

2020 February-March 2021, Bi-Monthly Education Report
Presented to the Board of Directors, Ocean County Soil Conservation District
March 18, 2021
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February 2020 – March 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 working with 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.

GENERAL OPERATIONS (APO Item #3)

(APO Item #3, Activity 3)

Professional Development:

- January 26: Barnegat Bay Partnership Annual Retreat (3 hrs)

EDUCATION INITIATIVES – GRANT RELATED (APO Item #4)

(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 for Education & Stewardship:

Becky continues to work with Karen Walzer to promote and increase usage of the JFY website as a guide to landscape practices for managing stormwater and reducing nonpoint source pollution in the Barnegat Bay watershed.

Responsibilities include:

- Post weekly messages on the Jersey-Friendly Yards Facebook page
- Research and develop new content for the Jersey-Friendly Plant Database, Success Stories, Blog, and/or other sections of the JFY website

Becky is working with BBVMNs to promote and highlight stewardship activities through the **BBVMN Newsletter** to connect BBVMNs with each other and with perspective volunteer opportunities, and to share information about natural resources in the Barnegat Bay watershed.

- Developed the Spring 2021 issue of *The Naturalist*

Subcontract with Barnegat Bay Partnership for Jersey-Friendly Yards Certification Project:

Becky continues to work with Karen Walzer of BBP on the **Jersey-Friendly Yards Certification program**. We are continuing to draft standards for School and Municipality Certification.

Jersey-Friendly Yards:

- **2021 Jersey-Friendly Yards Webinar Series:** The JFY Conference Committee launched our 2021 webinar series, "What's Bugging Your Jersey-Friendly Yard?", in January. We presented 3 programs so far, in our series of 6 webinars. Webinars are offered once a month from January-June. Programs are recorded (with permission from the presenter) and made available on the Jersey-Friendly Yards website. The Committee is planning to continue offering another webinar series for the second half of the year. We developed a short survey for constituents,

asking them which of the 8 Steps to a Jersey-Friendly Yards they would like to learn more about. We will select our theme and speakers for the next webinar series based on feedback from the survey.

(APO Item #4, Activity 1)

OCSCD has been awarded 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). Our project is called Sustainable Practices for Aquaculture Resources Conservation (SPARC). District staff, Kristin Adams, Erosion Control Specialist, is taking the lead on this project.

Sustainable Practices for Aquaculture Resources Conservation (SPARC) project:

This is the third 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 build District capacity through two 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 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.

Stockton Tuckerton Reef Oyster Restoration Project

- District Erosion Control Specialist Kristin Adams joined Dr. Christine Thompson and Steve Evert from the Stockton University Marine Field Station as they gathered data on the Tuckerton Reef, an oyster reef restoration site. With funding from the Barnegat Bay Partnership and the Jetty Rock Foundation, Stockton University has contracted with Parsons Mariculture to make the Tuckerton Reef site the first of its kind in southern Barnegat Bay. Established in 2016, this two-acre restoration site is monitored annually by Stockton research faculty and students, once at the beginning of the growing season in May or June, and again at the end of the growing season in October or November. Sampling includes water quality data, volume of the reef building materials and other organisms (oyster, clam and whelk shell, sponges, etc.), live oyster quantities and lengths, naturally set oysters and evidence of predation by oyster drills. This data helps to guide the future efforts of restoring health to the Barnegat Bay and Atlantic Intercoastal bays. Learn more about [SPARC](#) on the OCSCD website.

(APO Item #4, Activity 1)

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.

Field Inspection and Basin Analysis:

- A preliminary GIS analysis focusing on the proximity of the 181 basins in Lakewood Township to wetlands or waterbodies determined that 10 publicly maintained basins were within 250 feet of areas designated as wetlands and 21 privately maintained basins were within 100 feet of a waterbody. In January, 2021, field inspection and analysis was undertaken to further determine retrofit potential for the basins. OCSCD staff, Ramon Mejia and Luis Almeyda, teamed with Craig McGee, District Manager at Camden County Soil Conservation District, and Eileen Miller, Team Habitat Coordinator for South Jersey Resource Conservation & Development Council, evaluated 5 of these stormwater basins for retrofit potential. Selected stormwater basins will have individual retrofit designs targeted to improve both hydrological and ecological functions in an area highly impacted by development. It is anticipated that these retrofits will improve the quality and reduce the quantity of discharged stormwater to receiving waterbodies. In addition, wildlife habitat will be created or

improved by revegetating basins with native grasses and wildflowers. Learn more about [LTSBR Project](#) on the OCSCD website.

(APO Item #4, Activity 2)

Seeks grants and Funding:

- Currently, grant funding to support E&O programs and projects is currently provided through the Barnegat Bay Partnership subcontract: Part 1 - education and stewardship support, and Part 2 – subcontractor for the Bay-Friendly Yards Certification grant.

EDUCATION INITIATIVES (APO Item #5)

(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, primarily through Facebook.
- 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 1st as a target release date.

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

Special Projects:

- **Barnegat Bay Environmental Educators Roundtable:** This year marks the District's 24th Annual Barnegat Bay Environmental Educators Roundtable. Our 2021 theme is Inspiration for a Jersey-Friendly School Yard. With the help of our talented partners: BBP, Rutgers, JCNERR, the Lighthouse Center for Natural Resource Education, Cattus Island County Park and Save Barnegat Bay, we have put together a suite of Jersey-Friendly Yards inspired programs, designed specifically for teachers and environmental educators to guide them in the creation of a Jersey-Friendly School Yard. This year's hybrid event will offer 3 webinars and 3 garden tours (following CDC guidelines), between April 14 and May 1. All programs are free. An announcement and invitation was recently sent out through Constant Contact, and the information is on the District website: [Roundtable](#)
- **Poster Contest:** The 2021 Poster Contest entry deadline was March 11. The number of entries the District received is "to be determined" at the time of writing this Report. It's possible Becky may have an update by March 18 to share at the Board Meeting. The theme is: [Healthy Forests, Healthy Communities](#). OCSCD will once again offer a \$50 cash prize to the Ocean County SCD Grand Champion Winner. If we receive any entries this year, the Board will be invited to select the Grand Champion Winner from each of the First Place grade level winners.
- **Envirothon:** The 2021 NJ Envirothon will be offered in a virtual format this year. Becky is working with Lily Mehl, the Executive Director of NJACD, as well as colleagues from other SCD's to facilitate this event. The online Envirothon event date is tentatively set for Saturday May 22. There will be an Envirothon Training session for teams on May 3. (Last year's Envirothon was cancelled due to COVID-19.)
- **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.

(APO Item #5, Activity 6)

Internships/Volunteers:

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

(APO Item #5, Activity 7)

Outreach Programs, Conferences and Events:

- January 27: **Expanding Biodiversity - Attracting Birds to Your Yard** webinar presentation, hosted by the Ecological Landscaping Association (**167** live participants; video recording has been viewed **234** times on YouTube)
- February 4: **Expanding Biodiversity – Attracting Birds to Your Jersey-Friendly Yard** webinar presentation, hosted by the New Jersey Pinelands Commission (video recording has been viewed **195** times on YouTube)
- February 11: Jersey-Friendly Yards Tutorial/Training Presentation for the NJ Watershed Ambassadors (**22** participants)
- February 17: **Community Conservation** webinar presentation for the Point Pleasant Borough Rotary (**12** participants)
- March 9: **Cultivating Respect for Insects: An Overview of the Ecosystem Services That Insects Provide**, presented by Dan Duran, part of the Jersey-Friendly Yards 2021 Webinar Series (**163** participants)

(APO Item #5, Activity 7)

Outreach Programs, Conferences, Events Anticipated:

- March 16: **Girls Scout Gardener Badge** program for Girl Scout Troop 50427
- March 25: **Unearth the Life Beneath Your Feet, presented by Dr. Jennifer Krumins** Becky is collaborating with Dr. Steve Yergeau of Rutgers Cooperative Extension to host a webinar series supporting soil topics and expert speakers called “Get More Dirt on Your Soil”. This series is a follow-up to our 2020 webinar series called, “Get The Dirt on Your Soil”.
- April 15: **An Organic Gold Mine in Your Yard, presented by Fred Schoenagel** This is the second webinar in the “Get More Dirt on Your Soil” webinar series, hosted in collaboration with Dr. Steve Yergeau of Rutgers Cooperative Extension.
- May 5: **Breaking Ground on Composting, presented by Sandra Blaine-Snow** This is the third of three webinars in the “Get More Dirt on Your Soil” webinar series, hosted in collaboration with Dr. Steve Yergeau of Rutgers Cooperative Extension.