

October/November 2023, Bi-Monthly Education Report

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

November 16, 2023

Becky Laboy, M.Ed., Education Outreach Specialist

October – November 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.

2. (APO Item #1, Activity 17 and Sub-Task)

- Becky researches and supports funding opportunities for District Technical Staff to be trained in non-SESC programs and projects.
- 2nd Sub-Task, #4, SJRC&D, 319h Basin Retrofit Grant - Lakewood: Becky and Brittany Moore are working together on the Lakewood Stormwater Basin Retrofit Grant 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.

3. (APO Item #3, Activity 5) Becky serves as OCSCD representative member of the Barnegat Bay Partnership's Communication and Education Committee (CEC)

- Becky now serves as the CEC co-chair. Becky is working with CEC Chair Joel Mott, NJ Pinelands Commission, and Karen Walzer, Senior Public Outreach Coordinator, BBP, on the goals and objectives for future CEC meetings.
- 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: The shared services agreement for: Part 2 - Bay-Friendly Yards was concluded on September 6, 2023. *(Please see APO Item #4, Activity 1 for more details on the Final Report.)*

(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)

- The subcontract with Barnegat Bay Partnership for the Bay-Friendly Stewardship Certification Project (3 year contract) **concluded on September 6, 2023.**
 - Jersey-Friendly Yards webpages: [Jersey-Friendly Yards Certification Program website](https://www.jerseyyards.org/certification-program/)
 - **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/>



Photo: October 17, 2023, Teacher Gary Paxton, Becky Laboy (OCSCD), Karen Walzer (BBP) and Bailey Sanders (BBP) admiring Brick Twp. High School's new Jersey-Friendly Pollinator Garden in fall blooming colors!

Grant 2: Lakewood Township Stormwater Basins Retrofit Project

OCSCD is partnering with South Jersey Resource Conservation and Development Council (SJRC&D), 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 (NJDEP) to 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 and focusing primarily on the communications and education component. Read Ms. Moore's most recent [blog post](#).

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 and opportunities that will support the District's Mission.

- Becky submitted a proposal to the EPA Region 2 Environmental Education grant, on November 7. The project is titled: *Cultivating Resilient Communities: Understanding Soil as a Climate Mitigation Tool*. OCSCD's proposal was submitted in partnership with Natural Resource Education Foundation of New Jersey (NREF) and New Jersey Resources (NJR). The full Work Plan is attached. The brief Project Description states:

Cultivating Resilient Communities: Understanding Soil as a Climate Mitigation Tool empowers underserved Title I communities in Ocean County, New Jersey, fostering teacher expertise, climate-smart students, and community engagement. Our project employs a multi-focused approach to emphasize the role of soil as a powerful and dynamic resource for addressing climate-related issues, leading to student development of soil-based climate resilience (SBCR) projects. Professional development workshops, student field trips, and our culminating community-wide Student Summit are the cornerstones of our project. Workshops serve as fertile ground where 40 high school teachers grow their climate literacy. Educators are equipped with innovative instructional methods focused on local climate challenges and soil-driven solutions, using hands-on place-based interactive strategies and activities. Empowered teachers become vital catalysts in shaping ~1,000 climate-smart students. Field trips provide immersive experiences for ~500 students, who become rooted in their understanding of soil-based climate resilience practices by witnessing them firsthand. Collaboration with community leaders ensures an ecosystem of support towards a collective effort to drive behavioral changes and advocate for local climate resilience actions. A culminating Student Summit offers ~500 students the opportunity to share their climate resilience projects with the community. At the heart of our initiative lies the inspiring Lighthouse Center, a beacon of environmental innovation, where real-life examples come to the fore. Here, a living shoreline project stands as a testament to soil's ability to control erosion and absorb floodwater. Sustainable landscaping projects showcase their role in carbon sequestration and water filtration. Habitat restoration initiatives demonstrate the power of stabilized soil in support of biodiversity. Workshops, field trips and the Student Summit all take place at the Lighthouse Center. This project lays the foundation for a sustainable future.

(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. Sub-Task: update/create/maintain database & mailing list/contact for E&O initiatives. Constant Contact – Dissemination of email newsletters/updates, announcements, etc.

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 in OCSD's newsletter.

- OCSCD's [website](#)

- Constant Contact: Becky keeps an updated list of contacts in the District's Constant Contact database.
- [Newsletters](#) continue to be distributed monthly through our Constant Contact platform, typically on the first day of the month, to our audience of 1,713 contacts on our "General List".
 - [October newsletter](#)
 - [November newsletter](#)
- [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 promoted through 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](#) and [Instagram](#), conveniently through the Constant Contact platform. Constant Contact no longer supports Twitter ("X").
- For access to all our social media and project links, visit the "[Connect](#)" page on our website
- Becky continues to work with OCSCD staff on the [OCSCD Annual Report](#), highlighting the many projects, programs and partnerships with which the District staff are engaged. Publication of the OCSCD Annual Report covering 2023 and 2022 is anticipated for January 1st, 2024.

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 and the New Jersey Bay Islands Initiative.

- Becky is representing OCSCD at the monthly New Jersey Bay Islands Initiative (NJBII) "Communications Working Group". Becky and Kristin Adams also attend monthly online meetings with all NJBII partners and constituents.

3. (APO Item #5, Activity 3) Poster Contest: Visit OCSCD's [Annual NJ Conservation Poster Contest webpage](#) to see our 2023 winners. [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 Teacher Survey is being compiled to capture teacher's thoughts, opinions and ideas regarding logistics, theme, etc... for the 27th BBEERT.

6. (APO Item #5, Activity 6) Internship & Volunteer Opportunities and Agreements: The District has no education 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 12:** Becky co-presented with Karen Walzer (BBP) and Eileen Miller (under subcontract with OCSCD for JFY) an in-person program, **New Jersey Soil Health Assessment** for the Point Pleasant Garden Club, local officials and the general public. **(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 presented 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. **(30 Attendees)**
- **July 27:** Becky presented an in-person program, **Jersey-Friendly Yards Resident Certification Program** at the Little Egg Harbor Environmental Commission and the attending public. **(15 Attendees)**
- **August 17:** Becky co-presented with Jessica Pinto, Karen Walzer (BBP) and Bailey Sanders (BBP) at the JCNERR Teachers on the Estuary TOTE professional development program. Together, we introduced the teachers to the **Jersey-Friendly Yards School Certification Program** and provided an example lesson on Step 2: Start With Healthy Soil. **(15 Attendees)**
- **September 21:** Becky presented **Jersey-Friendly Yards: Landscaping for a Healthy Environment** for the NJ Pinelands Commission. **(35 Attendees)**
- **September 30: Jersey-Friendly Yards Conference** – the JFY Conference Planning Committee (Christine Raabe, Becky Laboy, Karen Walzer, Bailey Sanders, Steve Yergeau, Susan Servidio) will be facilitating their annual [JFY conference](#). **(98 Attendees)**
- **October 3:** Becky provided an outreach program at Pinelands Regional High School for 3 “Barrens to Bay” classes, focusing on local soil series along the Gifford’s Creek Trail for Jim Ardoin’s students (Participant in the Jersey-Friendly Yards School Certification Pilot Program). Holes were dug and soil samples were collected for Downer, Manahawkin and Lakehurst soil series. **(55 Students)**
- **October 10:** Becky provided follow-up outreach program at Pinelands Regional High School for 3 “Barrens to Bay” classes. Downer and Lakehurst soil samples were sieved to determine texture, NPK and pH testing conducted. **(55 Students)**
- **October 17:** Becky accompanied Karen Walzer and Bailey Sanders of BBP to Brick Township High School (participant in the Jersey-Friendly Yards School Certification Pilot Program) to see the garden, present the new plant ID signs, and provide a lesson about Fall Gardens for Birds and Wildlife. (JFY Step 7: Wildlife Habitat) **(5 Students)**
- **October 26:** Becky provided an outreach program for Southern Regional High School for “Barrens to Beaches” class. Presented overview of a soil profile. Walked a school trail and dug a hole to explore Downer soil. Collected soil sample to dry for an upcoming follow-up. **(16 Students)**
- **November 8:** Becky presented “Trees and Shrubs for a Winter Wildlife Garden” to Stafford Township Garden Club. Shared information about Jersey-Friendly Yards Municipal Certification Program. **(14 Attendees)**

8. (APO Item #5, Activity 8) Envirothon: The 2024 National Envirothon “Current Issue” topic has been announced: *Renewable Energy for a Sustainable Future*. The NJ Envirothon committee will be convening before the end of the year. Please visit [OCSCD’s Envirothon webpage](#) for more information as it becomes available.

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 facilitated their 2023 annual [JFY conference](#) on Saturday, September 30, from 8:30am-12:00pm followed by a native plant sale from 12:00-2:00pm. The theme was “Changing Climate, Changing Yards”. Featured speakers included 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.



Jersey-Friendly Yards Conference, September 30, 2023, Ocean County Soil Conservation District exhibit, R-L: Becky Laboy, Education Outreach Coordinator, Mike Gross, Secretary, Board of Supervisors, Liam McBride, Intern, Mary Ellen Banfield, Office Manager.