



Conservation Matters News Letter



Fall 2019



Midland Conservation District saves The Tomlinson Family Barn

After some shaky times, the Midland Conservation District and the historic Tomlinson barn, are on solid ground.

Like the Tomlinson barn, the Midland Conservation District was also in jeopardy in recent years. The district closed its doors in 2012 and sold its office in Sanford in 2015 to have operating money. The district re-organized and resumed operations at the USDA Service Center in Midland. The barn and the district also have history together, said Midland Conservation District Manager Karen Thurlow. The conservation district took ownership of the Tomlinson Family barn and approximately 5 acres, which was part of the Midland County's Pinecrest Farm on August 24, 2019, just over two years after Midland County Commissioners voted to have it torn down in June 2017. The barn is located just west of the intersection of Homer and Olson Rd. in Homer Township, Midland County west of the city of Midland, was built in 1912 by the Edward Tomlinson family. The county purchased the barn and 160-acre farmstead in 1968 with a donation they received from Dorothy Arbury, who was the granddaughter of Herbert Henry Dow, she was part of one of Midland's Founding Families.

The district leased the barn from the county for approximately 30 years and held their annual tree sales and Pheasant sales, along with other activities there.

When news of the county's decision to tear down the barn came out, Thurlow was determined to save it. There were other county residents who felt the same way and Thurlow began contacting township supervisors, county commissioners, local foundations and organizations to seek support for saving it. "I was the squeaky wheel," Thurlow said. No one knew we wanted to use it, so going public with my quest made it happen.

After months of negotiations, the county agreed to sell the barn to the conservation district in September of 2018. The district purchased the barn, along with 5 acres of surrounding property for about \$47,000. Two anonymous, private citizens donated \$35,000 and \$25,000, for the purchase, said Thurlow. The funds remaining after the purchase will "help" pay for needed renovations including a new roof and restoring electrical and water services to the building.

"I think it's a great accomplishment," Thurlow said of the district buying the building. We saved a Barn, how cool is that!

Along with restoring the barn as the site of its tree sales, the district is interested in using the barn to host educational workshops and as a site to highlight county agricultural history. I think that the farming history is very important to the community too and those families should not go unrecognized, their stories should be told. Thurlow said. The district is currently collecting the histories of the county's early farming families. Other projects we have planned include; an interpretive trail through a wooded portion of the property, pollinator plot, native plant sales, a high tunnel, garden plots, also a place to store our Earth and Water Tunnels. These are Educational tunnels we have for rent and take to events and schools to teach the Water Cycle and the "Secrets of the soil."

Co-locating with NRCS at the Midland Service Center has helped establish a relationship with area farmers, said Thurlow. We have really come a long way since 2015. The district obtained grant funding from NACD and NRCS to help with Technical Support to NRCS and in July was able to hire a second employee. With continued support, Thurlow is confident the district will be able to continue its mission of supporting resource conservation in the county. Now we are raising funds to get electric, water and some excavating done out there.

Community Match

We are asking the community to help us raise additional funds. Any amount will help. Please contact us or stop by with your donations!



Annual Tree Sale Taking orders Feb 1st- March 31

Order pick ups April 20-25 at the barn.

Public Sale April 25 through May 9th



This year Celebrate Earth Day 50 Year Anniversary



Help us Save the Barn!

Your private donation can help.
We need a new roof and paint job.
Electricity and Water.



Barn raised on our place.
Gardner Trulliman built
the barn in 1924.



What's this Barn for?
Our Annual Tree Sale Location
Educational Workshops for the Community
Midland County Agricultural History.
Farming Family's of Midland County share your
family story with us!



Barn finished



"4th Grade Farm Tour "



September 17th, 2019 marked the 32nd annual 4th Grade farm tour hosted by the Laurenz Family on their W. Laporte Rd farm in Midland County. The tour is open to all schools in Midland County, has 16 educational stations including a petting Zoo hosted by Midland County 4-H. Corn Maze, Zastrows Pop Corn, Dairy Demonstration (with a live cow!), Farm Machinery, Grain Handling and Storage, Chemical Storage and why that's important, Secrets of the Soil, Soil Health, Earth and Water Tunnels, donated by the district. They were taught most food comes from the farm, the equipment that helps, The conservation practices the farmers use to keep our soils and waters clean and healthy. Future Farmers of America (FFA) from Breckenridge help guide the children from station to station and have a presentation for the students on their program and what they do.

Mrs. Larurenz stated they had 10 classes attend. The attendance was very low this year. We are hoping that more schools will realize how important it is that kids come to a farm and see how things are done. The kids really enjoy it. This year the District is hosting a poster contest for the students. The posters are being collected and we are in the process of getting them on our Facebook page for your viewing and Voting!



Other sponsors include: The Exchange Club of Midland, Gleaner Life Ins. Society and Thrivent Financial

Other District Activities

Tree Planting :



We donated 100 trees to the **Coleman Agriscience STEM** program for them to plant on their 80 acre forest property.

Karen is on the Advisory Board and the Land Lab Planning Committee for the program. The program is going to be doing some really cool things there for the students and the community!

Northwood's Student's for Sustainability

We planted over 200 trees near the new student dorms and Rail Trail.



And The students came out to help clean up the Barn!

We are getting to know them and what they are doing, and looking forward to a great Partnership!

The mission of the Midland Conservation District is to find environmentally cooperative means for land usage and sustainability by providing a gateway for information, resources and partnership.





Soil and Water Educational Tunnels:



Soil Health Tunnel



We have these two awesome tunnels made possible from community donations for rent to help teach soil and water health. Out doors or indoors we can even provide the educational part!

- Contact us to see how you can have them for your function.

Water Health Tunnel



Conservation Districts continually scan the needs of their local communities, work in partnership with others involved in conservation to set local priorities, and develop action plans to solve natural resource problems. The delivery of these efforts by Conservation Districts allows citizens to manage their private lands for a cleaner, healthier Michigan.

MCTV and Conservation Matters Show

Karen is a volunteer at MCTV. Recording shows for the community and has also hosted 10 different shows on Conservation Matters, available on our web page to view. We are currently working on more. Do you have a topic you would like us to cover let us know!



Who are we and What do we do?



DNR HAP Hunting Access Program Public Hunting on Private Property



We currently monitor one 220 acre property in Midland County. For more information on HAP hunting locations in Michigan visit www.michigan.gov/mihunt

**Midland County Soil
Conservation District**

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BOARD & STAFF

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Mary Johnson ~ Co-chairman

David Ruhle ~ Director

Cindy Poole ~ Director

Jan Ruhle ~ Director

Karen Thurlow ~ District Manager

Nathanael Gentle ~ Technical Assistant

Paul Holowka ~ Acting District Conservationist



**Welcome New Employee
Nathanael Gentle**

A grant from the NACD (National Association of Conservation Districts) made it possible to hire a full time Program Technician.

**Office Hours are Monday
through Friday
8:00am-4:30pm**

Nathanael has a bachelor's degree in biology with minors in both chemistry and geography from Saginaw Valley State University. He has an array of work experiences researching water quality in the Saginaw Bay Watershed and teaching the importance of science and conservation to others. Growing up in the Great Lakes Bay Region, he has a background with gardening and raising a variety of farm animals. Nathanael is passionate about the environment and is an avid outdoors man. His career goals are to work to ensure the many natural features we get to enjoy will be around for generations to come. He is also passionate about educating others. Nathanael is excited to be working with the Midland Conservation District, having the opportunity to help others be good stewards of the land.



Field Talks



Soil health is "the continued capacity of soil to function as a vital living ecosystem that sustains plants, animals and humans. Regenerative Agriculture is a system of farming principles and practices that increases biodiversity, enriches soils, improves watersheds, and enhances ecosystem service. It also aims to capture soil and above ground biomass, reversing current global trends of the atmospheric accumulation. At the same time, it offers increased yields, resilience to climate instability, and higher health and vitality for farming and ranching communities.

"If there were some standardized simple remedy for the ills of the land that could be applied indiscriminately, the job of the soil conservation would be comparatively easy."

District programs are available to all people regardless of race, color, national origin, sex, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, or marital or family status.