

Rockingham County Conservation District

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Dedicated to the Wise Use of Our Natural Resources.

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ROCKINGHAM
COUNTY
CONSERVATION
DISTRICT



The Rockingham County Conservation District

Our mission is to conserve and sustain the natural environment for present and future generations

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Staff

Vicky Nelson - District Manager
Tracy Degan - Senior Project Manager
Arianna Spear - Conservation & Stewardship Manager
Kelly Brooks- Conservation Technician
Lorraine Lord-Office Manager

RCCD As-Needed Staff and Contractors

Michael Cuomo - NH Soil Scientist, NH Wetland Scientist, NH Septic System Designer (Reviewer)
Gerald Lang, PE - Hydraulic Engineer
Danna Truslow - Restoration Hydrologist
David Detour - Surveyor and AutoCAD Draftsman
Marc Jacobs - NH Soil Scientist, NH Wetland Scientist, Certified Professional in Erosion and Sediment Control



Natural Resources Conservation Service Partnering

The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service provides technical and financial assistance to farmers, ranchers, and forest landowners to voluntarily put conservation on the ground. This helps them to implement practices which improve environmental and agricultural quality. The District continues to partner with NRCS to identify and address natural resource concerns in communities and to coordinate public and private resources to meet local needs on a grass roots level.

In 2019 there were several changes at the NRCS Epping Field Office. In late August, Leo Smock-Randall returned to NH and joins the team as the New District Conservationist. Between 2007 and August 2019 he worked for NRCS in several other states. In addition, the Epping NRCS office welcomed another Soil Conservationist, Harold Pettigrew who arrived from NRCS in Nebraska. The District welcomes the new NRCS staff!

The partnership between the NRCS and Conservation Districts is one that was carefully designed to foster a unique and productive relationship to get conservation implemented on a VOLUNTARY BASIS and to provide federal resources at a local level.

The District continues to work under a cooperative agreement with the NRCS, Wetland Reserve Easement Program (WRE) in initiating management practices on 10+ wetland restoration projects. The NRCS-WRE program gives landowners the ability to permanently protect land while improving wetland habitats for wildlife, water quality, flood storage, groundwater recharge, open space, aesthetic values and environmental education. The existing management of WRE sites once completed will be valued over \$100,000, and it is expected that additional WRE sites will be added to the agreement in 2020 or 2021.

NRCS Contracts and Agreements in Rockingham County in 2019

Type of Assistance	# of Contracts	Amount	Conservation Program
Financial	22	\$437,379	Environmental Quality Incentive Program

Why did the turtle cross the road? To find suitable areas to nest!



New Hampshire is home to seven native species of turtles. Four of these species are listed on the NH endangered or threatened species list and are considered of greatest conservation need in the NH Wildlife Action Plan. Of the challenges they face, anthropogenic factors including habitat loss and fragmentation are the leading causes in species decline. In 2018, RCCD was awarded funding through an agreement between the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and the New Hampshire Association of Conservation Districts (NHACD) to demonstrate practices that create suitable nesting habitat for turtle species (particularly Blanding's and spotted turtles). Forest openings (such as old log landings) are the primary focus of the demonstration. These conservation practices are expected to lay the framework for future restoration efforts through land management



activities in New Hampshire. With coordination between NRCS, New Hampshire Fish and Game (NHFG), and the participating landowner work began to prepare sites to enhance their suitability for turtle nesting. Sand mounds were created at six sites and just two days later painted turtles were observed at two of the new nesting sites. Signs of snapping turtle nesting in two of six sand piles were found after just one week. NHFG biologists will continue to monitor the sites over the next several nesting seasons and collect data on turtle species. RCCD wants to extend our thanks to the cooperating entities and the landowner who agreed to participate in this project and has donated much of his time to complete the work.



DISTRICT HAPPENINGS The District's work has historically been to help prevent soil erosion and sedimentation problems, specifically on farms. Today, we continue to help farmers with these concerns and we also provide assistance with innovative farming practices such as cover crop mixes or specialty equipment that we rent at a very low cost. This equipment promotes farming that improves soil health in more sustainable ways.

The District is increasingly working with municipalities on local habitat restoration projects. We assist many communities in their town forests and conservation lands to control invasive plants and restore habitats. The District is actively working with several municipalities to promote New England Cottontail habitat, pollinator habitat, bat and turtle habitats, assist with rare plants and communities, and perform other habitat restoration. Other conservation initiatives include state land such as our decade long restoration project at Odiorne Point State Park in Rye. All of our conservation work continues to support the environmental priorities of the County and individual communities

The District advances into 2020 with focus and dedication to local conservation programs and projects in Rockingham County. We are launching a new user friendly website. Please visit www.rockinghamccd.org. We also anticipate supporting a native planting program with the County Nursing home in the near future, to help support our local native habitat needs, while engaging residents with meaningful hand-on conservation work. The District continues to implement new ways to work cooperatively with many different groups and communities in order to nurture stewardship of our soils, water, food systems, and natural resources.



RCCD'S SERVICES

TECHNICAL MUNICIPAL SERVICES

- Review of wetland delineation boundaries and required setbacks, Prime wetland reviews and other natural resource reviews
- Test pit witnessing and plan review for septic designs
- Restoration of wetland, shoreland, and native habitats
- Expert testimony at municipal board meetings
- Stormwater design and installation reviews
- Conservation easement monitoring for communities

In 2019 RCCD spent 1861 hours reviewing 298 projects in 13 towns.

*RCCD offers unbiased, professional, and objective services relating to natural resources **ONLY** to municipalities and cities in Rockingham County. RCCD does not perform private service work.*

Other Services

- Soil health improvement equipment rental program
- Soil Potential Index for Current Use Tax Assessments
- Historic Aerial Photography back to 1943
- Amoozemeter rentals

2019 Program Directed Outreach

- ◆ **NH Association of Conservation Commissions Annual Meeting & Potluck Presentation**
- ◆ **NH Landscape Association Annual Meeting and twilight workshop on invasive plants**
- ◆ **UNH Marine Docents - Habitat Restoration**
- ◆ **NHANRS Invasive Species Workshop**
- ◆ **NH Envirothon**

The RCCD evaluated re-growth of invasive seedlings, and in July set forth with both low-volume foliar (LVF) hand pumps, and cut-stump techniques. Loppers and chainsaws were used to cut large Oriental bittersweet vines (as shown) and glossy buckthorn trees greater than 16' in height. RCCD used low-impact herbicides, as permitted by the Special Permit, administered by the NH DAMF, Pesticide Bureau.



In addition, mechanical control was completed by hand by students from the Plymouth Regional High School, with dramatic results achieved in one afternoon. Seeding with conservation seed mix was completed in the fall and additional native plants were installed during the spring. Reestablishment of native vegetation is important to reduce seed sources of invasive vegetation that threatens to reinvade 130 acres of nearby restored areas. It is also important to promote the rapid regeneration of native species, and will assist in outcompeting invasive seedlings.

Additional future planting efforts include tree species such as shagbark hickory, red, and sugar maple to promote roosting sites for bats, and shrub species like Virginia rose, blackberry, northern bayberry and shadbush to promote diverse insect and bird populations.

Thanks to the NH Department of Natural and Cultural Resources as well as to the Department of Agriculture, Markets and Foods, the NH State Conservation Committee, and NH Coastal Program for their continued partnership and support on this ongoing project.



Coastal Habitat Restoration Efforts at Odiorne Point State Park



The District took on the challenging task of tackling the invasive plants found near the historic McKim-Gage House, adjacent to the rare Coastal Salt Pond marsh habitat. This nine acre reclamation effort is part of a continued coastal habitat restoration project at Odiorne Point State Park in Rye that began over a decade ago.

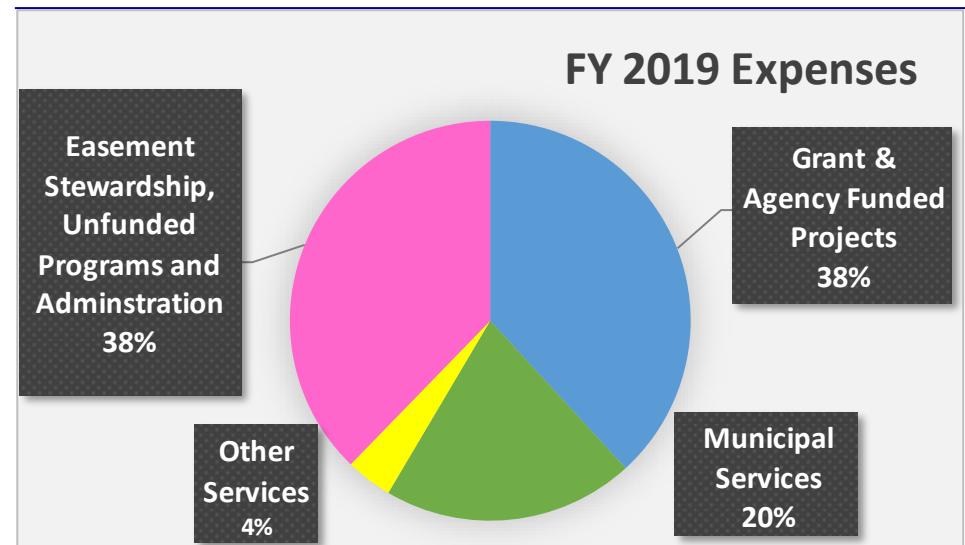
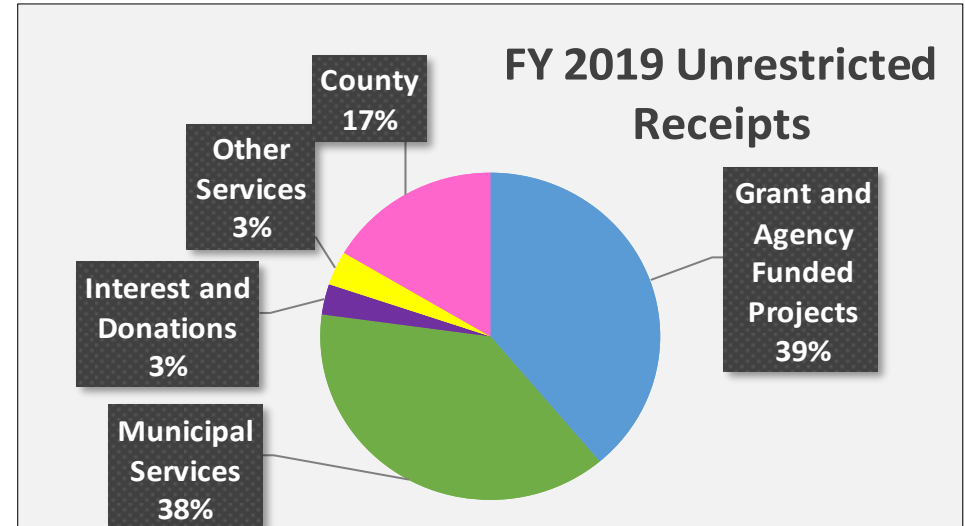
The project included use of Integrated Pest Management (IPM) techniques, as supported by the NH Department of Natural and Cultural Resources (DNCR), Division of Parks and Recreation, with additional funding support from the NH Department of Agriculture, Markets and Foods, (NH DAMF) through the Integrated Pest Management Program and the NH State Conservation Committee (NH SCC) through the Mooseplate program, and the NH Department of Environmental Services, Coastal Program (NH CP).

These habitat areas are adjacent to, and provide protection for, a rare damselfly and rare coastal communities that were in danger of invasion from Oriental bittersweet and glossy buckthorn. These invasive plants are two of the most impenetrable invasives found in this area of Odiorne, literally engulfing and overrunning native trees and shrubs.

The RCCD used a multi-tiered approach to reduce and remove invasive vegetation, and to enhance native plant and animal communities. The approach included flagging native plants and historic areas where equipment was not allowed, and the use of an excavator with boom mounted mulching drum to mow down the invasive plants in March 2019.



Financials



Conservation Districts Enabling Legislation: RSA 432
NEW HAMPSHIRE STATUE TITLE XL SOIL CONSERVATION AND FARMLAND PRESERVATION

The RCCD Board of Supervisors appreciates the past support of our programs by the Rockingham County Commissioners and the County Delegation.

No Till Drill and Seeder



Low Cost Equipment

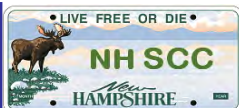
Yeoman's Plow; No-till Drill and Seeder;
Wood Ash/Lime Spreader; and Soil Aerator



Wood Ash/Lime Spreader



Contact the District to find out
more about equipment rentals!



Helping Farmers with the New Hampshire Soil Health Partnership

Our soils are a critical part of successful agriculture, and therefore food security in New Hampshire. Soil health goes beyond soil fertility and considers factors such as compaction, microbial diversity, organic matter content, stability, and structure. RCCD has joined the New Hampshire Soil Health Partnership in an effort to help farmers with maintaining and growing soil vitality that in turn helps them grow the products that we depend upon. This group is a partnership between the ten NH Conservation Districts, the New Hampshire Association of Conservation Districts, the Natural Resources Conservation Service, UNH Cooperative Extension, the UNH Agroecology Lab, and several individual farmers.



NO-TILL RETROFITS

Farmers who are ready to make the switch can utilize our retrofit cost sharing program to help with the financial side of turning existing conventional planters into no-till planters. This program includes a visit from an agricultural consultant to advise farmers on how to best make the transition at no cost to the farmer.

NO-TILL FOR VEGETABLE FARMERS

Reducing tillage on vegetable farms is excellent for soil health, but can come with obstacles and challenges. The Conservation Districts have acquired specialty equipment to facilitate no-till practices, such as no-till transplanters, for farmers to try on their farms. There have been several workshops and lectures with experienced no-till farmers and more are planned for in 2020.

NO-TILL CORN PLANTER RENTALS

Farmers who are interested in no-till can rent one of four no-till corn planters with a roller-crimper attached, to try out no-till on their farm.

