



ANDROSCOGGIN VALLEY SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

DISTRICT NEWS

"MAKING CONSERVATION WORK FOR YOU"

Partners Use Conservation District's Assistance



Jeff and Ann Nelson participate in Cathance River Survey

It has been exciting for the District to see groups partnering together to look at conservation issues. Students from Morse High School's environmental classes, Bowdon College and local volunteers gathered on Friday, October 19th at the Bath Water District Treatment plant to conduct a rapid stream corridor survey of Nequasset Stream.

The survey was conducted under the auspices of the Maine Department of Environmental Protection's (DEP) Stream Team Program and is part of the on-going effort of the Nequasset Lake Stakeholders group to gather information, provide education and help protect the Nequasset Lake watershed. It provided an opportunity for volunteers to learn about basic stream ecology and how land use practices can affect water quality, aquatic habitat and streambank stability. The Conservation District assisted by offering the volunteers training before and as they walked or canoed

pre-determined reaches of the stream with their leaders. Observations about in-stream and near-stream habitat as well as stability conditions were recorded and a report will be completed using the information gathered.

The Conservation District completed a Nequasset Lake Watershed survey in 2007, and will begin a Watershed Implementation Project with funding from the 319 Clean Water Act later this fall.

Earlier this summer the Conservation District assisted with a rapid stream corridor assessment on the Cathance River led by the DEP Stream Team. Partners in the effort included the Cathance River Educational Association, Brunswick-Topsham Land Trust, Town of Topsham, and other volunteers. This stream team had the most volunteers participating ever recorded.

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Androscoggin Valley SWCD

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The mission of the Androscoggin Valley Soil and Water Conservation District is to promote the conservation and stewardship of soil, water, and related natural resources, by providing leadership, technical assistance and educational programming to and with the citizens of Androscoggin and Sagadahoc Counties.

Conservation District Is Starting to Develop Two Programs

Groundwater Protection Program

Androscoggin Valley Soil and Water Conservation District has entered into a partnership with the Maine Department of Health and Human Services, Maine Drinking Water Program, to develop and test a program that will provide education, outreach and assistance to farms and other large landowners in public water supply protection areas.

The goals are to sustain agricultural land use, preserve open space, maintain water quality and availability and provide continued public water supply protection. Methods used to achieve these goals could include implementing or improving conservation management practices that will protect groundwater as well as entering into conservation agreements and/or conservation easements. Conservation practices and goals will be individualized to meet the needs and circumstances of the landowner.

The program will begin in Androscoggin and Sagadahoc Counties this fall. After development of educational materials and outreach, two to three landowners will be selected to participate in the program on a voluntary basis, based primarily on their location and their eligibility for USDA or other program funding. The District continues to actively search for additional funding sources that may be applied to the project, in order to increase incentives to participate in the program.

It is anticipated that after successful completion of the pilot, a state-wide program will be established. Towards that end, the District is also developing a training package for technical assistance providers and will make recommendations for the next steps upon conclusion of the pilot.

Both of these pilot programs will involve many partners. Within the state government, the District will be working with the Departments of Agriculture, Health and Human Services and Environmental Protection. Other partners include USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, USDA Time and Tide Resource Conservation and Development, Maine Association of Conservation Districts, University of Southern Maine, Maine Rural Partners, Maine Rural Water Association, Farm Energy Partners Network, and landowners.

For more information call Project Manager Sue Gammon at (207) 753-9400 ext 404.

A Carbon Credit Program

Androscoggin Valley Soil and Water Conservation District has also received a USDA/Natural Resources Conservation Service Conservation Innovation Grant. USDA Time and Tide Resource Conservation and Development served as the sponsor. This grant is for a pilot program to develop a soils carbon baseline database.

The baseline is necessary for the establishment of a soils carbon credit program in the state. A carbon credit program will allow farmers and other landowners to participate in a voluntary market, selling carbon offset credits on the Chicago Climate Exchange or through another entity.

The pilot program will be started in Androscoggin and Sagadahoc Counties. Though the program begins in these two counties, it is intended to be a state-wide initiative, beginning with education and outreach this fall once this pilot phase is completed.

Information gathered will be used to model existing carbon stores. Once the baseline is established, management practices increasing carbon will be modeled. The difference between the two, or net carbon gain, can be used as a credit or offset and sold to companies that need to reduce their carbon dioxide emissions.

A carbon credit program has the potential to provide extra income to landowners who wish to implement conservation practices that will increase carbon storage. Additional co-benefits of the program will include reduction in harm to water quality, the maintenance of open space and land productivity and protection of wildlife.

An Update From Our District Conservationist

USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) offers many programs to interested landowners or operators to provide assistance in conservation planning and financial assistance for the installation of practices. Any interested landowners or operators are encouraged to call Autumn or Paul at (207) 753-9400 x3.

It is nearly the end of the field season here in Maine. This coming year will bring many changes. A new Farm Bill is being drafted in Congress and we will hopefully see it for the spring season. The new Farm Bill will bring many changes to our programs and operations. Until things get settled, we have included a list of some of the programs we currently do offer. It is always best to give us a call if you have questions or need assistance, even if you do not think you would fit into any of these programs.

Through the **Conservation Technical Assistance Program**, NRCS staff provides landowner assistance for a variety of resource concerns including comprehensive nutrient management planning assistance for landowners and operators of animal feeding operations, grazing land management assistance, vegetable crop assistance, and even farm road erosion assessment. Call the office and ask for our Planning Assistance Request Form (it is only one page!) to help us document your need and begin the process to schedule a visit to your farm. This program allows us to bring our technical knowledge out to your farm free of charge to help solve resource problems in a way that will fit into how you manage your farm.

The **Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)** offers financial assistance for a wide variety of conservation practices designed to reduce non-point source pollution, soil erosion and sedimentation deposits, as well as to improve or enhance productivity and agricultural sustainability through a variety of grazing and crop land practices.

Maine NRCS is now offering the practice "**Prescribed Forestry**" through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP). This practice offering will

provide an incentive payment to qualified landowners who, with assistance from a Maine-licensed forester, prepare a plan to manage their forestland and conserve natural resources.



Landowners with forestland can manage their forest resources in a more sustainable way by having a prescribed forestry plan. With the EQIP Prescribed Forestry Plan Incentive, selected applicants can receive a one-time payment to help cover the costs of having a prescribed forestry plan prepared. There are two categories of incentive with total payment not to exceed \$4,000. The first category is 10 to 50 forested acres at \$20 per acre (flat rate), and the second is more than 50 forested acres at \$12 per acre (flat rate). To be eligible, you need to own 10 acres of contiguous forest land and must not have a current Forest Stewardship Plan (anyone receiving payments for a Woodswise Plan will not be eligible to receive EQIP payments for a Prescribed Forestry Plan).

Through EQIP a **new pilot Integrated Pest Management Plan Cost Share Program** is offered to vegetable producers in Androscoggin and Sagadahoc Counties. Interested, eligible producers will formulate their own individualized plan by first working with NRCS field staff to develop a basic pest management plan that includes a risk assessment of pesticides used. Next, they will choose general items from a list of IPM practices offered with NRCS or UM extension assistance.

Finally, they will create a farm- and crop-specific detailed plan utilizing information from The New England Vegetable Management guide and other resources.





**ANDROSCOGGIN VALLEY SOIL AND
WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT**

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"Making Conservation Work for You"

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Both Androscoggin Valley Soil and Water Conservation District and Natural Resources Conservation Service are equal opportunity providers and employers.

Donations made to Androscoggin Valley SWCD are used to offset the costs of the Conservation District's educational programming.

OTHER ACTIVITIES

MONTHLY MEETINGS:

Androscoggin Valley Soil and Water Conservation District Board of Supervisors meet the third Thursday, monthly. Public is welcome. Call the Conservation District to confirm the time and date at (207) 753-9400 #3.

LOCAL WORK GROUP MEET

With a new farm bill soon to be starting, a local work group consisting of representatives Androscoggin and Sagadahoc County reviewed the Environmental Quality Incentive Program practices and ranking tools October 4th. After the review a discussion was held regarding the priority practices, locally important soils, definitions of practices, and eligible ranking points for Androscoggin and Sagadahoc Counties.



USDA SERVICE CENTER OPEN HOUSE

In July the USDA Service Center held an open house offering new and potential farmers to learn from the service agencies and longtime farmers.

USDA's Rural Development, Farm Service Agency, Time and Tide Resource Conservation and Development and Natural Resources Conservation Service participated along with the Maine Forest Service, Maine Farmland Protection, Maine Farm Link and the Androscoggin Valley Soil and Water Conservation District in the open house.

Program fact sheets and displays were available throughout the building, and the day gave opportunity for farmers to ask questions one on one. A highlight of the day was the potluck luncheon sponsored by Maine Farm Link.

