

February-March 2025, Bi-Monthly Education Report

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

March 20, 2025

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February-March 2025 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.
- 2nd Sub-Task, #4, SJRC&D, 319h Basin Retrofit Grant - Lakewood: The LTSBRP team is planning a Program & Tour of the Lakewood Township Stormwater Basins Retrofit Project. The LTSBRP team will be sending out invitations to partners, municipalities, and public works leader and employees, to join us on Tuesday June 3, from 9:00am-12:00pm, at the Lakewood Township Department of Public Works for a PPT introduction to our Stormwater Basin Retrofit Project, followed by a bus tour of 3 retrofitted basins and one pollinator garden.

(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, including: New Jersey State Active Shooter Response Training 2025, Annual Cybersecurity Awareness Training 2025, New Jersey State Domestic Violence Policy Training 2025, New Jersey State Policy Prevention of Discrimination and Harassment in the Workplace Training 2025, New Jersey State Policy Prohibiting Discrimination in the Workplace Written Policy 2025, and New Jersey State Workplace Violence: Recognize, Prevent and Report Training 2025.

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

- Becky serves as the CEC Co-Chair for the current term. Becky is working with CEC Chair Joel Mott, NJ Pinelands Commission, Nina Sassano, Associate Director of Outreach, BBP, and Bailey Sanders, Stewardship Specialist, BBP, on the goals and objectives of the CEC Communication & Education Plan.
- 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](#). As CEC Co-Chair, Becky attends BBP Advisory Committee Meetings.
 - Sub-Task: The shared services agreement between OCSCD and BBP in support of Jersey-Friendly Yards has been extended to the end of the school year in 2025, in order to complete the many tasks outlined in the service agreement. (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)

- Becky is devoting time towards the BBP/OCSCD subcontract, "Jersey-Friendly Stewardship Certification Project". Tasks include: 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 are 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 billable services and \$15,000 of in-kind services to this project over the term of the subcontract.
 - Becky submitted Report #4 for the reporting quarter: October 1 – December 31, 2024.
 - During the most recent reporting quarter, Becky participated in site visits to Manchester Elementary School, Toms River South High School, and Jackson Liberty High School to assess potential areas for culminating garden projects. Becky also provided age-appropriate outreach programs to Central Regional High School, Pinelands Regional High School, and Toms River South Elementary School, introducing students to local soil series and conducting particle size analyses of various soil samples.

Grant 2: Lakewood Township Stormwater Basins Retrofit Project

OCSCD is partnering with South Jersey Resource Conservation and Development Council (SJRC&D) represented by Eileen Miller, Team Habitat Coordinator, the Camden County Soil Conservation District represented by Craig McGee, Director, and Lakewood Township Department of Public Works, 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. Brittany Moore is the lead project coordinator on behalf of OCSCD and Becky Laboy is focusing primarily on the communications and education component. Jessica Pinto, Erosion Control Specialist, has also been attending meetings and is offering her time to support this project. As reported above, Lakewood Twp Stormwater Basin Retrofit team is planning a Program & Tour of the Lakewood Township Stormwater Basins Retrofit Project. The LTSBRP team will be sending out invitations to partners, municipalities, and public works leader and employees, to join us on Tuesday June 3, from 9:00am-12:00pm, at the Lakewood Township Department of Public Works for a PPT introduction to our Stormwater Basin Retrofit Project, followed by a bus tour of 3 retrofitted basins and one pollinator garden.

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 is currently looking into [NJ NRCS FY2025 Community Gardens Farm Grant Opportunity](#), and [NACD Urban and Community Conservation Grant](#).

(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 1,648 contacts on our "General List". OCSCD's monthly newsletter has been officially named: **Conservation Conversation** and now includes "branding" through the use of the specific colors within OCSCD's logo. The content of each newsletter will focus on the District's 3 major goals: regulation, education and stewardship: **REGULATE, EDUCATE, ACTIVATE**. These changes to the Newsletter can be seen in the December 2024 issue, as well as in the 2024 Annual Report.
- In 2024 OCSCD published **12** monthly issues of our Newsletter to our list of 1,648 contacts signed-up on our "General List" to receive it.
 - [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.
- The [2024 Annual Report](#) has been published and is available on our website. This Report captures both the technical and educational accomplishments of 2024.
- 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](#).
- 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 Partnership's Communication and Education Committee (CEC), Jersey-Friendly Yards and the New Jersey Bay Islands Initiative.

- Becky Laboy and Kristin Adams represent OCSCD for the [New Jersey Bay Islands Initiative \(NJBII\)](#) and attend the monthly online meetings with all NJBII partners and constituents, led by Virginia Rettig, Edwin B. Forsythe NWR Manager, USFW.
- Becky is representing OCSCD on the NJBII Communications Working Group ("Press Team"), who meets once a month. The Press Team develop educational materials to highlight the work of the NJBII.

3. (APO Item #5, Activity 3) Poster Contest: The 2025 Conservation Poster Contest theme is "**Home is Where the Habitat Is**". OCSCD has promoted the Contest in our February and March Newsletters. Due date for all posters is March 6. All posters received will be judged by District staff, who will select First Place Winning Posters for each Grade Group. The Board will select the Grand Champion Winner. The Grand Champion Winner will be awarded a \$50 prize by OCSCD. First Place Winners will receive a congratulatory letter and a certificate of recognition from the District. All winners for the 2025 Poster Contest will be available for viewing on OCSCD's [Annual NJ Conservation Poster Contest webpage](#).

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: Registration for the 28th Annual Barnegat Bay Environmental Educators Roundtable is now open! The 2025 Roundtable will take place on **Wednesday, April 16, 3:00pm-8:00pm**. Our theme is: "**Caring for Our Precious Natural Resources: Considering Conservation, Climate and Community**". This year we are offering four 1-hour workshops and four 2-hour Field Experiences. Our Keynote Speakers will be Julianna Cofinas, a recent Kean University graduate who will present her project on soils; and Nicholas Guerriero, a current Stockton University student who will present his information on shellfish. Becky has

updated OCSCD's website to showcase all programs offered, as well as exhibitors and our keynote speakers. Please visit our [BBEERT webpage](#) to view information and a Gallery of Photos of last year's [27th Annual Barnegat Bay Environmental Educators Roundtable](#).

6. (APO Item #5, Activity 6) Internship & Volunteer Opportunities and Agreements: The Education Department does not have an intern 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.

2025 E&O programs, workshops and events:

- **Jan 10:** Becky and Dr. Pollock exhibited at the Connected Leadership Conference at Ocean County College, under the direction of Dr. Christine McCoid, of Point Peasant Schools. **(150 of attendees)**
- **Jan 16:** Becky provided a Soils program to the Environmental Club at Central Regional High School (Jersey-Friendly Yards Subcontract). **(30 students)**
- **Jan 27:** Site visit to Toms River South High School (Jersey-Friendly Yards Subcontract).
- **Feb 3:** Introduction to the JFY School Certification Program presented to Jackson Liberty High School; plus site visit (Jersey-Friendly Yards Subcontract). **(45 students)**
- **Feb 4:** Soils program provided to Pinelands Regional High School Period 1 (Jersey-Friendly Yards Subcontract). **(20 students)**
- **Feb 6:** Soils program provided to Pinelands Regional High School Period 11 (Jersey-Friendly Yards Subcontract). **(20 students)**
- **Feb 10:** Soils program provided to Toms River South Elementary School (Jersey-Friendly Yards Subcontract). **(25 students)**
- **Feb 26:** Training Workshop for JFY volunteers to assist with education in the classroom. **(6 participants)**
- **March 8:** Pinelands Short Course – “Exploring Soils of the Pines” indoor/outdoor program, Stockton University

8. (APO Item #5, Activity 8) Envirothon: Planning for the 2025 NJ Envirothon is underway. The location will be the Burlington County Soil Conservation District grounds, in Columbus. The 2025 theme is: *Roots and Resiliency: Fostering Forest Stewardship in a Canopy of Change*. Becky will co-coordinate the Wildlife Station with Holly Reynolds from Freehold Soil Conservation District. Please visit the [NCF-Envirothon \(Nationals\)](#) website, [NJ Envirothon](#) website and [OCSCD's Envirothon webpage](#) for more information.

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 Outreach, Webinars, Conference:
(Please see APO Item #5, Activity 7)