

## September 2021, Bi-Monthly Education Report

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

September 16, 2021

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### **August - September 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:**

- **August 18: Building Community and Driving Organizational Change**, hosted by The Watershed Institute and Hackensack Riverkeeper for the 25<sup>th</sup> Annual Land Conservation Rally. Centered around Environmental Justice (EJ), five panelists discussed their approaches to organizational changes and the community-centered work, in which they are engaged. They shared information about how organizations can build a stronger environmental movement by creating a more inclusive and equitable community. Community-based efforts that emphasize external community involvement within the environmental justice movements were explored. Hosted by Priscilla Oliveira of The Watershed Institute; panelists included: Tykee James, Rosana Da Silva, Jay Watson, Renata Barnes and Tanasia Swift.

### **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):**

- 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**. We have revised our draft standards for Residential, School and Municipality Certification, and have identified potential sources of funding for Jersey-Friendly projects. BBP will be subcontracting with a webmaster to develop the content for accompanying certification webpages on the JFY website where the Certification Program will be housed and promoted, and then we launch the Certification programs. At that point, much of Becky's time will be devoted to the JFY Certification program grant.

## 2. (APO Item #4, Activity 1)

### Expand Granted Projects: Jersey-Friendly Yards

- **2021 Jersey-Friendly Yards Webinar Series:** The JFY Conference Committee is offering a short webinar series for the summer, supporting the theme is [Jersey-Friendly by Design](#). Bruce Crawford of RCE presented *Designing Gardens to Support the Native Web of Life* in July (**155 attendees**), Elaine Silverstein of NPSNJ presented *Designing and Planting with Native Plants: Creating Native Habitat* in August (**134 attendees**), and Becky Laboy presented *Soil, Water and Light – Tips for a Successful Garden Design* on September 14 (**64 attendees**).
- **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 and OCSCD have confirmed their desire for an MOU and are outlining current responsibilities of each of the 3 cooperating organizations.
  - 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.
  - Karen and Becky are outlining a formal training session to train a small group of educators to present JFY programs, in an effort to assist the JFY Team with taking JFY statewide.

## 3. (APO Item #4, Activity 1)

### Grant Projects: 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. Becky is providing educational content about the project activities in the OCSCD newsletter. The project was highlighted in the [August issue](#), which featured seeding the stormwater basin at FirstEnergy Park in Lakewood with native grasses and perennials.

## 4. (APO Item #4, Activity 2)

### Seeks Grants and Funding:

- OCSCD collaborated with NJACD, Morris SCD and Cape-Atlantic SCD to write and submit an application/proposal for a grant through the **USDA Office of Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production (OUAIP)**. The outcome of our proposal is a planning document, a **Blueprint**, that will be applicable in all counties/regions of the state of New Jersey. The Blueprint is a how-to-manual for creating an Innovative Urban Agriculture Action Plan (IUAAP) for use by New Jersey conservation districts to address food security. **(Each District would receive just under \$49K in funding, each, for a 2 year contract.)**

## III. EDUCATION INITIATIVES (APO Item #5)

### 1. (APO Item #5, Activity 1)

#### Website, Media and Promotions:

OCSCD has “soft-launched” our new website: [www.soildistrict.org](http://www.soildistrict.org). We invite all Board members to provide feedback. Becky continues to...

- Work with Lisa Mazzuca, OCSCD’s new website designer, to fine-tune webpages to ensure an organized, 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 post comments pertaining to and in support of the SESC standards.
- Maintains database and mailing list of 1,800 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. New feature is the “Staff in the Field” – educating our audience about SESC with photos and descriptions.

- Develop an OCSCD Annual Report, encompassing and touting the many projects and programs with which the District staff are engaged, targeting November for release. We invite all Board members to provide feedback.

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

### Special Projects:

- **Barnegat Bay Environmental Educators Roundtable:** We are in the brainstorming and planning stages of developing the District's **25<sup>th</sup> Annual Barnegat Bay Environmental Educators Roundtable** in 2022. Possibly hosting "Kiss the Ground" film or another relevant film in an outdoor venue in the evening, preceded by a suite of outdoor educational opportunities for educators. We look forward to holding the Roundtable in person this year, after 2 years of facilitating a virtual Roundtable; although we are focusing on a fully outdoor option.
- **Poster Contest:** 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 were participating in the TIC program at their school this year, were required to coordinate with FREC staff for independent trout releases. The status of TIC Release at FREC in 2022 is to be determined.

## 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:

- July 15: **Pinelands Short Course**, Becky presented "**Soil Toils**" at this year's Summer Pinelands Shot Course.
- 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".

## 5. (APO Item #5, Activity 7)

### Outreach Programs, Conferences, Events Anticipated:

- October 18: **Winter Gardens for Wildlife**, a Jersey-Friendly Yards outreach program, hosted by the Brick Township Municipal Utilities Authority
- November 4: **Winter Gardens for Wildlife**, a Jersey-Friendly Yards outreach program, hosted by the Ocean County Library, Toms River Branch
- December 7: **Jersey-Friendly Yards – Landscaping for a Healthy Community**, hosted by Canco Park Conservatory and Hudson County Chapter of the NPSNJ.