

July 2021, Bi-Monthly Education Report

Presented to the Board of Directors, Ocean County Soil Conservation District

July 15, 2021

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June - July 2021 Education & Outreach Activities:

In support of OCSCD's Annual Plan of Operations (APO), which includes in its vision *"to be recognized as a conservation leader"*, and includes in its mission *"to protect, restore and sustain fully functioning soil resources..."*, *"further natural resource stewardship through educational programs..."* and *"develop and nurture effective relationships... to sustain functioning ecosystem services..."*, the Education Department is championing the **Jersey-Friendly Yards** initiative, in cooperation with Barnegat Bay Partnership, to effectuate OCSCD's vision and mission. In addition, the Education Department is supporting the OCSCD technical staff on two additional grant projects: **Sustainable Practices for Aquaculture Resource Conservation (SPARC)** and **Lakewood Township Stormwater Basin Retrofit Project**. In addition, the Education Department continues to provide community and statewide programs, and write grants to support OCSCD's overall mission.

I. GENERAL OPERATIONS (APO Item #3)

1. (APO Item #3, Activity 3)

Professional Development:

- June 9: Dr. Carolyn Finney, Ph.D., Scholar-in-Residence for Environmental Affairs at Middlebury College, was hosted by The Watershed Institute to discuss the development of cultural competency within environmental organizations and institutions, how to challenge media outlets on their representation of difference, and ways we can increase awareness of how privilege shapes who gets to speak to environmental issues and determine policy and action.

II. EDUCATION INITIATIVES – GRANT RELATED (APO Item #4)

1. (APO Item #4, Activity 1)

OCSCD is subcontracting with Barnegat Bay Partnership to support watershed-wide education and stewardship initiatives, including Jersey-Friendly Yards

Subcontract with Barnegat Bay Partnership **Part 1: Communication & Outreach (Education & Stewardship):**

- OCSCD has completed a second year of subcontracting with BBP in support of Communication & Outreach (Education & Stewardship). This "Part 1: Communication & Outreach" portion of the subcontract has been renewed for another year (FY22); the District awaits the contract from OCC. Per the subcontract, Becky continues to work with Karen Walzer to promote the JFY website as a guide to landscape practices for managing stormwater and reducing nonpoint source pollution in the Barnegat Bay watershed, engage community members in the JFY landscaping best practices, provide JFY programs, engage Barnegat Bay Volunteer Master Naturalists in watershed-wide conservation projects, and produce a quarterly BBVMN Newsletter ([Autumn 2020](#), [Winter 2021](#), Spring 2021, Summer 2021) .

Subcontract with Barnegat Bay Partnership **Part 2: Bay-Friendly Certification Project (3 year contract):**

- Becky continues to work with Karen Walzer of BBP on the **Jersey-Friendly Yards (Bay Friendly) Certification program**. After receiving feedback from the Technical Advisory Committee, we are currently revising our draft standards for Residential, School and Municipality Certification. We anticipate completing the Standards by the end of July, and will move on to identifying potential sources of funding for Jersey-Friendly projects, developing content for accompanying webpages on the JFY website where the Certification Program will be housed, promote and then launch the Certification programs.

2. (APO Item #4, Activity 1)

Expand Granted Projects: Jersey-Friendly Yards

- **2021 Jersey-Friendly Yards Webinar Series:** The JFY Conference Committee completed our 2021 webinar series, *What's Bugging Your Jersey-Friendly Yard?*, which featured 6 monthly webinars from January-June. Programs were recorded (with permission from the presenter) and are available to view on the Jersey-Friendly Yards website. The Committee will be offering another short webinar series for the summer: July, August and September; our summer series theme is [Jersey-Friendly by Design](#). Presenters will share garden planning and design ideas. Our presenters are: Bruce Crawford, *Designing Gardens to Support the Native Web of Life*, Elaine Silverstein, *Designing and Planting with Native Plants: Creating Native Habitat* and **Becky Laboy, Soil, Water and Light – Tips for a Successful Garden Design**.
- **Jersey-Friendly Yards – Statewide Outreach:** The Jersey-Friendly Yards Team, consisting of Karen Walzer (BBP) Christine Raabe and Becky Laboy (OCSCD), and Steve Yergeau and Susan Servidio (RCE) are discussing the next steps for taking the Jersey-Friendly Yards initiative statewide.
 - Rutgers is interested in enveloping Jersey-Friendly Yards branding and concepts within the suite of programs they offer through [New Jersey Agriculture Experiment Station](#) (NJAES), specifically through the Department of Agriculture and Natural Resources, in partnership with Michele Bakacs, Amy Rowe and Mike Haberland, in an effort to expand the reach of Jersey-Friendly Yards.
 - Karen Walzer and Becky Laboy are promoting Jersey-Friendly Yards programs to statewide “Green Groups”, including Green Teams, Environmental Organizations, Garden Clubs, etc., to expand our reach. Our goal is to train other volunteers and partners to also offer programs within their respective communities.

3. (APO Item #4, Activity 1)

Grant Projects: SPARC (Sustainable Practices for Aquaculture Resources Conservation)

OCSCD's 2020-2021 year of grant funding for SPARC has come to a close. Kristin Adams submitted a final progress report which is summarized on the OCSCD website: [2020 – A Year in Review](#).

OCSCD has been awarded another year of funding for the Sustainable Practices for Aquaculture Resources Conservation (SPARC). This is a technical assistance grant from the National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD) with funding from the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). District staff, Kristin Adams, Erosion Control Specialist, is taking the lead on this project. By mutual agreement, Year 2 of the NACD/TAG grant is starting on January 1, 2022.

This is the fifth year of the NACD technical assistance grant program, which was created with funds from the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) to help increase staffing at the field level and provide conservation services to farmers, ranchers and local communities across the U.S. Ocean County Soil Conservation District's **Sustainable Practices for Aquaculture Resources Conservation (SPARC)** project will continue to build District capacity through several pathways that will occur simultaneously. 1) District staff and partners will connect with local shellfish farmers primarily within Barnegat Bay and Great Bay, to gain a better understanding of their specific natural resource concerns. 2) Ms. Adams will continue to work towards NRCS Apprentice Conservation Planner certification, with a long-term goal of achieving NRCS Certified Conservation Planner status. 3) The District will provide a boots-on-the-ground, local connection between NRCS and the shellfish producers to further develop the conservation practices of the NJ NRCS Aquaculture Initiative while increasing producer participation and involvement.

4. (APO Item #4, Activity 1)

Lakewood Township Stormwater Basin Retrofit Project

OCSCD is partnering with South Jersey Resource Conservation and Development Council, Lakewood Township Department of Public Works, and the Camden County Soil Conservation District on a grant from the State of New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection: Lakewood Township Stormwater Basin Retrofit Project. The grant is funded by

a Federal 319(h) Water Quality Restoration grant awarded by the NJ Department of Environmental Protection to the SJRC&D. District employee, Brittany Moore, Erosion Control Specialist, is taking the lead on this project.

5. (APO Item #4, Activity 2)

Seeks Grants and Funding:

- OCSCD is in discussions with partners regarding a tentative application in response to **USDA Office of Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production (OUAIP) Notice of Funding Opportunity (NFO)**. Application is due July 30. This grant would focus on Urban Agriculture. The purpose of this NFO is to encourage and promote urban, indoor, and other emerging agricultural practices, including: community gardens and farms located in urban areas, suburbs, and urban clusters, rooftop farms, outdoor vertical production, and green walls; indoor farms, greenhouses, and high-tech vertical technology farms; hydroponic, aeroponic, and aquaponic farm facilities; and other innovations in agricultural production, such as agroforestry and food forests, as determined by the Secretary. **(Potentially up to \$60K in funding for the District)**
- Grant funding has been extended to OCSCD for a third year through the **Barnegat Bay Partnership Subcontract: Part 1 – Communication and Outreach (Education and Stewardship) Support (\$13,500 in funding)**.
- OCSCD has been awarded a second year of funding (for a total of 2 years of consecutive funding) for the **Sustainable Practices for Aquaculture Resources Conservation (SPARC)**. This is a technical assistance grant from the National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD), with funding from the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). **(\$35K (?) in funding)**

III. EDUCATION INITIATIVES (APO Item #5)

1. (APO Item #5, Activity 1)

Website, Media and Promotions: Becky continues to...

- Maintain and enhance the Education components of the OCSCD website, and is working with Lisa Mazzuca, OCSCD's new website designer, to help create a more user-friendly website interface.
- Promote OCSCD on social media, through Facebook, Instagram and Twitter. Technical staff continue to submit photos and captions to post; Jessica Pinto is assisting with enhancing comments pertaining to and in support of the SESC standards.
- Maintains database and mailing list of 1,900 active contacts for E&O initiatives in OCSCD's Constant Contact database.
- Create and distribute a monthly OCSCD eNewsletter to promote programs, projects and conservation news.
- Develop an OCSCD Annual Report, encompassing and touting the many projects and programs the District staff are engaged, with July 30th as a target release date. Outline as follows:
 - *Message from the Chairman of the Board and/or District Director*
 - *Staff – Who's Who*
 - *Overview of SESC*
 - *Roundtable – 25th Anniversary*
 - *Jersey-Friendly Yards – past accomplishments, where we go from here*
 - *SPARC*
 - *Subaqueous Soil Studies*
 - *Urban Agriculture, past and future*
 - *Lakewood Basin Project*

2. (APO Item #5, Activity 2, 3, 5, 8)

Special Projects:

- **Barnegat Bay Environmental Educators Roundtable:** In the brainstorming and planning process of developing the District's **25th Annual Barnegat Bay Environmental Educators Roundtable** in 2022. We look forward to holding the Roundtable in person this year, after 2 years of facilitating a virtual Roundtable.
- **Poster Contest:** The 2021 Poster Contest theme is: [Healthy Forests, Healthy Communities](#). The District's Grand Champion Winner was David Benson (Grade Group 4-6) of Stafford Intermediate School, who received a \$50 cash prize. The District received 21 entries this year in 2 of the 4 Grade Groups (2-3 and 4-6). The winning

posters of both grade groups were forwarded to the NJ State Contest. Voting in the NJ State Contest took place in June. Stay tuned for the announcement of the [Statewide Grand Champion Winner!](#)

- **Envirothon:** The 2021 NJ Envirothon was offered in a virtual format this year on May 22. Becky worked with Lily Mehl, the Executive Director of NJACD, as well as colleagues from other SCD's to organize and facilitate this online event. Becky proctored MATES Team #1 at the online Envirothon on May 22. She also helped facilitate an Envirothon Training Session for teams prior to the main event, on May 3. MATES Team #1 was the overall winner of the 2021 Envirothon. The National Envirothon is taking place on July 26. Holly Reynolds of Freehold SCD will be proctoring MATES at the National Competition, which is also online; Becky is standing-by as the back-up proctor for July 26, in case needed.
- **Trout-in-the-Classroom:** There is no Trout Release Event this year, which typically took place at the Forest Resource Education Center, where several schools gathered to attend workshops for students and release their trout. Schools that are participating in the TIC program at their school this year, are required to coordinate with FREC staff for independent trout releases.

3. (APO Item #5, Activity 6)

Internships/Volunteers:

- The Education Department does not have any new interns at this time.

4. (APO Item #5, Activity 7)

Outreach Programs, Conferences and Events:

- May 20: **Attracting Birds to Your Jersey-Friendly Yard**, presented by Becky, hosted by the Ocean County Library. (18 people attended or later viewed the recorded webinar)
- June 23: **Jersey-Friendly Yards – Taking Small Actions at Home**, presented by Becky, hosted by Sustainable South Jersey.
- June 24: **Introduction to Jersey-Friendly Yards**, presented by Becky, hosted by the Long Beach Township Marine Field Station. (6 people attended)

5. (APO Item #5, Activity 7)

Outreach Programs, Conferences, Events Anticipated:

- July 15: Pinelands Short Course, Becky is presenting "Soil Toils" at this year's Summer Pinelands Shot Course, on July 15.
- July 20: **Jersey-Friendly Yards – Landscaping for a Healthy Community with Native Plants**, hosted by Evesham Green Team.
- September 14: **Soil, Water & Light – Tips for a Successful Garden Design**. One of three Jersey-Friendly Yards webinars in our JFY summer webinar series, "Jersey-Friendly by Design".