



# Five-Year Strategic Plan (FY 2023 - 2027)

## Oceana Conservation District

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### **Organization of the Oceana Conservation District:**

Oceana Conservation District was established in 1972 by public referendum as a governmental subdivision of the State of Michigan and a public body corporate and politic, exercising public powers, as outlined in Conservation District Law, Act 463 of 1998.

### **Function of the Oceana Conservation District:**

Oceana Conservation District functions to identify, prioritize and implement natural resource protection to meet locally identified needs. We offer technical assistance, educational programs, and various services to meet natural resource management goals.

### **Mission of the Oceana Conservation District:**

Promote conservation, stewardship, and sustainable use of the natural resources in Oceana County through landowner assistance and education.

### **Vision of the Oceana Conservation District:**

Healthy forests, clean waters, sustainable agriculture, and vibrant, economically strong community,

### **Values of the Oceana Conservation District:**

Our work is guided and informed by our belief and commitment to:

- Stewardship - We honor this land by making decisions that will protect, improve and restore the natural resources in Oceana County for generations to come.
- Community - Decisions are made based on what is best for both the ecosystems and residents of Oceana County.
- Collaboration - We resolve to collaborate with local partners, agencies, schools, and businesses to maximize the impact we have in the community.
- Service - We strive to provide excellent technical assistance and customer service to the residents of Oceana County.
- Inclusiveness - We respect people, value diversity and are committed to equality.

### **Operations Priorities:**

1. Staffing – Retain five existing staff members, hire a Stewardship Coordinator, hire a seasonal crew for invasive species management and habitat restoration activities.
2. Funding – Develop new sources of revenue for educational programming, stewardship activities, and land preservation.

### **Natural Resource Priorities:**

1. Water Quality
2. Invasive Species
3. Wildlife and Habitat
4. Forest Health and Management
5. Land Use

**Measures of Success:**

- MAEAP: MAEAP Report (landowners assisted, sites assessed, farms verified, trainings held).
- FAP: FAP Report (landowners assisted, QFP acres enrolled, outreach events held).
- USDA Farm Bill Assistance: Landowners enrolled; cost-share funds received.
- Habitat Improvement/Restoration: Trees/plants sold, acres of forest and grassland planted.
- Education & Outreach: Number of people reached.
- Invasive Species Management: Acres restored and biodiversity improved.
- Land Preservation: Acres acquired or permanently protected.

**Staffing Needs:**

- Executive Director
- MAEAP Technician
- Forester
- Conservation Technician
- Stewardship Coordinator
- Educator
- Seasonal Invasive Species Technicians (2)

**Budget Needs:** Minimum of \$526,000 annually.

General	\$295,000
MAEAP	\$ 78,500
FAP	\$ 75,500
CTAI	\$ 77,000
Total	\$526,000

**Strategic Partnerships:**

Michigan Dept. of Ag & Rural Development  
USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service  
West Michigan CISMA  
Michigan Department of Natural Resources  
Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes and Energy  
Oceana County Farm Bureau  
MSU Extension  
Oceana County Board of Commissioners  
Oceana County Parks and Recreation Commission  
Oceana County Road Commission  
Oceana Community Foundation  
White River Watershed Partnership  
Friends of the Pentwater River  
West Michigan Regional Shoreline Development Commission  
Trout Unlimited  
U.S. Forest Service

## Benchmarks, Timeline, and Actions:

### Operations Priority #1: Retain and Grow Staff

#### Goals/Measures of Success:

1. Increase capacity to provide programs and services to county residents and landowners.
2. Increase capacity to adequately manage invasive species in Oceana County.

Benchmark	Timeline	Annual Action Plan
Retain current level of staffing	FY 2023-2027	Foster a welcoming, dynamic, supportive work culture. Continue to increase fringe benefits as funds allow.
Hire a Stewardship Coordinator	FY 2023	Recruit, hire and train a new staff member to manage nature preserves and coordinate restoration activities and invasive species management
Hire a seasonal invasive species crew	FY 2025 – 2027	Secure funding to recruit, hire, and train a two-member field crew to treat invasive species on a contractual, fee-based basis.

### Operations Priority #2: Increase Funding

#### Goals/Measures of Success:

1. Establish an endowment fund to adequately support general operations including relatively new Educator and Stewardship Coordinator positions and programs.
2. Acquire land and develop nature preserves.
3. Develop infrastructure for year-round educational programming.

Benchmark	Timeline	Annual Action Plan
Secure long-term, reliable funding for staff and programs	FY 2023 - 2027	Establish and grow an endowment fund; Advocate for an annual minimum of \$50,000 from MDARD's Operations Grant; Advocate for an annual minimum of \$20,000 from Oceana County; Solicit donors through annual appeals, newsletters and personal asks; Present proposal to Oceana County's "Women Who Care" group; Create Wish Lists through Oceana Community Foundation
Secure funding to acquire land and develop nature preserves	FY 2023	Launch a \$100,000 fundraising campaign to develop a Land Preservation Fund
Secure funding for infrastructure	FY 2025	Launch a \$100,000 fundraising campaign to develop infrastructure that will provide space for indoor programming at one of the District's nature preserves

## Natural Resource Priority #1: Enhance Water Quality

### Goals/Measures of Success:

1. Review/Update watershed management plans and identify needs for White and Pentwater Rivers.
2. Reduce sedimentation by 34,000 tons a year in the Pentwater River.
3. Reduce E. coli levels in the Pentwater River by at least 50cfu/100ml.
4. Reduce nonpoint source pollution in the White River by 20%.

Benchmark	Timeline	Annual Action Plan
MAEAP A*Systs & verifications	FY 2023 – 2027	Conduct at least 12 assessments and 8 verifications annually
USDA Farm Bill Enrollment	FY 2023 – 2027	Enroll at least 20 landowners into EQIP, CSP, CRP, ACEP to implement cover crops, riparian buffers, and nutrient management
Partnerships	FY 2023 – 2027	Grow partnerships with West Michigan Shoreline Regional Development Commission, White River Watershed Partnership, Friends of the Pentwater River, and Trout Unlimited to increase capacity for watershed management
Secure grant funding	FY 2023 - 2027	Apply for funding to address nonpoint source pollution in critical areas of the White River, as identified by Trout Unlimited. Identify, secure funding to support erosion control at “Sandy Bend” along the Pentwater River

## Natural Resource Priority #2: Manage Invasive Species

### Goals/Measures of Success:

1. Restore 10 acres of wetland annually through Phragmites and Knotweed control.
2. Treat 5,000 hemlocks annually for Hemlock Woolly Adelgid.
3. Increase biodiversity by 20% in treated areas.
4. Educate public on threats of NNIS and promote active involvement.

Benchmark	Timeline	Annual Action Plan
Secure CISMA Funding through MISGP, GLRI SOGL	FY 2023 – 2027	Survey and treat as many trees as funding allows. Attend CISMA meetings and participate in strategic planning
Secure grant funding through DNR	FY 2023 - 2027	Apply for funds to remove invasive species at Stony Creek Nature Preserve and replant with native vegetation
Utilize Oceana Community Foundation funding	FY 2023	Survey and treat 20 acres of Phragmites and Knotweed on private lands through cost-share funds provided with OCF grant.
Education	FY 2023 – 2027	Send information through newsletters and social media; Conduct one outreach event annually

## Natural Resource Priority #3: Protect and Improve Wildlife Habitat

### Goals/Measures of Success:

1. Create 25-50 acres of early successional, pollinator/monarch habitat annually.
2. Create/enhance 25-50 acres of forest and/or riparian habitat annually.
3. Enhance 26 miles of shoreline and coastal dune communities.

Benchmark	Timeline	Annual Action Plan
Native Seed/Installation Program	Spring 2023 – 2027	Facilitate native plantings by seed as required by EQIP, CSP, CRP contracts
Reforestation Program	FY 2023 – 2027	Conduct annual tree and plant sales; partner with agencies to conduct tree plantings
Critical Dune Permitting	FY 2023 – 2027	Conduct critical dune assessments and provide recommendations that meet EGGLE standards and ensure dune stabilization
Dune Grass Program	FY 2023 – 2027	Promote and conduct two dune grass sales annually

## Natural Resource Priority #4: Improve Forest Health and Management

### Goals/Measures of Success:

1. Identify and reduce threats of forest pests and diseases in Oceana County.
2. Increase level of forest management on private lands.
3. Enroll 2500 acres of eligible forest into the Qualified Forest Program annually in the three-county service area (Oceana, Muskegon, and Newaygo).

Benchmark	Timeline	Annual Action Plan
Secure CISMA and grant funding	FY 2023 – 2027	Secure funding to prioritize HWA treatments in Oceana County
Education	FY 2023 – 2027	Host workshops, presentations, demonstration projects, field days, press releases and social media posts to raise awareness about forest health and management. Provide and promote “best management practices” for effective eradication of invasive species. Educate landowners on how to treat HWA on their own if/when funding is not readily available.
Forestry Assistance Program	FY 2023 – 2027	Conduct site assessments, provide recommendations, refer landowners to consultants, assist landowners with QFP enrollment, conduct outreach events to promote forest management
MAEAP Forest, Wetlands, & Habitat	FY 2023 – 2027	Promote MAEAP’s Forest Wetlands and Habitat assessment and verification to encourage forest management

## Natural Resource Priority #5: Maintain & Utilize Green Space in Oceana County

### Goals/Measures of Success:

1. Support biodiversity by maintaining large tracts of undeveloped land in Oceana County, creating corridors, and ensuring connectivity for wildlife.
2. Provide year-round recreational opportunities for Oceana County residents to support health, well-being, and quality of life.
3. Connect people to nature by providing year-round place-based educational and adventure experiences to encourage exploration and appreciation for Oceana County's natural resources and inspire the current and next generation to protect our healthy forests and fields, fresh air, and clean water.

Benchmark	Timeline	Annual Action Plan
Property Management	FY 2023 – 2027	Maintain access, trails, signage, and property at Otto and Stony Creek Nature Preserves
Land Acquisition	FY 2023 – 2027	Acquire/preserve an additional 80 acres of forested, riparian and/or farmland. Launch funding campaign to purchase and/or develop land
Outdoor Recreation & Education	FY 2023 - 2027	Facilitate programming for youth including a forest school program for preschoolers, summer camps, field trips, and family programs; facilitate adult programs including guided field trips, workshops, field days, wilderness programs, etc.