

NW Michigan Regional Fruit Grower Newsletter - March 2011
(Go to the HTML version for more active Links)

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

2011

- 3/14-4/15** **Conservation Reserve Program Sign-up**
- 3/15** **Getting Ready for the Challenges In New Fruit Production Season**
Hart United Methodist Church
- 3/16** **Ag Labor Management Session**
NWMHRS
- 3/18** **Farm & Business Estate & Succession Planning**
Hart United Methodist Church
See flyer for details
- 3/22** **Wetland Protection & Restoration Workshop**
Leelanau Co. Government Center
See flyer for details
- 3/23** **Finding Local Food Resources: An Open House**
Grow Benzie, 5885 M-115 (Frankfort Hwy), Benzonia
- 3/24** **Borer Pheromone Disruption Meeting**
NWMHRS
- 3/29** **Tart Cherry RAMP Workshop**
NWMHRS
- 3/29** **Logger Education Program**
Cadillac
- 3/30** **High Density Sweet Cherry Tour**
Grand Rapids area
- 4/1** **Wine Grape Kickoff**
NWMHRS
See flyer for details
- 4/1** **Specialty Crop Grant Deadline**
- 4/7-4/30** **4-H Tractor Safety Program**
NWMHRS
See flyer for details
- 4/8** **Benzie/Manistee Hort Show**
Blaine Christian Church, Arcadia
- 4/14** **Logger Education Program**
West Branch
- 4/18** **Tree Fruit Kickoff**

NWMHRS

- 5/10 Antrim County IPM Updates Begin**
Jack White Farm
- 5/10 Benzie County IPM Updates Begin**
Loy Putney Farm
- 5/11 Leelanau County IPM Updates Begin**
Bardenhagen Farms
- 5/11 Grand County IPM Updates Begin**
Josh Wunsch Farm
- 7/29 Supplemental Revenue Assistance Payments for 2009 Losses Deadline**
- 8/8 FSA Emergency Loan Deadline**
- 8/25 NW Station Open House & Equipment Show**

GETTING READY FOR THE CHALLENGES IN NEW FRUIT PRODUCTION SEASON

Mirjana Bulatovich-Danilovich, MSUE Tree Fruit Educator

Growers must stay informed and in tune with changes that significantly impact product marketability and production profitability.

Join us **March 15** for the *Spring Horticulture Meeting* in Hart for a full day of educational presentations and discussions on production technology, pest protection, regulatory policies, and supplemental insurance for fruit producers.

Program Topics

- **Policy Update** by Suzanne Thornsby, MSU, Department of Agricultural Economics. The emphasize will be on issues that will be addressed in the new Farm Bill and possible implications that these new policies will have on fruit farming operations.
- Phillip Tocco, MSUE Educator, will address **Changes in GAP (Good Agricultural Practices) and give an overview of Federal Food Safety Guidelines**. Food safety deals with producing, handling, storage and preparation of food in ways to prevent contamination with food borne pathogens. In fruit production one of the main concerns has been contamination with E-coli. Following prescribed GAP and Federal Food Safety Guidelines is increasingly important in produce acceptability and marketability.
- **Disaster Program “SURE”** is created under the provision of 2008 Farm Bill. Curtis Talley, MSUE Educator will address requirements to qualify for the program, needed documentation, timing for submitting collected documentation, agency that is accepting and handling claims, time-line for claims review, approval and payout.
- **The Swiss Sandwich System As An Alternative to Herbicides** by Mirjana Bulatovic-Danilovich, MSUE Educator. Increased environmental and health concerns are credited with reduction in

pesticide use. The Swiss Sandwich System (SSS) is new and innovative approach in orchard floor management that provides improved physical and microbial properties of the soil, improved soil fertility, suppression of disease and insect pressure while keeping weeds at bay. It was originally designed for organic production systems but given the low cost, efficiency and ease of system establishment it could easily be implemented in conventional orchards reducing the need for herbicide applications.

- **Insect Management Strategies** by John Wise, MSU, Department of Entomology. An update on research with new chemistries and efficacy studies in controlling some of the old problems. An overview of specific options for insect control in 2011 growing season.
- **New Invasive Insect Species** by Mark Whalon, MSU, Integrated Plant Systems Center. In 2010 Spotted Wing Drosophila (*Drosophila suzukii*) has been found in several counties in Michigan including Oceana County. Potentially, this is very damaging pest due to very wide range of hosts and its lifecycle. Marmorated Stink Bug (*Halyomorpha halys*) is another newcomer that has been creating a lot of problems in Pennsylvania, Ohio and other parts of the country. Over the last several years Apple Flea Weevil (*Orchestes pallicornis*) has been making a comeback. Previous outbreaks were sporadic and far in between so it could be treated almost as new pest. Knowing when and where to look for these pests is prerequisite for successful control.
- **Tree Fruit Disease Strategies.** Specific recommendations for dealing with apple scab (*Venturia inaequalis*), firelight (*Erwinia amylovora*), powdery mildew of apple and pear (*Podosphaera leucotricha*), powdery mildew of stone fruit (*Sphaeroteca pannosa* and *Podosphaera clandestine*), cherry leaf spot (*Brumeriella jaapii*), brown rot (*Monilinia sp.*) as economically most significant diseases.
- **Virus Complex In West Michigan Orchards** by Bill Shane, MSUE Educator. An overview of proposed survey for presence and identification of three major viruses in tree fruit orchards in west Michigan. The major viruses, tomato ring spot (TmRSV), prune dwarf virus (PDV) and prunus necrotic ring spot (PNRSV), are responsible for reduced yields, fruit quality, overall tree health and tree longevity. Information on distribution and prevalence of these viruses would benefit growers when making decisions about fumigation before replanting individual trees or entire orchards.

The meeting will be held at the Hart United Methodist Church in Hart, Michigan. Growers will receive **5 credits** toward recertification of their pesticide applicators license. CCA credits have been applied for but at this time there is no information available regarding their approval. Advanced registration is \$25 by calling Wendy at 231-757-4789 and \$30 when registering at the door. For additional information, contact Dr. Mira Bulatovic-Danilovich via e-mail at bulatovi@anr.msu.edu or by phone at 231-740-4083.

AG LABOR MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

Dr. Rob Serrine, Extension Educator, Leelanau Co.

Leelanau MSU Extension and Michigan Farm Bureau will host an **Ag Labor Management Program** on **Wednesday, March 16** at the NW Michigan Horticultural Research Station from **8:30 am-3:30 pm**.

This day-long program will cover agency enforcement and education strategies, responding to media events and other crises, procedures, immigration and housing issues, employer/employee

rights and responsibilities, youth employment, farm labor and independent contractors, interaction with GAP and other food safety and security procedures, and more.

The cost of the program is \$75 for the first participant from your farm or operation, and \$50 for each participant thereafter. Lunch and handouts are included in the cost of the program. Core pesticide recertification credits have been applied for. **Participants must be prepaid and pre-registered to attend.** To register, complete the attached brochure and mail with a check, or call the Leelanau MSU Extension office and register by phone using your credit or debit card as payment. For more information, call the Leelanau MSU Extension office at 231-256-9888. Registration deadline is **March 11**.

CONSERVATION RESERVE PROGRAM

[Conservation Reserve Program \(CRP\)](#), administered by the Farm Services Agency (FSA), provides annual rental payments and cost-share assistance to establish long-term conservation practices on eligible farmland. Land can be enrolled for a period of up to 15 years. For more information, read our most recent blog post on CRP [here](#), or visit the USDA CRP website [here](#). The 40th general sign-up will be held from **March 14-April 15, 2011**.

BORER PHEROMONE DISRUPTION MEETING

There will be a meeting to discuss Michigan cherry grower experiences with borer mating disruption. Don Thomson (DJS Consulting Services) will be hosting this meeting and is looking to collect grower feedback from the farm. Growers who have already used mating disruption in the past are welcome to attend. The meeting is **free** and will start at 9am on **March 24th** at the NW Michigan Horticultural Research Station. Contact the NWMHRS at 231-946-1510 for more information.

TART CHERRY RAMP WORKSHOP

Jean Haley, Haley Consulting Services, LLC

A workshop open to all tart cherry growers will be held on **March 29th** from **9 a.m. to 1 p.m.** at the Northwest Michigan Horticultural Research Station. This workshop will focus on developing a self-assessment workbook for tart cherry IPM. The workbook covers IPM practices that are specific to tart cherry production, and uses the most recent data and results from the RAMP project. This workshop will help growers understand their level of IPM use and where to make possible improvements. Workbook sections include topics like monitoring and sampling in the orchard, orchard floor management, cover crops, managing and conserving moisture in the orchard, protecting and conserving natural enemy populations, and more. Participants in the workshop will have the opportunity to provide critical feedback to improve the workbook. The possibility of receiving pesticide recertification credits for the workshop is being looked into. Workshop fees are covered under the RAMP grant, but registration is required. Please contact Erin Lizotte at (231) 946-1510 or by email at taylo548@msu.edu or Jean Haley at (715) 699-4724 or by email at jean@usableknowledge.com.

HIGH DENSITY SWEET CHERRY TOUR

Nikki Rothwell, Extension Educator

All growers are invited to a high density sweet cherry tour in the Grand Rapids area on Wednesday **March 30th, 2011**. This tour is arranged by the Michigan State University cherry team in conjunction with area farmers and packers.

The tour will include three stops: 1) Clarksville Research Station--new NC-140 planting including four new training strategies--super spindle axe, tall spindle axe, Kim Green Bush, and the upright fruit wall system (UFO). Dr. Greg Lang will talk on these training systems used in different regions around the world. 2) northwest Grand Rapids--tour two high density sweet cherry orchards with pruning demo. 3) tour of Riveridge's new packing facility followed by a discussion of the future of fresh market sweet cherries in Michigan.

The tour cost for northwest Michigan growers is \$35 including lunch and the bus ride to the Grand Rapids area. Cost for tour plus lunch, not including bus ride is \$10. Please call Jackie Baase at the Northwest Michigan Hort. Research Station by **March 18** to make reservations to join the tour and to help us make plans for the lunch: 231-946-1510.

High Density Sweet Cherry Tour Agenda

10:00	Arrive at Clarksville Horticultural Experimental Station <i>Welcome, Phil Schwallier, MSU Extension</i>
10:00-11:30	NC-140 sweet cherry planting: four new training systems <i>Dr. Greg Lang, Dept. of Horticulture, MSU</i>
11:30	Leave for Alpine Town Hall; Eat lunch en route
12:15-1:00	Fresh market sweet cherry discussion* and LUNCH <i>Mike Dietrich: fruit quality, consistency, and market potential</i> <i>Dr. Greg Lang: fresh market sweet cherry research</i> <i>Gary Bardenhagen: support for fresh market sweet cherry research and cultivar evaluation</i>
1:00-2:00	Tour and pruning demonstration of high density sweet cherry planting <i>Joe Rasch, Joe Rasch Farms</i>
2:00-3:00	Tour and pruning demonstration of high density sweet cherry planting <i>Riveridge Orchards</i>
3:00-3:45	Tour of Riveridge's new packing house

*This tour and discussion is a result of the "Sweet Cherry Summit", held at the NW Research Station in fall 2008 to explore ways to expand the Michigan fresh market sweet cherry industry. Priorities established for the Michigan industry at that meeting were: 1) improving production efficiency (i.e. training systems/rootstocks and new varieties), 2) developing best practices protocols for fresh market fruit, 3) determining optimal post-harvest management for lengthening holding capacity, and 4) understanding the physiology of fruit cracking.

BENZIE MANISTEE HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY TO HOST EDUCATIONAL SHOW

The Benzie Manistee Horticultural Society is pleased to announce plans to hold their annual show on **April 8th** at the Blaine Christian Church located at 7018 Putney Road in Arcadia. This year's

program will include an emphasis on frost protection, irrigation, apple economics, and invasive pests of concern for the 2011 season. The following agenda is tentative at this time, but not likely to change drastically prior to the show. This show is open to all northwest Michigan growers, and features good apple topics that have not been discussed at previous events. We hope to see many of you there. To register for the Benzie-Manistee Show, please call Steve Fouch at 231-882-0025; we will need a headcount for lunch by **April 1**. The cost for the day-long event is \$20, which includes lunch, the program, and membership to the Benzie-Manistee Horticultural Society.

Friday, April 8, 2011

- 9:00-9:30 *Frost Protection with Water in Michigan*
Beau Shacklette, TRICKL-EEZ
- 9:30-10:00 *Different Strategies of Frost Protection with Water*
Scott Harn, Nelson Irrigation
- 10:00-10:30 *Frost Protection and The MSU Enviroweather System*
Steve Marquis, MSU
- 10:30-10:45 *BREAK*
- 10:45-12:00 *Grower Panel on Current Frost Protection Strategies: Frost Fans, Are They For You?*
Mark Miezio (Cherry Bay Orchards), Bruce Veliquette (Cherry Ke Orchards), Greg Williams (Williams Orchards)
- 12:00-1:00 *LUNCH*
- 1:00-1:30 *Update on MAEAP and EQIP Programs*
Scott Huey, NRCS, Manistee County
Dan Busby, Groundwater Stewardship Program
- 1:30-2:15 *Sweet Cherry Varieties-What's on the Horizon?*
Wanda Hueser, Summit Tree Sales
- 2:15-3:00 *A Look at Different Growing Systems and the Economics Behind Them*
Dr. Bill Shane, SWMREC, MSUE
- 3:00--3:30 *Invasives of Importance for 2011*
Dr. Nikki Rothwell, NWMHRS

MWSP INTRODUCES THE SAFE FOOD RISK ASSESSMENT

The Michigan Water Stewardship Program, with help from a project GREEN grant, has created a Safe Food Risk Assessment for producers of fresh fruit and vegetables. The Safe Food Risk Assessment is a scale –appropriate voluntary program designed to educate fresh fruit and vegetable producers about food safety and recognize those who use safe food management practices. Producers who successfully complete the assessment and on-site farm review will receive a *Certificate of Completion* that can be shared with customers and buyers.

For more information on the Safe Food Risk Assessment or to schedule an on-farm site review, please contact Dan Busby at the Grand Traverse Conservation District at 231-941-0960 ext 22 or email Dan at dbusby@gtcd.org.

MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE ANNOUNCES SPECIALTY CROP GRANT OPPORTUNITY

Michigan Department of Agriculture (MDA) Director Keith Creagh and U.S. Senator Debbie Stabenow, Chairwoman of the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry today announced new opportunities for Michigan businesses thanks to the Specialty Crop Block Grant Program through the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Ag Marketing Services. The program is designed to enhance the competitiveness of Michigan's specialty crops. Grant proposals must be received by MDA no later than **April 1, 2011**.

"This grant program provides a unique opportunity for our state's specialty crop producers to enhance their profitability by expanding their domestic and international markets," said Creagh. We appreciate Senator Stabenow's continued support of Michigan's agriculture industry and look forward to continued partnerships in the future."

Because of Senator Stabenow's work, the 2008 Farm Bill (Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008) was the first one in history to recognize the importance of specialty crops fruits, vegetables, nursery products, and floriculture.

"I authored this grant program during the most recent Farm Bill so our growers can continue to make significant investments in Michigan's specialty crop sector," said Senator Stabenow. "These grants support the men and women who grow fruits and vegetables and create thousands of jobs throughout Michigan."

The grants, ranging from \$10,000 to \$75,000, enhance the competitiveness of the state's specialty crops, including, but not limited to: research, promotion, marketing, nutrition, trade enhancement, food safety, food security, plant health programs, education, increased knowledge and consumption, increased innovation, improved efficiency and reduced costs of distribution systems, environmental concerns and conservation, product development, good agricultural practices, good handling practices, and good manufacturing practices.

Eligible applicants include non-profit organizations, local, state, and federal government entities, for-profit organizations, and universities. The organizations must be legal entities recognized by the IRS, and applicants must reside and/or conduct their business or organization in Michigan. Applications should demonstrate how the project will potentially produce measurable impacts for the specialty crop industry as a whole and not-for-profit to a specific product, single organization, institution, or individual.

For program information, application form, or submission criteria, please visit www.michigan.gov/mda or contact Mike DiBernardo at dibernardom@michigan.gov or 517-373-9144. Proposal must be RECEIVED (not postmarked) by 5 p.m. on Thursday, April 1, 2011.

IPM TREE FRUIT KICKOFF

Erin Lizotte, IPM Educator

Please plan to join us for the annual *Tree Fruit Kickoff* to be held on **April 18** at the Northwest Michigan Horticultural Research Station from 5-7 pm. We will review label and management changes for the 2011 season for apple and cherry growers as well as discuss invasive species of concern. This meeting is **free**, and no registration is required. I hope to see you there!

2011 HANDS-ON TREE FRUIT IPM UPDATE SERIES

Erin Lizotte, MSUE

Please note the changes to meeting times!

Once again, we will host a series of hands-on IPM workshops that will be held throughout northwest Michigan during the 2011 growing season. Tree fruit growers are encouraged to bring examples of pests and damage found on the farm to the meetings for identification and discussion. Each week will characterize a different time in the season and distinct weather patterns, which in turn will present a unique set of pest problems and management strategies that will be discussed. These meetings are **free** and do not require registration. Pesticide recertification credits and certified crop advisor continuing education credits will be available. Feel free to attend the meetings at any location or time that is convenient for you!

Leelanau County

Location: Jim and Jan Bardenhagen Farm, 7881 Pertner Road, Suttons Bay
Dates: May 11, May 18, May 25, June 1, June 8, June 15, June 22, June 29
Time: 12-2 pm

Grand Traverse County

Location: Josh Wunsch Farm, Phelps Road Packing Shed, Old Mission
Dates: May 11, May 18, May 25, June 1, June 8, June 15, June 22, June 29
Time: 3-5 pm

Benzie County

Location: Loy Putney Farms, 4286 Raymond Road, Frankfort
Dates: May 10, May 24, June 7, June 21
Time: 2-4 pm

Antrim County

Location: Jack White Farm, M-31, south of Elk Rapids on the southeast side of M-31
Dates: May 10, May 24, June 7, June 21
Time: 10-12 pm

NEW ONLINE TOOL HELPS PUSH MSU EXTENSION TO GET INFORMATION TO FARMERS, STAKEHOLDERS

The [MSU Extension News for Agriculture](http://news.msue.msu.edu/) is now live! The site gives farmers and others interested in agriculture access to the newest information and research from MSUE in one convenient, online location. You can access the site now at:

<http://news.msue.msu.edu/>

SUPPLEMENTAL REVENUE ASSISTANCE PAYMENTS FOR 2009 LOSSES HAS OPENED

Christine White, Exec. Director of USDA's Farm Service Agency in Michigan reminds eligible producers that the sign-up period for the 2009 crop year Supplemental Revenue Assistance Payments (SURE) program has opened. SURE is one of five disaster programs included in the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 (Farm Bill) that provides assistance to farmers who have suffered losses due to natural disasters.

“Natural disasters can turn what would be a profitable crop year into a year of hardship and financial loss,” White said. “Any eligible producer who suffered losses during the 2009 crop year is encouraged to visit a local FSA office to learn more about the SURE program and how to apply.”

To be eligible for SURE, a farm or ranch must have:

- At least a 10% production loss on a crop of economic significance;
- A policy or plan of insurance under the Federal Crop Insurance Act or the Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) for all economically significant crops;
- Be physically located in a county that was declared a primary disaster county or contiguous county by the Agricultural Secretary under a Secretarial Disaster Designation. Without a Secretarial Disaster Designation, individual producers may be eligible if the actual production on the farm is less than 50% of then of the normal production on the farm due to a natural disaster.

Producers considered socially disadvantaged, a beginning farmer, or a limited resource farmer may be eligible for SURE without a policy or plan of insurance or NAP coverage.

Farmers interested in signing up, must do so before **July 29, 2011**. For more information on the 2009 SURE program, visit any USDA Service Center or FSA county office or <http://www.fsa.usda.gov/sure>.

CLEANING HORN-FACED BEE TUBES EACH WINTER WILL PREVENT MITE BUILD UP

Nikki Rothwell, District Horticulturist, Northwest Michigan Horticulture Research Station

Osmia cornifrons, horn-faced bee (HFB), is a pollinator that is native to Japan where they pollinate over 80% of Japanese apples. Horn-faced bees are solitary and because they are not part of a social colony like honeybees, all females are capable of reproducing and each female must forage for its own offspring. This intensive foraging behavior is necessary to supply provisions for their larvae, and this foraging activity makes them desirable as pollinators in orchard settings. HFB adults are active for 6-8 weeks, April through June, which are the peak pollinating months. These bees are easy to manage, reproduce without difficulty, and do not sting. They require minimal management because after pollination, the offspring develop in their nesting boxes and adults are not seen outside the colony until the following spring. There is only one generation of HFB per season.

We have been experimenting with HFB in cherry orchards in northwest Michigan and have had good success with these alternative pollinators. Unfortunately, many of our HFB colonies have developed a mite problem, likely caused by the reuse of tubes for housing developing HFB larvae. The genus of mites that is causing issues on HFB is *Chaetodactylus*, and we are still in the process of identifying the mites to species. Because both the mites and HFB reside inside the tubes, the process to clean the HFB is somewhat time consuming, but can be done now during the slower winter months. From our preliminary work at the Northwest Station, we have found that regular cleaning will reduce mite populations and help with HFB regeneration and health of the bee colony.

The most effective cleaning protocol is as follows:

Slice open the tubes with the capped ends first. This capped end is an indicator that the tube is relatively filled, or at least partially filled, as they fill the tubes from inside out. Depending on time,

tubes without capped ends can be cleaned, but in the interest of time, we started with the capped tubes.

Tubes should be cut along the length of the tube, and the blade should not cut too deeply into the tube so as to not cut into the HFB cocoons inside. Essentially, cut just the cardboard tube to the depth only to open the tube -- not to slice it in half! The cutting is best performed with a sharp, thin razorblade.

Once tubes are opened (and we had to work at physically opening them because they do not just fall open), remove healthy cocoons. Healthy cocoons are small (less than 1/4"), brownish gray, and have small pellets on them. Although they do not look like much, these cocoons house live adult HFB. After cocoons are removed, leave behind any masses of yellow pollen mixed with mites. The mites use the pollen as a food source and do not directly parasitize HFB -- they compete with the bee larvae for the pollen while the larvae are developing. If there is a pile or mess of pollen, the larva did not survive as the mites consumed the pollen and left behind the pollen remains. Hence, messy pollen is a bad sign and brown cocoons are a good sign. If you are working for a long time, store loose cocoons in the refrigerator until ready to rinse.

After all cocoons (or as many are to be completed within a day) are removed from the tubes, place the cocoons into a colander and rinse well with cool water to remove any frass, pollen or mites. We used the spray nozzle on the sink and rinsed them and gently moved them around for 30 seconds. After rinsing, dip cocoons into a 5% bleach/water solution for approximately 30 seconds. All the rinsing and dipping can be performed with the cocoons in a colander.

After the bleach solution, rinse again with cool water and lay in a single layer on top of paper towel to dry completely. Once dry, HFB cocoons are ready for storage until spring. They can be stored in plastic deli containers with holes punched into the lid for air circulation. It would be wise to check periodically for moisture -- no mold should be allowed to form.

In the spring, place 100 to 150 cocoons inside a small, dark emergence box with a 5/16" hole cut into one side. Attach or tape the emergence box inside a bucket filled with clean, empty tubes. Place the buckets into the orchard at the appropriate timing to coordinate with bloom.

FARM SERVICE AGENCY EMERGENCY LOANS

James L. Monroe, Farm Loan Manager
USDA, Farm Service Agency

Due to natural disasters in 2010, eligible family farmers in Northwestern Michigan may qualify for Farm Service Agency emergency loans. To be eligible, farmers in a designated disaster county or a contiguous county must have suffered a 30% loss in crop production due to the designated disaster weather conditions. The **deadline for filing** an emergency loan application is **August 8, 2011**.

Disaster designations:

1. Thirty two counties in Michigan have been designated as natural disaster areas due to frost and freezing weather that occurred March 1, 2010 and ended May 16, 2010. Antrim, Benzie, Grand Traverse, Leelanau, Manistee, and Otsego are designated as primary disaster counties; twenty five counties are contiguous including Charlevoix, Crawford, Kalkaska, and Wexford.

2. Thirty six Michigan counties have been designated as natural disaster due to the combined effects of various severe storms with excessive rain, high winds, hail, flooding, flash flooding, and lightning that occurred on or after January 22, 2010. Antrim, Grand Traverse, Kalkaska, and are primary disaster counties, thirty four counties are contiguous including Charlevoix, Crawford, Manistee, Roscommon, and Wexford.
3. Twenty one Michigan counties have been designated as natural disaster areas due to drought and excessive heat, including unseasonably warm late winter and early spring temperatures that occurred on or after January 1, 2010. Antrim, Benzie, Grand Traverse, Leelanau, and Otsego are primary disaster counties; twenty one counties are contiguous including Charlevoix, Crawford, Kalkaska, Manistee, Roscommon, and Wexford.

Please call your local FSA office to apply for disaster assistance:

Bellaire (231) 533-6450 x 2

Traverse City (231) 941-0951 x 2

Petoskey (231) 347-2133 x 2

Cadillac (231) 775-7681 x 2

Farm Loan Program staff headquartered in the Traverse City USDA Service Center (231) 941-0951 x 109.

THE MICHIGAN WATER STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM HAS A NEW LOOK, LOGO, AND WEBSITE



Check out www.MiWaterStewardship.org Stewardship practices for clean water and a healthy home! Visit our interactive website for ways to make your home green, your family healthy, and keeps Michigan's water clean. Free online training courses for adults, fun activities, games, and videos for youth and presentations and lesson plans for educators. There is something for everyone who wants to become a water steward.

MAEAP LEGISLATIVE BILLS WILL RECOGNIZE FARMS

A package of bills passed the Senate and House agriculture committee that would give MAEAP and farmers involved with the program the recognition it deserves. While MAEAP would remain a voluntary program, as it has been for its 11-year life, giving it the authority of law brings it higher visibility within the farming community and offers incentives beyond documented environmental benefits. To learn more about these bills and their benefits to Michigan farmers and the community, visit MI Farm Bureau website at:

<http://www.michiganfarmbureau.com/farmnews/transform.php?xml=20110228/maeap.xml>

To learn more about the Michigan Agriculture Environmental Assurance Program (MAEAP), or to schedule an on-farm site review, please contact Dan Busby at the Grand Traverse Conservation District at 231-941-0960 ext 22 or email Dan at dbusby@gtcd.org.