

## June/July 2023, Bi-Monthly Education Report

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

July 20, 2023

Becky Laboy, M.Ed., Education Outreach Specialist

### June – July 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. *(See also, APO Item #5, Activity 1)*

- Becky maintains and updates the District website with Chapter 251 SESC-related information, Education & Outreach information, and general updates.
- In addition, Lisa Mazzuca of [On Your Mark Website Design and Graphics](#) is under contract with the District to provide website support, as needed.
- The Subaqueous Soils in the Barnegat Bay webpage was recently updated by Lisa Mazzuca, and is now the Coastal Zone Soil Survey Research page: <https://soildistrict.org/coastal-zone-soil-survey-research/>

#### **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. Becky, Brittany and Eileen Miller, Habitat Coordinator for South Jersey RC&D conducted a site visit of several basins on July 13. Brittany will be including a summary in her forthcoming Report.

### **(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 Barnegat Bay Partnership CEC Retreat on June 28. This full day PD focused on Climate Change Education.

#### **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 was a member of the CEC Retreat Planning sub-committee. The 2023 Education & Outreach Retreat took place on June 28, 9:30am-3:00pm at the Long Beach Twp Marine Field Station. It was very successful! The theme was “Climate Change Education – a Catalyst for Change”. Keynote Speaker, Janice McDonnell of Rutgers University, presented on the NJ Climate Change Standards. Guest presenter Kimberly McKenna, Executive Director of the Stockton Coastal Research Center discussed the New Jersey Bay Islands Initiative (NJBII) and specifically focused on the Bay Island Restoration Project (BIRP) tool. Attendees learned how Barnegat Bay research and restoration initiatives are addressing climate change, and how educators can introduce these ideas and concepts to their students. Two field-based components included a visit to Clam Cove where attendees learned about nesting requirements for Diamondback Terrapins and the effects of climate and human infrastructure on their habitat (the afternoon group witnessed a female terrapin laying eggs!), and they also learned about Dr. Tom Herrington’s work on monitoring coastal system changes due to storm surge and wave impacts, due to climate change. At the Field Station, attendees learned about human-made nest enclosures for Diamondback Terrapins and the monitoring that is taking place, and Dr. Christine Thompson’s work with oyster restoration habitat monitoring in the Barnegat Bay.
- 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. Becky has submitted the FY23 Report #4 (please see attached). BBP received an extension on this grant; it will continue until September 6, 2023.
    - [Jersey-Friendly Yards Certification Program website](#)
    - **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, Becky and Eileen Miller, Habitat Coordinator for South Jersey RC&D monitored the basins on July 13, information regarding this visit will be embedded in the next quarterly Grant Report; a copy will be provided to the Board.

## **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 submitted a proposal for a small grant worth \$500 from the Soil Science Society of America, for educational equipment to support our programs. Unfortunately, this proposal was not funded.
- Becky attended a webinar to learn about the Regional Conservation Partnership Program Grant on June 7. OCSCD will not be submitting an application.

## **(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 1,808 contacts on our "General List", with an additional 2,212 statewide education administrators (used for our Roundtable campaigns), totaling 4,020, of which, 1025 are considered "most engaged". As of the writing of this Report, we had 2 new subscribers in the last 30 days. We have a 45% "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 continues to work 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.

**3. (APO Item #5, Activity 3) Poster Contest:** Please OCSCD's [Annual NJ Conservation Poster Contest webpage](#) to see our 2023 winners. Winning posters were photographed and the photos were submitted to the statewide contest. Statewide Winners have been 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 continues searching for grants to support funding to print additional LML Guides.

**5. (APO Item #5, Activity 5) Barnegat Bay Environmental Educators Roundtable:** Planning for the 27th Annual Barnegat Bay Environmental Educators Roundtable is underway. A Steering Committee convened on June 15 to discuss dates, theme, topics and early promotion of the event. An additional meeting will be scheduled for August.

**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)**
- **July 25:** Becky will be presenting in an in-person program, **The Soils of Burlington County and the Plants That Thrive Here**, to the Southwest Chapter of the Native Plant Society of New Jersey.
- **July 27:** Becky will be presenting an in-person program, **Jersey-Friendly Yards Resident Certification Program** at the Little Egg Harbor Environmental Commission.

**8. (APO Item #5, Activity 8) Envirothon:** The 2023 NJ Envirothon took place in-person, for one day (no overnight) on **Saturday, May 20**, at Camp Zehnder, in Wall Twp in Monmouth County. (This was two days after our May Board Meeting.) This year's theme was **Changing Climate**. Becky created the Wildlife Station Written Test. Becky and OCSCD Staff, Rachel Hammack, proctored the Wildlife Station, along with staff from other SCD's. The winner of the 2023 NJ Envirothon was MATES of Ocean County. Congratulations to our Hometown Heroes! An article hailing their achievements was posted on [OCSCD's Blog](#) and included in [OCSCD's June 2023 newsletter](#).

**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 committee has announced a "Save-the-Date" for in-person Conference for Saturday, September 30, from 8:30am-12:00pm followed by a native plant sale from 12:00-2:00pm. The theme is "Changing Climate, Changing Yards". Featured speakers will include Dr. Christopher Obrupta, Extension Specialist in Water Resources, Rutgers Cooperative Extension, and Christopher Miller, Manager/Agronomist, New Jersey Plant Materials Center, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service. More information will be available on the [Jersey-Friendly Yards website](#).



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[www.SoilDistrict.org](http://www.SoilDistrict.org)

TO: Karen Walzer, Public Outreach Coordinator  
Barnegat Bay Partnership

FROM: Becky Laboy, Education Outreach Specialist

Re: BBP/OCSCD Subcontract, Part 2: "Bay-Friendly" Stewardship Certification Program (BFSCP)  
P.O. 009753A1  
Account Number: 22-3-3-27180-71210  
Progress Report FY23 #4: April 01, 2023 – June 30, 2023

Date: July 7, 2023

**Secondary Project Goal:**

The secondary goal of the project is to implement the ***Jersey-Friendly Stewardship Certification Program*** by enrolling participants and providing guidance and assistance for meeting program standards and becoming certified.

**Project Objective 4:** Enroll certification program participants and implement projects to **assist them with becoming Bay-Friendly certified.**

**Task 2.** Enroll 2 to 3 watershed municipalities in the Municipal Stewardship Certification Program and **provide assistance with implementation of projects that meet program standards.**

Assistance is being provided to these enrolled municipalities: Pine Beach Borough and Point Pleasant Borough. During this reporting quarter, OCSCD has been in communication with project leaders from both municipalities and has offered support in several ways.

**Pine Beach:**

Municipalities are required to complete 2 Project Actions. As indicated in the previous Report, Pine Beach project coordinators, Dave McKeon and Justine Saxton identified Project Action F as one of their Project Actions – "Implement your plan to control invasive plant species on a municipal property." They identified "Pocket Park" as their municipal property. Pocket Park is a small neighborhood park that was created several years ago by residents. The park has since overgrown with English Ivy and other invasive species. The Pine Beach project leaders decided to implement both mechanical and chemical strategies to remove and eradicate tenacious English Ivy and other invasives from this neighborhood park.

During this Reporting Period, invasive species were removed by both chemical and mechanical methods. In addition, the garden bed area of Pocket Park has been expanded and is being prepared for planting of native plants.





Photos: (L) English Ivy has been killed and will be removed from the tree it was strangling. (R) The area in front of the woodlands was cleared of invasive species and will become part of the native plant garden.

#### Point Pleasant Borough:

Becky Laboy, Education Outreach Specialist, OCSCD, worked with Karen Walzer and Point Pleasant Garden Club leader, Kelly Noto, to source and order materials and plants for the Club's new pollinator garden, called "Pollinator Point". The garden was implemented on May 20. Members planted over 160 individual plants consisting of 30 different species. Small signs were installed near a representative of each species, indicating the scientific and common names, the plant's preferred growing conditions, the pollinators the plant attracts, and a QR code that connects to the Plant Details webpage on the [Jersey-Friendly Yards Plant Database](#). A pathway made of pavers overlaying stone dust winds through the garden, which is bordered on one side by a new fence.



Photos: (L) Native plants installed at Pollinator Point garden, (M) pavers installed in the garden, (R) plant labels installed that indicate the plant's scientific and common name, growing conditions, pollinators supported and a QR code connecting to the Jersey-Friendly Yards Plant Database.

*Healthy Soil is at the Root of Everything!*



**Task 3:** Enroll 2-3 watershed schools in the School Stewardship Certification Program and **provide assistance with implementation of projects that meet program standards.**

### **Brick Township High School:**

School Certification requirements were reviewed with Mr. Gary Paxton, Brick Twp High School STEM teacher. A pollinator garden was installed in the Brick Twp High School Courtyard with a goal of deterring soil erosion caused by two downspouts, to attract and support pollinators and wildlife, and to beautify school grounds. Becky Laboy and Jessica Pinto, OCSCD, subcontractor Eileen Miller, NJ Healthy Landscapes, worked with Karen Walzer and Bailey Sanders, BBP, and Brick Twp High School teacher, Gary Paxton, to provide technical assistance regarding soil erosion control and to source and order materials and plants for the Brick Township High School pollinator garden. The garden was installed by Mr. Paxton and his STEM students on June 1, with assistance from Eileen Miller and Becky Laboy. Signs for the garden and plants were discussed.



Photos: (L) Before and (R) After photos of the Brick Twp High School garden site. Before, water from the downspouts were causing soil erosion on the sloped area of the courtyard. After, students engineered channels for the water to disperse and dissipate through the newly installed pollinator garden.

*Healthy Soil is at the Root of Everything!*

## Pinelands Regional High School:

School Certification requirements were reviewed with Mr. Jim Ardoin, Pinelands Regional High School Honors Ecology teacher. Becky Laboy and Jessica Pinto, OCSCD, worked with Karen Walzer and Bailey Sanders, BBP, to support implementation of Step 6A: Learn about the benefits of native plants. Mr. Ardoin's 3 Ecology classes were provided a native plant walk where numerous plants growing in their woodlands and bogs were identified and their benefits discussed. On June 1, Mr. Ardoin's ecology classes hosted "Pinelands Bogs Open House". Student leader volunteers organized educational stations around the campus for visiting students from Bordentown Regional Middle School. Plans for the culminating project were put in motion - to create an interpretive trail to highlight the key concepts in the 8 Steps to a Jersey-Friendly School Yard using the soil test information, water-based activities and student-generated nature-based artwork completed this past Reporting Period. This trail will be a key educational component of future "Pinelands Bog Open House" events.



Photos: (L) Pinelands Regional Ecology classes were provided a native plant walk through the school's woodlands and bogs, where they learned to identify several native plants that could be planted within a home landscape, and discussed their benefits to people and wildlife.

### **Task 4: Provide a total of 12 workshops for watershed residents about how to join the Bay-Friendly resident network and about stewardship actions they can implement at home.**

OCSCD assisted BBP with providing 3 presentations for residents about the Bay-Friendly Resident Certification Program and how to use the resources and tools of the Jersey-Friendly Yards website to implement landscaping BMPs at home.

- **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. **(20 Attendees)**
- **April 20:** Becky presented an in-person program, **Jersey-Friendly Yards Resident Certification Program** for the Women's Connection Group at the Clarion Hotel. **(50 Attendees)**
- **April 26:** Becky presented an in-person program, **Jersey-Friendly Yards Resident Certification Program** at the Barnegat Library. **(2 Attendees)**