

November 2021, Bi-Monthly Education Report

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

November 18, 2021

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October-November 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. IMPLEMENTATION OF CHAPTER 251 SOIL EROSION CONTROL ACT & OTHER NATURAL RESROUCE PROGRAMS AND PROJECTS (APO Item #1)

1. (APO Item #1, Activity 14)

Becky maintains the District Website and Manages Distribution of Notices.

Becky maintains and updates the new District website with Chapter 251 SESC-related information. Becky also manages and distributes Inspection Requests and 48 Hour Notices as they are received electronically through the website, appropriating requests to Inspectors overseeing specific territories.

II. GENERAL OPERATIONS (APO Item #3)

1. (APO Item #3, Activity 5)

Becky Laboy serves as OCSCD representative member of the Barnegat Bay Partnership's Communication and Education Committee (CEC)

Becky attends bi-monthly meetings of the CEC and reports on OCSCD's education initiatives related to National Estuary Program activities and goals, such as those specified in BBP's [CCMP](#) and [Communication Plan](#).

III. 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 ([Fall 2021](#), [Summer 2021](#), [Spring 2021](#), [Winter 2021](#), [Autumn 2020](#))

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**. BBP has subcontracted with a webmaster, Lisa Mazzuca (who is also OCSCD's webmaster) to develop the content for accompanying certification webpages on the JFY website. The Certification Program will be housed and promoted on these pages. Becky is working with Lisa to help provide photos and content.

2. (APO Item #4, Activity 1)

Expand Granted Projects: Jersey-Friendly Yards

- **2021 Jersey-Friendly Yards Webinar Series:** The final Jersey-Friendly Yards webinar of 2021 was offered on October 12, “Spiders, They Can Be Your Friends”, presented by Sabrina Turpak, Rutgers Plant Diagnostic Library. **(37 attendees)** The JFY Conference Committee has decided that we will continue offering webinars to the public and we are currently discussing the specifics of the 2022 webinar series.
- **Jersey-Friendly Yards – Statewide Outreach:**
 - Karen Walzer and Becky Laboy continue to promote Jersey-Friendly Yards programs to statewide “Green Groups”, including Green Teams, Environmental Organizations, Garden Clubs, etc., to expand our reach.
 - Karen and Becky continue to develop 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.
 - On **November 3**, Becky and Karen Walzer (Public Outreach Coordinator for Barnegat Bay Partnership) implemented a full-day Jersey-Friendly Yards Training Program for the 2022 cohort of New Jersey Watershed Ambassadors, hosted at Jakes Branch County Park. The JFY website, including tools and resources, was introduced; Ambassadors were instructed on site conditions, including light, moisture and soil properties. They tested the soil’s texture, pH and NPK on a potential Jersey-Friendly garden site; Ambassadors used the JFY website and Plant Database to select appropriate plants based on the site conditions.

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. Additional movement on this project will continue in January, 2022.

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. **Unfortunately, this project was not funded. However, the group plans to reconvene, refine the application, and resubmit it for the next RFP.**

IV. EDUCATION INITIATIVES (APO Item #5)

1. (APO Item #5, Activity 1)

Website, Media and Promotions:

OCSCD’s new website: www.soildistrict.org has been public for the past 2 months. The new website organizes the vast quantities of information and resources available on the website into a more user-friendly experience. We appreciate all feedback provided by Board members, and ask for continued feedback as you visit the site.

Becky continues to...

- Work with Lisa Mazzuca, OCSCD’s website designer, to fine-tune webpages to ensure an organized, user-friendly website interface.
- Promote OCSCD on social media, through Facebook, Instagram and Twitter.
- Create and distribute our monthly OCSCD eNewsletter to promote programs, projects and conservation news. New feature added since September is: “Staff in the Field” – educating our audience about SESC. Jessica Pinto is assisting with summaries pertaining to and in support of the SESC standards. Technical staff continue to submit photos.

- Archive newsletters on our website, where they are available for viewing: <https://soildistrict.org/newsletters/>
- Maintain database and mailing list of 1,889 contacts in Constant Contact database; 289 are considered “most engaged”. We have a 29% “open rate”.
- Develop an OCSCD Annual Report, encompassing and touting the many projects and programs with which the District staff are engaged, targeting end-of-December for release.

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

Special Projects:

- **Barneгат Bay Environmental Educators Roundtable:** We are in the brainstorming and planning stages of developing the District’s **25th Annual Barneгат Bay Environmental Educators Roundtable** in 2022. Christine and Becky will be meeting with Mike Mangum, OCPR Manager, and staff of Ocean County Parks & Recreation to discuss potentially partnering on this endeavor. We are considering a suite of outdoor educational programs for educators, as well as hosting “Kiss the Ground” – a film about the importance of soil in capturing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere. 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:** The [Statewide Grand Champion Winner](#) of the 2021 Poster Contest is Marcia Chen whose artwork was submitted to Bergen SCD. Ms. Chen’s Poster, along with posters of all the Finalists are available for viewing on the [NJACD website](#).
- **Envirothon:** The winner of the 2021 NJ Envirothon was MATES, Team #2. Congratulations to our hometown heroes! MATES team finished 13th in the North American Envirothon, which took place virtually on July 26.
- **Trout-in-the-Classroom:** There was no Trout Release Event this year, which typically takes place at the Forest Resource Education Center, where several schools gather 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:

- Becky is advertising for intern/volunteer positions with OCSCD at various local schools, including Ocean County College, Kean-Ocean and Stockton. The Education Department does not have any new interns at this time.

4. (APO Item #5, Activity 7)

Outreach Programs, Conferences and Events:

- October 18: **Winter Gardens for Wildlife**, a Jersey-Friendly Yards outreach program, hosted by the Brick Township Municipal Utilities Authority

5. (APO Item #5, Activity 7)

Outreach Programs, Conferences, Events Anticipated:

- December 7: **Jersey-Friendly Yards – Landscaping for a Healthy Community**, hosted by Canco Park Conservatory and Hudson County Chapter of the NPSNJ.
- March 12: **Soil Toils** program as part of the Pinelands Short Course, hosted by Pinelands Commission and Stockton University.