

## April/May 2023, Bi-Monthly Education Report

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

May 18, 2023

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### April – May 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. Brittany compiled Report #10 and sent it to Craig McGee of Camden Soil Conservation District, who is the Project Leader of the grant.

### (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 attended 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](#).
  - Becky is on the CEC Retreat sub-committee. Planning is currently underway for the 2023 Education & Outreach Retreat, "Climate Change Education – a Catalyst for Change", on June 28, 9:30am-3:00pm at the Long Beach Twp Marine Field Station. Attendees will learn how Barnegat Bay research and restoration initiatives are addressing climate change. Highlighted programs include: New Jersey Bay

Island Initiative, Tuckerton Oyster Reef, and Diamondback Terrapins. Keynote Speaker will be Janice McDonnell of Rutgers University.

- 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 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](https://www.jerseyyards.org/certification-program/) is up-and-running. Becky has submitted the FY23 Report #3 (please see attached).
    - **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.

- OCSCD’s role is to implement and promote the Lakewood Township Stormwater Basin Retrofit Project, including education and outreach programs to bring awareness to the importance of the Basin Retrofit projects. Brittany Moore is the lead project coordinator on behalf of OCSCD and Becky Laboy is assisting. Brittany has submitted Report #10 (please see attached) to Craig McGee, Director of Camden County Soil Conservation District who is Project Leader for the grant.

**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 is currently writing a proposal for a small grant worth \$500 from the Soil Science Society of America, for educational equipment to support our programs.
- Becky also looks forward to collaborating with other organizations, agencies and District staff on application submittals and project implementation. Of note, Cape-Atlantic SCD now has a full-time Educator, Haley Jackson; 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 1,814 contacts on our "General List", with an additional 2,208 statewide education administrators (used for our Roundtable campaigns), totaling 4,026, of which, 999 are considered "most engaged". As of the writing of this Report, we had 25 new subscribers in the last 30 days. We have a 39% "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
- Although delayed, Becky is continues 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 partners**, and is involved in several 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.

- As listed under APO #3, Activity #5, Becky is on the **Barnegat Bay Partnership Retreat Planning subcommittee**. Planning is currently underway for the 2023 Education & Outreach Retreat, "Climate Change Education – a Catalyst for Change", on June 28, 9:30am-3:00pm at the Long Beach Twp Marine Field Station. Attendees will learn how Barnegat Bay research and restoration initiatives are addressing climate change. Highlighted programs include: New Jersey Bay Island Initiative, Tuckerton Oyster Reef, and Diamondback Terrapins. Keynote Speaker will be Janice McDonnell of Rutgers University.

**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 2<sup>nd</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup>. OCSCS staff anonymously selected one winner from each Grade Group. The two winners were anonymously presented to the Board at the March Board Meeting; the Board selected one poster to be the Grand Champion Winner. The Grand Champion Winner is Mia Faulkner, Grade 4, of Cedar Creek Elementary School. OCSCD awarded the Grand Champion Winner with a \$50 cash prize – a check was mailed. The contender was Landon DeRosa, Grade 3, Cedar Creek Elementary School. Both students received a letter and a certificate for their achievements. Both winning posters can be found on our [Annual NJ Conservation Poster Contest webpage](#). Both posters were photographed and the photos were submitted to the statewide contest. Statewide Winners have not yet been selected. Once statewide winners are selected, [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 26<sup>th</sup> **Annual Barnegat Bay Environmental Educators Roundtable** took place on **April 19, 2023**, at The Lighthouse Center for Natural Resource Education. Agenda, Exhibitors, Field Trips, Workshops and Keynote Speaker are all posted on the OCSCD website, on the [Barnegat Bay Environmental Educators Roundtable webpage](#). We had one of our best Roundtables to date! Many thanks to Dr. Bill Pollock for kindly providing the "Welcome" to our guests at the Roundtable. Thank you to our Board Treasurer, Mr. Gary Paxton, for registering and attending the BBEERT. Please see the attached Evaluations Summary.

**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)**
- **April 12:** Becky co-presented **Jersey-Friendly Yards Resident Certification Program** webinar with Karen Walzer, BBP, hosted by JCNERR as part of their afternoon "Lunch 'N Learn" series. This program will count towards fulfillment of requirements for the Bay-Friendly/Jersey-Friendly Stewardship Certification Program grant, in partnership with BBP. **(20 Attendees)**
- **April 23:** Becky presented an in-person program, **Jersey-Friendly Yards Resident Certification Program** at the Barnegat Library. This program will count towards fulfillment of requirements for the Bay-Friendly/Jersey-Friendly Stewardship Certification Program grant, in partnership with BBP. **(2 Attendees)**

**8. (APO Item #5, Activity 8) Envirothon:** The 2023 NJ Envirothon 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 created the Wildlife Station Written Test. Becky and OCSCD Staff, Rachel Hammack, will be proctoring the Wildlife Station, along with staff from other SCD's.

**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 reconvened. We are planning an in-person Conference for the fall of 2023!