



October 2025 Board of Commissioners Activity Reports

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HIGHLIGHTS FOR OCTOBER 2025

1. **Juvenile Justice System Presentation** – During the October 28, 2025, Committee of the Whole, Hon. Judge Jeffrey Dufon presented an overview of the Juvenile Justice System, highlighting its complexity and need for reform. Board discussion included comments from Hon. Judge David DiStefano emphasizing judicial coordination, integrated service delivery, and interdepartmental collaboration to improve outcomes for youth involved in the system.
2. **2025-2026 Snow Removal Bids** - The Board approved the snow removal bid totaling \$63,850.00 for 14 County-owned properties during its October 14, 2025, meeting. The bid represents a modest 1% increase over the previous season and ensures essential winter maintenance at County facilities.
3. **2025 Holiday Lighting** - During the October 14, 2025, meeting, the Board approved the installation of holiday lighting and decorations using donated materials and supplemental items provided by the County. Buildings & Grounds staff will complete the installation on a volunteer basis, ensuring no additional cost to the County.
4. **Access Visitation (AV) Grant Contract** - During the October 14, 2025, meeting, the Board approved a joint grant contract with the State Court Administrative Office for \$5,250.00 to support supervised parenting time, custody mediation, and dispute resolution services. Van Buren County will serve as the fiscal agent for the multi-county award.
5. **Disposal/Auction of County Property – Sheriff’s Department Drone** – The Board authorized the auction of a 2018 field-tracking drone previously used by the Sheriff’s Office during its October 14, 2025, meeting. Proceeds will go toward the purchase of two modern drones better suited for rapid response. The original drone had become too slow to deploy for urgent operations.
6. **Disposal/Auction of County Property – Sheriff’s Department Golf Cart** – The Board authorized the auction of an outdated golf cart used by the Sheriff’s Department for community events, during the October 14, 2025, meeting. The unit is no longer cost-effective to maintain, and any revenue from its sales will be returned to the department’s budget.
7. **Purchase of County Property – Sheriff Patrol Vehicles** – The Board approved the purchase of four patrol vehicles for the Sheriff’s Office during its October 28, 2025, meeting. The purchase, not to exceed \$260,000.00, will be funded through the General Fund as part of the department’s annual fleet replacement cycle.
8. **2025 Drain and Lake Level Assessments** – During the October 28, 2025, the Board approved the 2025 Drain and Lake Level Assessment Rolls totaling \$972,669.17. These assessments cover project and maintenance costs and will be spread across applicable townships, cities, and villages.
9. **Equalization – 2025 Apportionment Report** – The Board adopted the 2025 Apportionment Report during its October 28, 2025, meeting. The report outlines millage rates for all taxing jurisdictions in Van Buren County and ensures compliance with statutory tax levy regulations.

- 10. PA 116 Applications 01-2025 and 02-2025 – Drozd Family Grain** – During the October 28, 2025, meeting, the Board approved two PA 116 applications submitted by Drozd Family Grain. These applications place agricultural parcels in Bloomingdale Township into the Farmland and Open Space Preservation Program.
- 11. Diversion Management Platform – Prosecutor’s Office** – During the October 28, 2025, meeting, the Board approved a three-year, \$3,000.00 contract with Advent, a diversion management platform for use by the Prosecutor’s Office. The platform supports online case screening and behavior modification programming designed to reduce incarceration while improving community safety.
- 12. CIP 2025-2026: Purchase of a 3/4 Ton Replacement Truck – Buildings and Grounds** - The Board authorized the purchase of a 3/4-ton replacement truck for the Buildings and Grounds Department at a cost of \$52,952.00 during the October 28, 2025, meeting. This purchase was included in the approved 2025–2026 Capital Improvement Plan.
- 13. Use of County Property – Paw Paw Downtown Development Authority (DDA) Village Holiday Celebration** – During the October 28, 2025, meeting, the Board granted the Paw Paw DDA permission to use County property for its Village Holiday Celebration scheduled for December 12–14, 2025. This includes use of the Courthouse parking lot, the tree in front of the Courthouse, and the County Park. The event will honor Register of Deeds Paul DeYoung for his community service.
- 14. September 2025 Claims** – During the October 28, 2025, BOC meeting, the Board approved payment of claims totaling \$7,688,012.65 for County operations during the month of September 2025.
- 15. Position Creation – Digital Communications Coordinator** – At the October 28, 2025, meeting, the Board approved the creation of a new full-time Digital Communications Director position. The role will be shared between Van Buren and St. Joseph Counties and is intended to modernize public engagement and digital content strategy across departments.

Appointments/Reappointments

- 1. Van Buren County Mental Health Board (VBCMh) – Barnes, S.** – The Board appointed Susan Barnes to the Van Buren Community Mental Health Board of Directors during the October 14, 2025, meeting. Ms. Barnes brings prior board experience, having served from 2007 to 2024, including as Board Chairperson and VBCMh’s representative to the Southwest Michigan Behavioral Health Board.
- 2. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) – Ontiveros, C.** - The Board reappointed Cathy Ontiveros to the Van Buren County DHHS Board during its October 28, 2025, meeting. Ms. Ontiveros has served with distinction and was appointed to a new three-year term ending November 1, 2028.



[Scan the QR code](#) for updates, news, live Board meetings, agendas, minutes, and more!



Hours of Operation:

Monday - Thursday 8am - 5pm
Friday 8am - 2pm

Cass County

Immunizations
1st & 3rd Wednesdays

STI Testing & Treatment
Thursdays

Dental
Monday - Friday

Van Buren County

Immunizations
Thursdays

STI testing & treatment
Wednesdays

Dental
Monday - Friday

Newsworthy

Visit vbcassdhd.org/news

[West Nile Virus Detected in Cass County Bird – What You Need to Know](#)

[Sea Lamprey Control Planned for Paw Paw River](#)

Medical Director and Nursing

In September, health department nursing staff actively engaged in a variety of educational and professional development opportunities. The team participated in an annual influenza webinar to stay current on prevention strategies and communicable disease nurses attended a virtual series focused on hospital-acquired infections and infection prevention, with insights tailored to long-term care and assisted living facilities. Additionally, the department welcomed a nursing student from Western Michigan University to shadow the health department nursing team. Over five days, the students gained 40 hours of valuable hands-on experience in public health nursing.

Cass County recently confirmed its first positive case of West Nile Virus in a blue heron that had been struck by a vehicle. The health department has issued **[a public press release](#)**¹ with details and prevention tips. Arbovirus activity, including West Nile Virus and Eastern Equine Encephalitis, **[continues to be monitored across the state](#)**². Additionally, several schools and daycares have reported small outbreaks of Hand, Foot, and Mouth Disease (HFMD). **[Informational materials](#)**³ have been distributed to facilities and healthcare providers.

The Health Department reports that fifteen individuals within our district received Post-Exposure Prophylaxis for rabies following potential exposure to a bat. In each case, the bat was either unavailable or not suitable for testing. As of early October, 37 bats have tested positive for rabies in Michigan in 2025. Local county data includes Allegan County with two cases, Berrien County with one, and Kalamazoo County with three. Van Buren and Cass Counties have not reported any rabies-positive animals to date. For the latest statewide data, visit **[the 2025 Rabies Positive Animals in Michigan report](#)**⁴.

Environmental Health

- 75 septic permits
- 77 well permits
- 66 restaurant inspections
- 19 temporary food inspections
- 45 septic final inspections
- 42 well final inspections
- 10 restaurant reinspections
- 18 swimming pool inspections

¹ <https://vbcassdhd.org/west-nile-virus-detected-in-cass-county-bird-what-you-need-to-know/>
² https://www.michigan.gov/emergingdiseases/-/media/Project/Websites/emergingdiseases/Folder3/Weekly_Arbovirus_Summary.pdf?rev=a42c5ee32bbf4e80983102593114ea77
³ https://www.michigan.gov/mdhhs/-/media/Project/Websites/mdhhs/Folder1/CD_Info/A-Z/HFMD-Fact-Sheet.pdf?rev=89a4cbe29b4a43e4963e834e98b460bb&hash=C03F1264DD54E4A179B91560F8A10DE4
⁴ https://www.michigan.gov/emergingdiseases/-/media/Project/Websites/emergingdiseases/Folder3/Current_MI_Rabies_Map.pdf?rev=b9fa7637e15b46d9a99f3ff5b26ea5b9&hash=B018A7E2963EAB520C71D434C25B2289



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**West Nile Virus Detected
in Cass County Bird –
What You Need to Know**

**Sea Lamprey Control
Planned for Paw Paw
River**

Health Promotions

Staff participated in a mandatory Standard Response Protocol Training, gaining essential knowledge on how to respond to emergencies such as severe weather or active threats. Our Health Promotion team was active in the community, attending the Cass Family Expo and the Cass Council on Aging Health Fair, where they provided educational resources, flu and COVID-19 vaccines, and giveaways to local residents.

In support of overdose prevention, a new Narcan distribution machine has been installed in the Dowagiac office and staff also took part in the Southwest Michigan Opioid Summit. Cass and Van Buren County seniors received a boost to their nutrition benefits with an additional \$25 added to their Senior Project Fresh cards. On social media, the health department is promoting Dental Awareness Month and Breast Cancer Awareness Month to raise awareness and encourage preventive care.

Dental Clinic and Outreach

In September, the Dowagiac clinic welcomed 23 new patients and served 398 individuals, while Lawrence saw 65 new patients and cared for 542 individuals. Looking back at a very unusual year, the dental team showed adaptability and patience with staff changes, extended leaves of absence, and outside forces affecting everyone in public health. Through it all, staff have always kept their core values as a guiding star and continued to provide excellent and compassionate care to patients. Between the two clinics this year, we have been able to provide over 4000 dental exams and cleanings, over 200 arches of dentures, and over 7000 fillings and crowns. This care was all provided at low cost and the highest standards of care.

The dental outreach team was busy providing care directly to children in the community through the SEAL! program and Kindergarten Oral Health Assessments (KOHA), all at no cost to the patient.

**SEAL! Oct. 2024 - Sept. 2025
VB/Cass**

- Number of schools: 32
- Number of Cleanings: 800
- Number of Sealants placed: 2279
- Number of Students that received oral health education: 9130

**KOHA Oct. 2024 - Sept. 2025
VB/Cass and Berrien**

- Number of schools: 82
- Number of assessments (combined): 3072
- Referral for Urgent Care Tx: 97

John Faul
County Administrator



David Krzycki
Veterans Services Director

VAN BUREN COUNTY VETERAN SERVICES

Phone: (269) 657-8200 Ext 1612
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226 E. Michigan Avenue
Paw Paw, MI 49079

Email: KrzyckiD@vanburencountymi.gov
Web: www.vanburencountymi.gov

1. **This report covers the reporting period from Aug-Sep FY2025.**
2. **Happy Birthday United States Army US Navy, and US Marine Corps!**
3. **Statistical information Indicates:**
 - Overall, this year we have seen **3325** contacts for FY 2025.. New contacts, **DD-214 Request, Aid and Attendance inquiries, and Relief.** are the main topics during this period. (We have seen an increase in younger veterans and female veterans this reporting period.)
 - The dental program spent **\$54,090.74**, in FY25 with **251** visits.
 - In FY2025 we spent **\$62,645.74** on the FY2025 MVAAG grant.
 - Soldiers and Sailors had **0** a fully developed relief request for consideration in FY2025
 - We had **9** burial relief approved for **\$300.00** in FY2025.
4. **Statistics Aug-Sept FY2025**
 - **VA Claims/Actions:** We had **92** claims/actions filed in August and **104** in September. This reflects all the various actions related to additional benefits, DIC, Relief, Aid and Attendance, and requests for DD214's.
 - **Appeals:** We had **5** appeals in August and **3** appeals for September for this period.
 - **Health Care:** Veteran services had **6** veterans signed up for VA Health Care in this reporting period.
 - **Home/Event Visits:** **1** home visits in this reporting period.
 - **Assisted Living Visits:** Conducted a total of **0** Assisted Living Visits this reporting period.
 - **Community Events:** Conducted **7** outreach and County Events since our last report.
5. **Public transportation gave 16 rides in August and 12 rides in September.**

6. End of Fiscal Year Roll up:

- a. 3325 **Contacts/visits.**
 - b. 1069 **Personal actions submitted**
 - c. 32 **Claim/Appeals submitted**
 - d. 46 **VA Health Care Enrollments**
 - e. 6 **Home visits**
 - f. 48 **Community Events**
 - g. 9 **Burial for \$300.000**
 - h. 208 **Public Transportation Veteran Rides for Appointments**
 - i. *251 **Veterans for Dental Program**
 - j. *\$54,604.74 **Spent on Dental**
 - k. >\$38,000.00 **Relief**
- *** \$9,568,453.47 **In Disability Claims for Veterans in FY2025**
- *** \$3,901,353.72 **In A&A, DIC, Caregivers, Backpay in FY2025**
- *** 13,469,807.19 **Return benefits for Veterans through VBC Veteran Services in FY2025**

7. The following events were conducted during this reporting period FY2025.

- **August 2025**
 - Visit American Legion
 - Visit VFW
 - Pack the Piers (South Haven)
 - Veterans Social (Paw Paw)
- **September 2025**
 - Harvest Wine Festival
 - Closed out FY2025 Grant with MVAA
 - Victims Services Speaking Engagement (Lawerence)
 - Veterans Social (Paw Paw)
- **Upcoming events for Veteran Services:**
 - Decatur VFW Standdown (OCT 10)
 - Tractor Supply (Winterization for Veterans)
 - Halloween (Veterans Services)
 - Veterans Day (11 Nov)
 - Thanksgiving Meals (22 Nov)
 - Christmas Meals (13 Dec)

Notes: Military Branch Birthdays

- Army. June 14, 1775.
- Coast Guard. August 4, 1790
- Air Force. September 18, 1947
- **Navy. October 13, 1775.**
- **Marine Corps. November 10, 1775.**
- National Guard December 13, 1636.
- Space Force, December 20, 2019.



Van Buren Conservation District October 2025 Program Update

Submitted by Emily Hickmott, Executive Director

The VBCD staff continues to work exclusively from home and the field until our office at the USDA Service Center reopens. We are not available in our office, but we will continue to work and be available to meet. We are grateful to be able to continue working on soil and water conservation in Van Buren County thanks to local funding sources like the Van Buren Conservation District Programs Millage; support from Van Buren County and our local townships, villages, and cities; and other local funding sources. Contact information is available at VanBurenCD.org/about to find out how our team can best help you.

Since last month's report, we have completed this season's road right-of-way treatment of high priority invasive species - Japanese knotweed and phragmites. We enjoyed being a part of the Van Buren County Road Commission's Employee Appreciation Day where we were able to do some invasive species trivia with their excellent staff! Check out the staff's updates below to see what else we've been up to this fall.

Did you know? Michigan's Conservation Districts are governmental subdivisions of the State of Michigan. We are public organizations created under the provisions of Soil Conservation District Law, Public Act 297 of 1937. We are overseen by the Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development.

Our work is administered by a publicly elected board of directors (as defined by the Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Act Public Act 451 of 1994, as amended). Board Directors serve four year terms that are typically staggered, so we tend to have an election at our annual meeting each year. Curious about what conservation districts are or how we work? Reach out anytime!

Upcoming Events (Details available on [our website](#)):

- Veteran's Day Holiday | Tuesday, November 11, 2025
- Van Buren Conservation District Board Meeting | Wednesday, November 19, 2025 | 10:00 AM | VBCD Office / USDA Service Center | 1035 E Michigan Ave., Paw Paw, MI 49079
 - *Meeting relocation will be posted on our website and on the USDA doorfront if the USDA Center is not open on November 19.*
- Thanksgiving Holiday | Thursday, November 27, 2025
- Van Buren Conservation District Board Meeting | Wednesday, December 17, 2025 | 10:00 AM | VBCD Office / USDA Service Center | 1035 E Michigan Ave., Paw Paw, MI 49079
 - *Meeting relocation will be posted on our website and on the USDA doorfront if the USDA Center is not open on November 19.*

Program Updates:

- **Ag Conservation/Water Quality Projects** (*Erin Fuller and Colleen Forestieri*) - In September, the Ag and Water Quality team coordinated our annual aerial fly-on cover crop co-op. Over 2,200 acres of cover crops were planted with this method. Additionally, Erin Fuller led a "Discover with the District" event at the Phillips Family Memorial Nature Sanctuary in Decatur.



Van Buren Conservation District October 2025 Program Update

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- **SWxSW Corner CISMA (Cooperative Invasive Species Management Area) Team** (*Abbie Bristol, Alex Florian, Jena Johnson*) - The field season is slowly winding down, but the CISMA team is still working diligently to finalize projects, address high priority invasive species, and prepare for the upcoming year. The Strike Team was hard at work spraying and identifying all the Phragmites and Japanese knotweed in Van Buren County Road Rights of Way. Multiple presentations were given to a variety of audiences, including the Van Buren County Road Commission, garden clubs, and coastal communities. The team was available for impromptu surveys of spotted lanternfly (SLF) when reports were suddenly made (no SLF were found, but connections with property owners were made). The team identified the CISMA's needs and began writing grants for competitive projects to fund work in 2026 and beyond.
- **Michigan Agriculture Environmental Assurance Program (MAEAP) and Regen Ag Program** (*Kyle Mead*) - The Fiscal year has come to an end, and the tech has been able to meet or exceed all of his goals except for the Reverification Goal and missed by not much. This past year has been great for meeting new landowners and filling the pipeline with more folks who will sooner or later become MAEAP Verified.
- **National Association of Conservation Districts (NRCS) Technical Assistance** (*Lucas Hartman, Gabriel Francisco*) - This month was our annual Grazing Field Day and it was held at Conservation Technician Gabriel Francisco's farm Thunderfoot Farms in Paw Paw Michigan. Attendees heard from Gabe about how his farm has been working this multi-generational farm and some of the interesting grazing practices he has been doing on his small diversified livestock farm. Keynote speaker was Nathan Drumhiller of Drumhiller Farms located in Parma Michigan.
- **Outreach** (*Jacob Diljak*) - September saw two field day events supporting two groups within our communities: coastal residents and farmers. The VBCD's first Dune Day and Grazing Field Day strengthened our community support and shared stewardship of our natural resources. We also unveiled our new trail signage along the Van Buren State Trail!
- **Resource Recovery & Recycling** (*Kalli Marshall, Jacob Diljak*) - September was a busy month as we engaged with Municipal Leaders at Lunch and Learns, held our last Passenger & Semi Tire and Electronics Collection of the year and prepped for the end of the fiscal year. We were able to upgrade our pesticide container with a new sign and paint. We are wrapping up the 2023 Recycling Infrastructure Grant and share the exciting end results.



ROAD COMMISSION TALKING POINTS

IMPORTANT DATES TO REMEMBER

Township Annual Meetings have been scheduled to take place on October 28th at 6 PM and October 29th at 1 PM. Officials may choose to attend the session that best fits their schedule. Zoom options will be offered. Every Supervisor and Road Liaison is encouraged to attend one of these two scheduled sessions.

THE GOVERNOR HAS SIGNED A BUDGET, BUT . . .

The Governor has just signed the budget and additional bills that make up the road funding package, but many questions remain unanswered about how the 2025 Transportation Package could impact Van Buren County. Will the 24% marijuana wholesale tax be challenged? Which types of funding have immediate effect? When will the new road money start coming in? Will this improve levels of service? At this point everything is still very unclear. Exact amounts the VBCRC will receive are not yet finalized and to make matters even more confusing, fuel and marijuana are consumption taxes and could fluctuate month-to-month. January 1st is the start of collections, but it is still unclear when new revenue will start flowing to the VBCRC. And all areas of road agency operations are being examined for impact by new funds. So stay tuned . . .

SNOW PLOW ROAD-EO AND 3RD ANNUAL EMPLOYEE APPRECIATION DAY A SUCCESS

The Snowplow Road-EO and 3rd Annual Employee Appreciation Day was held on September 30th. Coming in First Place in the Road-EO Competition was **Dave Stafinski**, Road Maintenance Employee (13 Years of Service), with **Randy Moser**, Road Maintenance Employee (46 Years of Service) in Second Place, and **Austin Hammond**, Road Maintenance Employee (2 Years of Service) in Third Place.

Accolades for Major Milestone Anniversaries were given to Tim Nicholas, Road Maintenance Employee (40 Years); Larry Click, Road Maintenance Employee (25 Years); and John Noffke, Road Maintenance Employee (25 Years).

2025 SEALCOAT AND FOG SEAL PROGRAM COMPLETE

The Road Commission wrapped up its 2025 Sealcoat and Fog Seal program last week completing 168 miles of primary and local roadways in Van Buren County, including the Villages of Mattawan and Decatur. **Fun fact:** Sealcoat is basically sunscreen for asphalt. It protects asphalt from the sun's UV rays which dry it out and cause cracking. Kind of like how sunscreen protects your skin!

BOARD APPROVES 2025 OPERATING BUDGET ADJUSTMENT

At its October 2nd meeting the Board approved adjustments to the 2025 Operating Budget which included adjustments for anticipated revenues, township contributions, and other revenues. Adjustments also included adjustments to Primary Heavy Maintenance, Special Maintenance, and Local General Maintenance due to increases and/or decreases based on actual costs, and/or adjustments following bid openings. The resulting fund balance remains healthy going into FY2026. A copy of the October 2025 Adjusted Budget is available for inspection online at <https://www.vbcrc.org/budget>.

NOTE: To receive project and complete maintenance & operations updates (Weekly Update) please see visit the Road Commission's website at www.vbcrc.org/projectupdates.