

February-March 2024, Bi-Monthly Education Report

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

March 18, 2024

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February – March, 2024 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 continues to champion 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 OCSCD technical staff on the **Lakewood Township Stormwater Basin Retrofit Project**, is an active partner in the **New Jersey Bay Islands Initiative**, and offers support to the **South Jersey Resource Conservation & Development Council** (SJRC&D). 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 #3, Activity 1 and 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. We are moving forward with plans to execute the education component of the grant. Becky regularly attends the SJRC&D meetings.

(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.

- 1st Sub-Task, Becky develops an annual Individual Professional Development Plan, and reviews it with Christine Raabe, District Director.

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 Bailey Sanders, Stewardship Specialist, 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 between OCSCD and BBP in support of Jersey-Friendly Yards / watershed stewardship was renewed on February 12, 2024, for a period of one year. (See APO Item #4, Activity 1.)

(APO Item #4) EDUCATION INITIATIVES – GRANT RELATED

1. (APO Item #4, Activity 1) Becky continues to seek and expand granted projects when opportunities arise.

Grant 1: Jersey-Friendly Yards (subcontract with Barnegat Bay Partnership 2/12/24 – 2/12/25)

- A new one year subcontract for the Jersey-Friendly Stewardship Certification Project was signed with Barnegat Bay Partnership. The one year term takes place from February 12, 2024 – February 12, 2025. Compensation is for up to \$15,000. The scope of responsibilities includes: 1) develop and deliver age appropriate lessons and activities on soil health and other JFY topics to participating students in at least 10 enrolled schools. Lessons and activities must be designed to assist schools with meeting the requirements of the JFY School Certification Program. 2) Provide technical advice and support to at least 5 enrolled schools about the design and installation of JFY School Certification Program projects in their schoolyards; advise on issues related to soil health, plant selection, and wildlife habitat enhancement. OCSCD will provide a total of \$15,000 of in-kind services to this project over the term of the subcontract.

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.

- Becky and Brittany Moore are in the process of developing education and outreach programs to bring awareness to the importance of the Basin Retrofit projects, with the assistance of Craig McGee, Camden SCD and Eileen Miller, Team Habitat Coordinator. 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.

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.

- We are still waiting to hear about the status of the grant proposal Becky submitted 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).
- Jessica Pinto applied for, and received, a Xerces Society Pollinator Kit to create a pollinator garden at Common Ground community garden in Lakewood Township. Additional partners on this project include Lakewood Township Public Works and Brick Township Municipal Utilities Authority.

(APO Item #5) EDUCATION INITIATIVES

1. (APO Item #5, Activity 1) Becky maintains and enhances OCSCD’s website to more effectively utilize and disseminate pertinent and educational resources and assist in fulfilling OCSCD Mission.

- Sub-Task: Becky maintains the communications database & mailing/contact list for E&O initiatives. Constant Contact is the tool used to disseminate newsletters/updates, announcements, etc.

Communications: Website, Newsletter, Blog, 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".
 - [February newsletter](#)
 - [March 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.
- [2022-2023 Annual Report](#): has been published and is available on our website. This Report captures both the technical and educational accomplishments of the past two years.
- 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

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 \(NJBI\)](#) "Communications Working Group". Becky and Kristin Adams also attend monthly online meetings with all NJBI partners and constituents.

3. (APO Item #5, Activity 3) Poster Contest: The topic for the 2024 Poster Contest has been announced: "**May The Forest Be With You, Always**". The Posters Contest is announced on OCSCD's [Annual NJ Conservation Poster Contest webpage](#) and will be communicated with the public through our newsletter.

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: The date of the [27th Annual Barnegat Bay Environmental Educators Roundtable](#) has been announced. Please mark your calendars for **Wednesday, April 17**. The 27th Roundtable will follow timing and logistics of past years. This year's theme is "Sustainable Connections", as proposed by the Ocean County Clean Communities staff at the OC Department of Solid Waste Management. All workshops and field trips have been confirmed. Our keynote presenter is Shaina Brenner, 2022 Milken Educator Award recipient. Please visit our BBEERT webpage for details.

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) Becky offers a variety of Outreach Programs based on soil health & natural resources to various groups/organizations; at least 12 per year.

In 2024, Becky has presented:

- **March 8:** Becky presented "**Soils of the Pines**" workshop for the **Pinelands Short Course**, and set-up a table exhibit. The event was hosted by the NJ Pinelands Commission, and took place at Stockton University. **(25 workshop attendees, over 500 event attendees)**

8. (APO Item #5, Activity 8) Envirothon: The NJ Envirothon will take place on Saturday, May 18, at Big Brook Park in Marlboro. The 2024 National Envirothon "Current Issue" topic has been announced: *Renewable Energy for a Sustainable Future*. Please visit the [NJ Envirothon](#) website and [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 JFY Conference committee met to on February 28 to discuss the 2024 Conference. Details are yet to be determined.