved with the growing, handling, harvesting, storing, and transportation of fresh produce, covered by the Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA) Produce Safety Rule (PSR). All services offered are free, voluntary, and confidential. The primary goal is to assist area growers to reach or maintain compliance with tricky regulations and educate on best practices for preventing contamination of fresh produce. Growers can access services by contacting our technician directly, reaching out to their respective Conservation District, or through the Produce Safety Team website. Southwest Michigan's Produce Safety Technician is a part of the Michigan On-Farm Produce Safety Team. The team is a close working group that includes the six Produce Safety Technicians throughout the State, Michigan State University Extension, and the Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development. This enables our produce safety technician to have access to abundant resources to assist our areas farmers in the most effective and complete way. Throughout 2024 our Produce Safety Technician worked to foster relationships with stakeholder groups in Southern Michigan to promote the use of the Produce Safety Risk Assessment, and certification as a free alternative to third party Produce Safety Audits. This has opened new markets up to smaller growers who would have felt the financial burden of these costly audits. This has also helped fresh produce consumers in Michigan to have access to safe, nutritious, and locally grown produce. While Produce Safety is the main concern of Program, our technician works with our region's producers in many other aspects on the farm. Throughout 2024 our Produce Safety Technician worked closely with several new farmers. They were able to design and develop wash pack areas to save producers time and money while avoiding cross contamination and making sure the areas are easy to clean and maintain. They were able to work with brand new farmers who bought mature orchards and fields to find buyers and harvest workers. They were also able to work with new smaller and urban growers to plan and create high bed gardens, composting programs, and planting schedules. In addition to the services that our technician provides they also help link producers to other resources that they may need. If the technician cannot help directly, they will link producers to other experts in the fields that they may need. This includes many partner organizations and institutions specializing in pest management, wildlife habitat development, construction, and seed specialization to name a few.

In fiscal year 2024, the Produce Safety Technician was able to:

- Conduct 53 farm visits
- Complete 26 Produce Safety Risk Assessments
- Worked with farms to implement 226 risk reduction practices
- Conduct 1 On-Farm Readiness Reviews
- Publish 3 Newsletter articles Reaching 3961 people
- Hold or assist with 13 educational outreach events

During 2025 our technician will continue participating as an expert in round tables and trainings for farmers at multiple events, writing and submitting articles for the Produce Safety Team newsletter, and working to create a larger footprint in the coverage area to assist a greater number of farmers in Southwest Michigan. Our technician is an excellent resource for produce growers of all sizes and experience levels and is looking forward to connecting with more of our regions producers in the coming year.



## Wildlife Habitat Grant - Oak Habitat Improvement

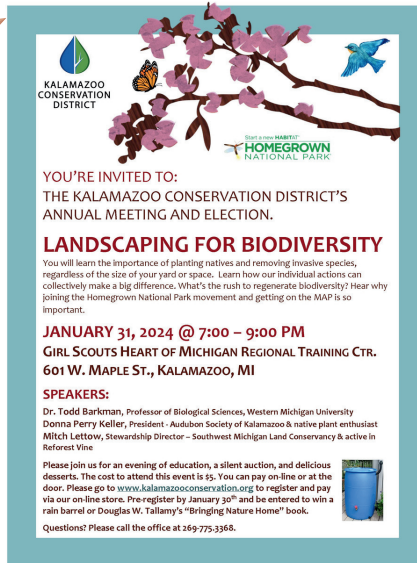
Gourdneck SGA was purchased as public hunting property and has been primarily managed to provide habitat for white-tailed deer, wild turkey, eastern cottontail, fox squirrels and wood ducks. Species of Greatest Conservation Need including Eastern box turtle, Eastern massasauga, blue racer, monarch butterfly and others have been documented in the oak communities which also provide habitat for migratory and resident birds, reptiles, and amphibians and other wildlife. There are four units that make up the Gourdneck SGA complex totaling 2,293 acres. All four of the units share many of the same cover types including oak, mixed upland deciduous, herbaceous open land and various wetland types including rare prairie fen.

This habitat project takes place in an area with a mature oak canopy, but with fire suppression and no management practices, the forested area was becoming increasingly colonized with shade tolerant red maples. In 2024, the Kalamazoo Conservation District worked with Steinkraus Forestry Management and the City of Portage to treat invading red maples in the subcanopy while leaving the oak mast trees to invigorate a healthy growing oak forest. This has begun to open the forest canopy as well as clear out the undesirable undergrowth allowing shade intolerant oak regeneration and promoting growth of the previously suppressed native herbaceous layer. Developing this wildlife-friendly matrix of oak habitat will benefit game and nongame species as well as a wide array of migrant and resident bird species and other wildlife.

During 2024, tornados devastated areas of Portage, including sections of Gourdneck State Game area. As the Kalamazoo Conservation District continues to grow and deepen our partnerships with Michigan DNR, the City of Portage, and other stewards of the land, we will work to ensure this natural disaster does not impeded access to the Gourdneck SGA and continue our work improving oak habitat. This project is done with the assistance of the Michigan DNR Wildlife Habitat Grant to enhance wildlife habitat. These grants are funded through a portion of hunting and fishing licenses that are sold each year with the purpose of providing funding to conservation partners to assist the Wildlife Division with developing or improving wildlife habitat for game species.



# 2024 Event Overview

**KALAMAZOO CONSERVATION DISTRICT**

**YOU'RE INVITED TO:**  
THE KALAMAZOO CONSERVATION DISTRICT'S  
ANNUAL MEETING AND ELECTION.

**LANDSCAPING FOR BIODIVERSITY**  
You will learn the importance of planting natives and removing invasive species, regardless of the size of your yard or space. Learn how our individual actions can collectively make a big difference. What's the rush to regenerate biodiversity? Hear why joining the Homegrown National Park movement and getting on the MAP is so important.

**JANUARY 31, 2024 @ 7:00 - 9:00 PM**  
GIRL SCOUTS HEART OF MICHIGAN REGIONAL TRAINING CTR.  
601 W. MAPLE ST., KALAMAZOO, MI

**SPEAKERS:**  
Dr. Todd Barkman, Professor of Biological Sciences, Western Michigan University  
Donna Perry Keller, President - Audubon Society of Kalamazoo & native plant enthusiast  
Mitch Lettow, Stewardship Director - Southwest Michigan Land Conservancy & active in Reforest Vine

Please join us for an evening of education, a silent auction, and delicious desserts. The cost to attend this event is \$5. You can pay on-line or at the door. Please go to [www.kalamazooconservation.org](http://www.kalamazooconservation.org) to register and pay via our on-line store. Pre-register by January 30th and be entered to win a rain barrel or Douglas W. Tallamy's "Bringing Nature Home" book.

Questions? Please call the office at 269-775-3368.



**January 2024**  
**Annual Meeting, Conservation Banquet  
& Election (FY2023 Year In Review)**

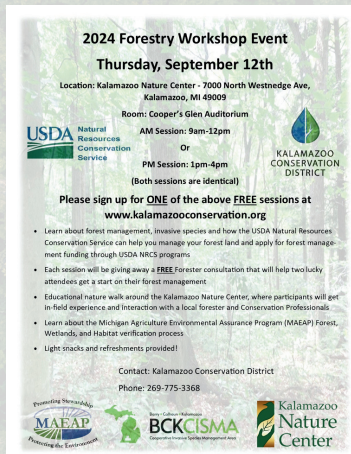


**April 2024**  
**Annual Reforestation Tree  
Seedling Sale**  
**13,500 Trees sold and  
planted in Kalamazoo  
County!**



**Summer 2024**  
**We jointly hosted three tire  
recycling events assisting the  
community with car tire disposal**

**September 2024**  
**Forestry Workshop  
Partnered with  
Kalamazoo Nature  
Center & NRCS**



**2024 Forestry Workshop Event**  
**Thursday, September 12th**  
Location: Kalamazoo Nature Center - 7000 North Westedge Ave,  
Kalamazoo, MI 49009

Room: Cooper's Glen Auditorium

AM Session: 9am-12pm  
Or  
PM Session: 1pm-4pm  
(Both sessions are identical)

Please sign up for ONE of the above FREE sessions at  
[www.kalamazooconservation.org](http://www.kalamazooconservation.org)

- Learn about forest management, invasive species and how the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service can help you manage your forest land and apply for forest management funding through USDA NRCS programs.
- Each session will be giving away a FREE Forester consultation that will help two lucky attendees get a start on their forest management.
- Educational nature walk around the Kalamazoo Nature Center, where participants will get in-field experience and interaction with a local forester and Conservation Professionals.
- Learn about the Michigan Agriculture Environmental Assurance Program (MAEAP) Forest, Wetlands, and Habitat verification process.
- Light snacks and refreshments provided!

Contact: Kalamazoo Conservation District  
Phone: 269-775-3368

Partners: MAEAP, BCKCISMA, Kalamazoo Nature Center



# 2025 Events

**February 6th** - Annual Meeting, Election & Conservation Banquet

**April 25th & 26th** - Annual Tree Seedling Sale Pick-Up

**May 10th** - Tabling at the World Migratory Bird Day Festival Celebration with the Michigan Audubon Society and Kalamazoo Parks

**May 17th** - Partnered Clean-Up Event with the Kalamazoo River Watershed Council

**June 10th** - Scrap Tire Recycling Event

**July 26th** - Scrap Tire & E-waste Recycling Event

**August 7th** - Scrap Tire Recycling Event

**August 23rd** - Partnered Water Quality Event with the Kalamazoo River Watershed Council & Kalamazoo Parks

Check out our **NEW monthly Coffee & Conversations Events**; hosted the last Tuesday of each month at 9AM!

Join us at our **NEW monthly Preserve Hike Series**; held every month at a different local preserve, the third Thursday of each month at 5PM!

Check our website calendar, or social media for monthly location update!

**Stay tuned for more events and workshops coming soon!**

**Follow us on Facebook, Instagram, Sign-up for our Newsletters, or check out our website at [kalamazooconservation.org](https://kalamazooconservation.org), to see our new monthly campaigns! Supporting BIG changes made through combining small actions within our community.**

# Kalamazoo Conservation District Fiscal Year 2024 Financial Statements Review

## Balance Sheet FY2024

	Sep 30, 24
<b>ASSETS</b>	
Current Assets	
Checking/Savings	
001 - General Checking	17,610.86
004 - Petty Cash	361.23
Total Checking/Savings	17,972.09
Accounts Receivable	
018 - Accounts Receivable	45,643.45
Total Accounts Receivable	45,643.45
Other Current Assets	
100 - Undeposited Funds	-280.00
108 - Tree Inventory	12.13
109 - Platbook Inventory	2,415.60
110 - Resale Materials Inventory	619.86
Total Other Current Assets	2,767.59
Total Current Assets	66,383.13
<b>TOTAL ASSETS</b>	<b>66,383.13</b>
<b>LIABILITIES &amp; EQUITY</b>	
Liabilities	
Current Liabilities	
Accounts Payable	
202 - Accounts Payable	12,870.00
Total Accounts Payable	12,870.00
Other Current Liabilities	
227 - Sales Tax Payable	2.49
228 - Due to State of Michigan	1,353.09
231 - Payroll Deductions Payable	2,028.78
257 - Accrued Wages Payable	1,896.00
258 - Accrued Taxes Payable	145.05
Total Other Current Liabilities	5,425.41
Total Current Liabilities	18,295.41
Total Liabilities	18,295.41
Equity	
390 - Fund Balance	33,911.12
Net Income	14,176.60
Total Equity	48,087.72
<b>TOTAL LIABILITIES &amp; EQUITY</b>	<b>66,383.13</b>

## Profits & Loss FY2024

	TOTAL
<b>Ordinary Income/Expense</b>	
Income	
530 - Items for Purchase	28,419.88
539 - State Grants	148,686.22
600 - Charges for Services	20,709.00
671 - Other Revenues Control	30,674.69
Total Income	228,489.79
Cost of Goods Sold	
789 - Cost of Goods Sold	348.49
Total COGS	348.49
Gross Profit	228,141.30
Expense	
4000 - Reconciliation Discrepancies	0.01
701 - Personnel Services	124,676.18
726 - Supplies Control	22,616.72
800 - Other Services & Charges	44,787.99
900 - Printing & Publishing	105.24
902 - Miscellaneous Expense	91.81
955 - Donations	100.00
957 - Dues & Fees	1,000.00
960 - Meeting Expenses	1,057.96
964 - Refunds & Rebates	-180.21
967 - District Overhead for Grant	19,709.00
Total Expense	213,964.70
Net Ordinary Income	14,176.60
Net Income	<b>14,176.60</b>



**KALAMAZOO  
CONSERVATION  
DISTRICT**

# ***Thank you to our donors & sponsors, for your amazing support!***

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EXTENSION



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**Cross Country Farm**  
**Myers Farm LLC**  
**Villa Miller Farm**  
**Wiley Farms**



*Kalamazoo Indoor  
Garden Center*

