

**2020 October/November, Bi-Monthly Board Report, Education & Outreach, Becky Laboy, E&O Specialist  
November 19, 2020**

In support of OCSCD's Annual Plan of Operations, 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 working with the Technical Staff on two grant projects, and together we are championing several initiatives to effectuate OCSCD's vision and mission: **Jersey-Friendly Yards, Urban and Community Agriculture, Sustainable Practices for Aquaculture Resource Conservation (SPARC) and Lakewood Township Stormwater Basin Retrofit Project**. In addition, the Education Department continues to provide community and statewide programs, and write grants to support OCSCD's overall mission.

**GENERAL OPERATIONS (APO Item #3)**

(APO Item #3, Activity 3)

Professional Development:

- October 7: Monarch Ecology, hosted by NRCS (1 hr)
- October 21: Designing with Natives, hosted by the Native Plant Society of New Jersey (1 hr)
- October 27: American Holly, hosted by The Lighthouse Center for Natural Resource Education Foundation. (0.50 hr)

**EDUCATION INITIATIVES – GRANT RELATED (APO Item #4)**

(APO Item #4, Activity 1)

**OCSCD is subcontracting with Barnegat Bay Partnership to support watershed-wide education and stewardship initiatives, including Jersey-Friendly Yards (JFY):**

Subcontract with Barnegat Bay Partnership for Education & Stewardship:

The 2019-2020 BBP/OCSCD subcontract has been completed. The **subcontract has been renewed for 2020-2021**.

Through the 2020-2021 subcontract, Becky continues to work with Karen Walzer on promoting and increasing usage of the JFY website as a guide to landscape practices for managing stormwater and reducing nonpoint source pollution in the Barnegat Bay watershed.

- Becky is coordinating and engaging Barnegat Bay Volunteer Master Naturalists (BBVMN) in meaningful projects that align with BBP and OCSCD strategic plans and the CCMP. In October, Becky assisted Karen with engaging BBVMNs in a volunteer **stewardship project to eliminate invasive species at John C. Bartlett County Park** at Berkley Island. Volunteers joined Karen and Becky on October 10 and 17 to help remove Common Mugwort, Chinese Bush Clover and Phragmites.
- Becky is working with BBVMNs to create a **BBVMN Newsletter** to connect BBVMNs with each other and with perspective volunteer opportunities, and to share information about natural resources in the Barnegat Bay watershed.

Subcontract with Barnegat Bay Partnership for Jersey-Friendly Yards Certification Project:

- Becky continues to work with Karen Walzer of BBP on the **Jersey-Friendly Yards Certification program**. We are currently building a Technical Advisory Committee, and we are creating a JFY Survey for Homeowner Certification.

Jersey-Friendly Yards:

- **2020 Jersey-Friendly Yards Webinar Series:** The JFY Conference Committee completed our first webinar series, "Wild About Jersey-Friendly Yards". We offered 7 programs and had a total of 868 attendees in total, which was around 300 individuals who participated in one or more programs.
  - Introduction to Jersey-Friendly Yards: **110 attendees**
  - If You Plant It, They Will Come: **164 attendees**

- Buzz With Bees: **87 attendees**
- Plant This, Not That: **105 attendees**
- Attracting Birds to Your JFY: **132 attendees**
- Wild About Composting: **90 attendees**
- How and When to Clean-up Your Winter Wildlife Garden: **180 attendees**
- **2021 Jersey-Friendly Yards Webinar Series:** The JFY Conference Committee is planning a 2021 webinar series, which, depending on COVID-19, will be part of our 5<sup>th</sup> Annual JFY Conference next fall, or in lieu of a 2021 Conference. Our theme for this webinar series is, "What's Bugging Your Jersey-Friendly Yard?". We will be offering webinars January-June, then either continue with webinars, or prepare for an in-person Conference. Presenters will focus programs on the importance of arthropods (insects and other beneficials) in the native plant garden. Programs will be recorded and made available on the Jersey-Friendly Yards website.

(APO Item #4, Activity 1)

**OCSCD is collaborating with Rutgers Cooperative Extension to facilitate the Community Garden Network, in support of the Urban and Community Agriculture initiative:**

Urban and Community Agriculture Initiative:

- The **Community Garden Network of Ocean County (CGN)** team, consisting of OCSCD, RCE, Fulfill, Rutgers Master Gardeners of Ocean County, along with Soil to Soul and Toms River Green Team, continues involvement to connect the community to healthy food resources, increase community food security, and improve access to healthy food.

(APO Item #4, Activity 1)

**OCSCD has been awarded a technical assistance grant from the National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD) with funding from the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). Our project is called Sustainable Practices for Aquaculture Resources Conservation (SPARC).**

Sustainable Practices for Aquaculture Resources Conservation (SPARC) project:

- This is the third year of the NACD technical assistance grant program, which was created with funds from the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) to help increase staffing at the field level and provide conservation services to farmers, ranchers and local communities across the U.S. Ocean County Soil Conservation District's **Sustainable Practices for Aquaculture Resources Conservation (SPARC)** project will build District capacity through two pathways that will occur simultaneously. District staff, including Christine Raabe, District Director, and Kristin Adams, Erosion Control Specialist, along with a broad-based Advisory Committee Partnership will connect with local shellfish farmers primarily within Barnegat Bay and Great Bay, to gain a better understanding of their specific natural resource concerns. Ms. Adams will work towards NRCS Apprentice Conservation Planner certification, with a long-term goal of achieving NRCS Certified Conservation Planner status. The District will provide a boots-on-the-ground, local connection between NRCS and the shellfish producers to further develop the conservation practices of the NJ NRCS Aquaculture Initiative while increasing producer participation and involvement.
- **OCSCD now has "boots in the water" working with local shellfish farmers to gain a better understanding of their specific natural resource concerns.** Kristin recently visited two different aquaculture operations to learn more about oyster farming from industry professionals. Dale Parsons of Parsons Mariculture in Tuckerton offered a tour of his nursery where he raises oyster spat and hard clam seed in raceways and upwellers. Matt Gregg of Forty North Oyster Farms in Barnegat Light showcased a different technique to grow oysters, using a rack and bag system. Kristin joined NRCS Soil Scientist, David Steinmann, in the field to learn how subaqueous soil properties can help determine the best locations for aquaculture in the Barnegat and Great Bays. Steinmann showcased two main methods when taking samples of subaqueous soil, the McCauley auger method and the vibracore method. Data is used to map and classify the soil series throughout the coastal zone, similar to terrestrial soil mapping.

- This past month **District staff joined NRCS Soil Scientist David Steinmann in the field to assist with soil sampling in the Barnegat Bay watershed.** The USDA NRCS Soil and Plant Division is responsible for surveying, mapping and interpreting soils throughout the entire country. This includes surveying soil at the bottom of the Barnegat Bay. At 25 selected sampling sites throughout the estuary NRCS is collecting soil samples. Many of the samples are collected using a vibracore. Samples are examined in the field then sent to a local lab where they are split open, photographed, described, and sampled by soil scientists from the Hammonton Soil Survey Office, then they are sent to the NRCS Kellogg Soil Survey Lab (KSSL) for complete soil analysis. Some samples are sent to the KSSL for "whole core" blue carbon analysis. Simultaneously, the Barnegat Bay Partnership (BBP) is conducting habitat and biological studies. Thanks to this joint collaborative effort by NRCS and BBP, soils data is contributing to two important research projects - Barnegat Bay Partnership's study of the degradation of coastal tidal wetlands in the Barnegat Bay estuary and the NRCS's study of the amount of blue carbon stored within this valuable coastal ecosystem. The results of this project will help inform local partners in their efforts to protect and restore the deteriorating but critical tidal wetlands in our watershed.

(APO Item #4, Activity 1)

**OCSCD is partnering with South Jersey Resource Conservation and Development Council, 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.**

Lakewood Township Stormwater Basin Retrofit Project:

- OCSCD is excited to announce our partnership with South Jersey Resource Conservation and Development Council, Lakewood Township Department of Public Works, and the Camden County Soil Conservation District on an awarded grant from the State of New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection, the **Lakewood Township Stormwater Basin Retrofit Project.** This 4-year grant focuses on retrofitting stormwater basins within the North and South Branch of the Metedeconk River watershed, a sub-watershed to the Barnegat Bay watershed. The Lakewood Township Stormwater Basin Restoration Project was funded by a Federal 319(h) Water Quality Restoration grant awarded by the NJ Department of Environmental Protection to the South Jersey Resource Conservation & Development Council (SJRC&D).
- The restoration of Metedeconk River watershed is of critical importance. The Metedeconk River provides over 100,000 residents with a source of clean water for drinking and personal use. **The primary goals of the grant are to reduce non-point source pollutant loading, and improve water quality and wildlife habitat by retrofitting stormwater basins.**
- It is anticipated that **up to 12 stormwater basins in Lakewood Township will be retrofitted**, each with an individual retrofit design that could include revegetation of the basin with native grasses and wildflowers, reforestation of the basin, structural modification, or other methods that would accomplish an efficient and cost-effective retrofit. Once renovated, the basins will be able to treat and filter target pollutant from stormwater runoff and recharge groundwater more effectively, therefore, decreasing the amount of pollutants and volume of stormwater discharged to receiving streams.

(APO Item #4, Activity 2)

**Seeks grants and Funding:**

- NREFNJ and OCSCD submitted a grant proposal to The Watershed Institute seeking funding to support our *Jersey-Friendly Yards – Landscaping for a Healthy Environment* project. This project is a collaboration between 7 watershed Partners: NREFNJ, OCSCD, BBP, RCE, JC NERR, OCP&R, SBB, who will collectively offer an educational webinar series featuring Jersey-Friendly Yards, gardens, landscapes, tools and resources, with the goal of educating, empowering and spurring action in Barnegat Bay watershed residents to change their landscaping behaviors so they adopt Jersey-Friendly landscaping practices for a healthier watershed. We will be notified of the grants' status by December.

## EDUCATION INITIATIVES (APO Item #5)

(APO Item #5, Activity 1)

**Website, Media and Promotions:** Becky continues to...

- maintain and enhance the Education components of the OCSCD website, and is working with **Lisa Mazzuca, OCSCD's new website designer, to help create a more user-friendly website interface.**
- **promote OCSCD on social media**, primarily through Facebook.
- maintains database and mailing list of **1,904 active contacts** for E&O initiatives in OCSCD's Constant Contact database.
- Creates and distributes a **monthly eNewsletter** advertising programs, projects and conservation news.

(APO Item #5, Activity 2, 3, 5, 8)

**Special Projects:**

- **Poster Contest:** The 2021 Poster Contest theme has been announced: [Healthy Forests, Healthy Communities](#).

(APO Item #5, Activity 6)

**Internships/Volunteers:**

- Becky is working with intern, **Gabriella Marzella**, of Stockton, to complete an Independent Study through the District. Ms. Marzella is studying to be a Middle School Science Teacher. She is creating a series of activities based on the JFY website and concepts to support achievement of the Girl Scout "Gardener Badge". She will be presenting her work in December.

(APO Item #5, Activity 7)

**Outreach Programs, Conferences and Events:**

- No programs to report.

(APO Item #5, Activity 7)

**Outreach Programs, Conferences, Events Anticipated:**

- January 12: **Low Maintenance Landscaping with Jersey-Friendly Yards** webinar presentation, hosted by the Horticultural Society of South Jersey.
- January 27: **Attracting Birds to Your Yard** webinar presentation, hosted by the Ecological Landscaping Association