

December 2022/January 2023, Bi-Monthly Education Report
Presented to the Board of Directors, Ocean County Soil Conservation District
March 16, 2023
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February – March 2023 Education & Outreach Activities, as per the Annual Plan of Operations:

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** 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 outreach programs and statewide initiatives, as well as research and write grants to support OCSCD's overall mission.

(APO Item #1) IMPLEMENTATION OF CHAPTER 251 SOIL EROSION & SEDIMENT CONTROL ACT & OTHER NATURAL RESOURCE PROGRAMS AND PROJECTS

1. (APO Item #1, Activity 14) Becky maintains the District Website.

- Becky maintains and updates the District website with Chapter 251 SESC-related information, Education & Outreach information, and general updates.

2. (APO Item #1, Activity 17, Sub-Task) Becky researches funding opportunities for District Technical Staff to be trained in non-SESC programs and projects.

- Becky and Brittany Moore are working together on the Lakewood Stormwater Basin Retrofit Project.

(APO Item #3) GENERAL OPERATIONS

1. (APO Item #3, Activity 1) Becky provides support and assistance to Christine Raabe, Jean Baluski and Mary Ellen Banfield to provide for the accountability of the District to the public, legislature and to NJDA-SSCC, by posting on the website, the following:

- financial information
- Board meeting minutes, agendas and meeting notices, as required
- Public Notices

2. (APO Item #3, Activity 3) Becky participates in various training opportunities to enhance overall abilities as a District employee.

- Becky has developed and submitted an Individual Professional Development Plan for FY23
- Becky will be attending the "Mining Soil Data" in-person professional development program presented by NJ Soil Scientist, Edwin Muniz, on March 24.

3. (APO Item #3, Activity 5) Becky 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](#).
 - Sub-Task: Becky continues to work with BBP on the shared services agreement for: Part 2 - Bay-Friendly Yards. (see APO Item #4, Activity 1)

- Becky is representing OCSCD at the monthly New Jersey Bay Islands Initiative (NJBII), “Communications Working Group”. Becky attends monthly meetings as part of the Communications Working Group, as well as monthly meetings with all constituents.

(APO Item #4) EDUCATION INITIATIVES – GRANT RELATED

1. (APO Item #4, Activity 1) Becky manages, coordinates, administers and implements current grants, and seeks to expand granted projects when opportunities arise.

Grant 1: Jersey-Friendly Yards (Bay-Friendly Stewardship Certification Program)

- Subcontract with Barnegat Bay Partnership **Bay-Friendly Stewardship Certification Project (3 year contract):**
 - Becky continues to assist Karen Walzer, Public Outreach Coordinator for BBP, on the **Jersey-Friendly Yards Certification Program**. District staff, Jessica Pinto, is now also assisting with the grant. OCSCD has subcontracted with Eileen Miller, Soil Health Specialist, Healthy Landscapes NJ, LLC., who is also assisting with the implementation of the grant. The [Jersey-Friendly Yards Certification Program website](#) is up-and-running. In the past 2 months we have accomplished the following:
 - Coordinating efforts with 2 schools: Pinelands Regional HS and Brick HS, as well as 2 Municipalities: Pine Beach and Point Pleasant Borough, to fulfill the requirements for Certification, specifically the 8 Steps to a Jersey-Friendly Yard.
 - Visited Pinelands Regional HS to meet with teacher Jim Ardoin and administrator Kim Clark. Completed 3 school visits at **Pinelands Regional HS.**, on February 13, 27 and March 6. Provided hands-on soil lessons in support of [Step 2: Start With Healthy Soil](#). Mr. Ardoin has posted the activities on his class website: <https://sites.google.com/prsdnj.org/prhshonorsecology/home> We will continue to work with Mr. Ardoin to help Pinelands High School complete the Jersey-Friendly Yards School Stewardship Certification.
 - Visited Brick Township HS on January 23, to meet with Sustainability Teacher, Gary Paxton (also Treasurer for the OCSCD Board). Discussed the potential garden location on campus. Completed 3 additional school visits at **Brick Township HS**; February 9, March 9, 16 provided hands-on soil lessons in support of [Step 2: Start With Healthy Soil](#). We will continue to work with Mr. Paxton to help Brick Township High School complete the Jersey-Friendly Yards School Stewardship Certification.
 - Attended **Point Pleasant Borough Garden Club** meeting on February 14. PPB Garden Club leader Kelly Noto and Cheryl Saccente are leading the JFY certification process for Point Pleasant Borough. Their project will consist of the implementation of a Native Pollinator Garden. Visited the PPB tentative pollinator garden site at the Municipal Building complex. We will be following-up with a Soil Health Assessment – date TBD. We are in the process of sourcing plants for the garden.
 - Met with **Pine Beach Environmental Team**, Dave McKeon and Justin Saxton, on March 1, who are leading the JFY certification process for Pine Beach. Visited the selected garden site – the “Pocket Park”. The project will consist of removing a large amount of invasive species that are overwhelming the native trees and shrubs on the site. We discussed additional Steps to take towards certification.
 - **Resident Certification Program:** <https://www.jerseyyards.org/certification-program/residents-certification/>
 - **School Certification Program:** <https://www.jerseyyards.org/certification-program/schools-certification/>
 - **Municipal Certification Program:** <https://www.jerseyyards.org/certification-program/municipal-certification/>

Grant 2: Lakewood Township Stormwater Basins 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.

- Brittany Moore is the OCSCD staff representative managing OCSCD’s grant activities, with assistance from Becky Laboy. OCSCD’s role is to implement and promote the Lakewood Township Stormwater Basin Retrofit Project. The team is currently assessing additional sites on which to focus our restoration efforts.

2. (APO Item #4, Activity 2) Seeks Grants and Funding to support both on-going and new initiatives and programs:

Becky continues to research potential grants that will support the District’s Mission. Becky looks forward to collaborating with other organizations, agencies and District staff on application submittals and project implementation. No new grants have been submitted at this time. Cape-Atlantic SCD now has a full-time Educator; we are exploring ways to spread Jersey-Friendly Yards to other Districts.

(APO Item #5) EDUCATION INITIATIVES

1. (APO Item #5, Activity 1) To maintain and enhance OCSCD website. To more effectively utilize and disseminate pertinent and educational resources and assist in fulfilling OCSCD Mission.

Communications: Website, Newsletter, Blogs, Social Media and Annual Report:

Becky has been using several OCSCD media communications platforms in an effort to engage a broader audience in support of the District’s Mission. OCSCD staff have been regularly contributing articles for publication.

- OCSCD’s new [website](#)
- [Newsletters](#) continue to be distributed monthly through our Constant Contact platform, typically on the first day of the month, to our audience of 1,782 contacts on our “General List”, with an additional 2,259 statewide education administrators (used for our Roundtable campaigns), totaling 4,041, of which, 1,043 are considered “most engaged”. We have a 53% “open rate”. Our newsletter offers featured sections such as “Education Programs & Events”, “Staff in the Field” and “Partner Projects”, where we discuss the latest updates about educational programs, projects and events, as well as grants, current partner projects, technical information regarding SESC Standards, and informative content about soil, water and natural resource conservation in the Barnegat Bay watershed.
- [Blog posts](#) on our website highlight the District’s many projects, as well as our soil conservation message, and are linked in our newsletters and social media.
- Newsletters, blogs and other soil conservation information are also distributed via the District’s social media platforms by Becky and Kristin Adams via [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#) and [Twitter](#)
- For access to all our social media and project links, visit the “[Connect](#)” page on our website
- Becky is currently working on the [OCSCD Annual Report](#), highlighting the many projects, programs and partners with which the District staff are engaged.

2. (APO Item #5, Activity 2) Becky maintains communications and networks with regional and statewide Conservation Education and Environmental Education initiatives, including Barnegat Bay Roundtable Steering & Planning Committee, Barnegat Bay Estuary Program’s Communication and Education Committee, Conservation Partnership meetings, Natural Resource education Foundation of New Jersey (NREF), Jersey-Friendly Yards.

- Currently, Becky is on the **Barnegat Bay Partnership Retreat Planning subcommittee**, assisting with the planning of the annual CEC Retreat, which will be held **on June 28, at the Long Beach Township Field Station**.

3. (APO Item #5, Activity 3) Poster Contest: The 2023 Annual Conservation Poster Contest has closed – the deadline to receive posters was on March 1. This year’s theme is “One Water”, highlighting the importance of water as a natural resource. The contest information, rules and entry form can be found on our [website](#). OCSCD received poster contest entries from 2 teachers this year, in Grade Groups 2nd-3rd and 4th-6th. OCSCS staff are currently selecting one winner from each Grade Group. The two winners will be presented to the Board, who will select the Grand Champion. OCSCD will award the Grand Champion Winner a \$50 cash prize. Winning OCSCD posters can be found on our [Annual NJ Conservation Poster Contest webpage](#). [Winning statewide posters can be found on the NJACD website](#).

4. (APO Item #5, Activity 4) Promote the Distribution of Low Maintenance Landscaping Guides. Becky is currently searching for grants to support funding to print additional LML Guides.

5. (APO Item #5, Activity 5) Barnegat Bay Environmental Educators Roundtable: The District's 26th Annual Barnegat Bay Environmental Educators Roundtable will take place on **April 19, 2023**, at The Lighthouse Center for Natural Resource Education. Agenda, Exhibitors, Field Trips and Workshops are all posted on the OCSCD website, on the [Barnegat Bay Environmental Educators Roundtable webpage](#). We are excited to announce our Keynote Speaker is Christine Girtain, NJEA's New Jersey Teacher of the Year for 2022-23, and longtime attendee of the Roundtable. Planning for the 2023 BBEERT will continue over the next few weeks. OCSCD staff will be assisting with preparations. Jessica Pinto will be presenting a workshop. Dr. Pollock has kindly offered to provide the "Welcome" to our guests at the Roundtable. We cordially invite all Board Members to attend.

6. (APO Item #5, Activity 6) Internship & Volunteer Opportunities and Agreements: The District has no interns at this time.

7. (APO Item #5, Activity 7) Offer a variety of Outreach Programs based on soil health & natural resources to various groups/organizations; at least 12 per year.

In 2023, Becky has presented:

- **February 8: Don't Treat Your Soil Like Dirt – Building a Foundation for your Jersey-Friendly Yards**, webinar hosted by Bergen-Passaic Chapter of the Native Plant Society of New Jersey. **(151 Attendees)**
- **February 23:** Becky co-presented **Jersey-Friendly Yards Resident Certification Program** webinar with Karen Walzer, BBP, hosted by the Jersey Shore Chapter of the Native Plant Society of New Jersey. This program fulfilled requirements for the Bay-Friendly/Jersey-Friendly Stewardship Certification Program grant, in partnership with BBP. **(14 attendees)**
- **March 4: Soil is the Foundation of Life on Earth**, in-person program presented at the Annual Spring Meeting and Conference of the Native Plant Society of New Jersey. **(373 attendees)**

Becky will be presenting:

- **April 12:** Becky will be co-presenting **Jersey-Friendly Yards Resident Certification Program** webinar with Karen Walzer, BBP, hosted by JCNERR. This program will fulfill requirements for the Bay-Friendly/Jersey-Friendly Stewardship Certification Program grant, in partnership with BBP.
- **April 23:** Becky will be presenting an in-person program, **Jersey-Friendly Yards Resident Certification Program** at the Barnegat Library. This program will fulfill requirements for the Bay-Friendly/Jersey-Friendly Stewardship Certification Program grant, in partnership with BBP.

8. (APO Item #5, Activity 8) Envirothon: The 2023 NJ Envirothon has been announced and will take place in-person, for one day (no overnight) on **Saturday, May 20**, at Camp Zehnder, in Wall Twp in Monmouth County. This year's theme is Changing Climate. Becky and OCSCD Staff, Rachel Hammack, are assisting with the creation of the Wildlife Station written-test.

9. (APO Item #5, Activity 9) Track Participants, evaluations, provide reports on E&O activities to District Director and Board: Becky maintains constant contact with District Director, Christine Raabe, and provides bi-monthly reports regarding all education activities to the OCSCD Board of Supervisors.

10. (APO Item #5, Activity 10) Jersey-Friendly Yards Conference & Webinars The Jersey-Friendly Yards Conference and Webinar committee has not yet convened in 2023.