

February-March 2022, Bi-Monthly Education Report

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

March 17, 2022

Becky Laboy, M.Ed., Education Outreach Specialist

February-March 2022 Education & Outreach Activities:

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 is championing the **Jersey-Friendly Yards** and **Barnegat Bay Master Naturalist** initiatives in cooperation with Barnegat Bay Partnership, to effectuate OCSCD's vision and mission. In addition, the Education Department is supporting the OCSCD technical staff on two additional grant projects: **Sustainable Practices for Aquaculture Resource Conservation (SPARC)** and **Lakewood Township Stormwater Basin Retrofit Project**. In addition, the Education Department continues to provide community outreach programs and statewide initiatives, as well as write grants to support OCSCD's overall mission.

I. IMPLEMENTATION OF CHAPTER 251 SOIL EROSION CONTROL ACT & OTHER NATURAL RESOURCE PROGRAMS AND PROJECTS (APO Item #1)

1. (APO Item #1, Activity 14)

Becky maintains the District Website and Manages Distribution of Notices.

Becky maintains and updates the new District website with Chapter 251 SESC-related information. Becky also manages and distributes Inspection Requests and 48 Hour Notices as they are received electronically through the website, appropriating requests to Inspectors overseeing specific territories.

II. GENERAL OPERATIONS (APO Item #3)

1. (APO Item #3, Activity 5)

- **Becky serves as OCSCD representative member of the Barnegat Bay Partnership's Communication and Education Committee (CEC)** 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](#).
- **Becky is representing OCSCD at the monthly New Jersey Bay Islands Initiative (NJBII).** Becky attends monthly meetings with all constituents, as well as monthly meetings as part of the Communications working group.

III. EDUCATION INITIATIVES – GRANT RELATED (APO Item #4)

1. (APO Item #4, Activity 1)

Subcontract with Barnegat Bay Partnership **Part 1: Communication & Outreach (Education & Stewardship annual contract, in its 3rd year) - OCSCD is subcontracting with Barnegat Bay Partnership to support watershed-wide education and stewardship initiatives, including Jersey-Friendly Yard and Barnegat Bay Master Naturalist Program:**

- Per the subcontract, Becky continues to assist Karen Walzer, Public Outreach Coordinator for BBP, to promote the JFY website as a guide to landscape practices for managing stormwater and reducing nonpoint source pollution in the Barnegat Bay watershed, engage community members in the JFY landscaping best practices, provide JFY programs, engage Barnegat Bay Volunteer Master Naturalists in watershed-wide stewardship and conservation projects, and produce a quarterly BBVMN Newsletter ([Winter 2022](#), [Fall 2021](#), [Summer 2021](#), [Spring 2021](#), [Winter 2021](#), [Fall 2020](#))

Subcontract with Barnegat Bay Partnership **Part 2: Bay-Friendly Certification Project (3 year contract):**

- Becky continues to assist Karen Walzer, Public Outreach Coordinator for BBP, on the **Jersey-Friendly Yards (Bay Friendly) Certification program**. BBP has subcontracted with a webmaster, Lisa Mazzuca (who is also OCSCD's webmaster) to develop the content for Jersey-Friendly certification webpages on the JFY website. The

Certification Program will be housed and promoted on these pages. Becky is working with Karen and Lisa to help provide content and photos.

2. (APO Item #4, Activity 1)

Expand Granted Projects: Jersey-Friendly Yards

- **2021 Jersey-Friendly Yards Webinar Series:** The JFY Conference Committee is offering a 2022 JFY webinar series, “Back to Basics”. Each webinar reflects one of the 8 Steps to a Jersey-Friendly Yard. Becky presented the first 2 webinars: Step 1 Plan Before You Plant, and Step 2 Start With Healthy Soil. Recordings can be found on the [Jersey-Friendly Yards Events](#) webpage.
 - **February 8**, Becky presented “Plan Before You Plant”, hosted by the Jersey-Friendly Yards Team: BBP. OCSCD, RCE. **(102 attendees)**
 - **March 8**, Becky presented “Start With Healthy Soil”, hosted by the Jersey-Friendly Yards Team: BBP. OCSCD, RCE. **(16 attendees)**
- **Jersey-Friendly Yards – Statewide Outreach:**
 - Karen Walzer and Becky Laboy continue to promote Jersey-Friendly Yards programs to statewide “Green Groups”, including Green Teams, Environmental Organizations, Garden Clubs, etc., to expand our reach.
 - **January 25**, Becky presented “Jersey-Friendly Yards - Landscaping for a Healthy Environment”, hosted by the Great Swamp Watershed Association. **(125 attendees)**
 - **February 9**, Becky presented “Jersey-Friendly Trees and Shrubs for a Winter Wildlife Garden”, hosted by the Master Gardeners of Hunterdon County. **(54 attendees)**
 - **February 16**, Becky presented “Jersey-Friendly Yards – Invasive Species and Native Alternatives”, hosted by the JCNERR for their Friends Along the Mullica series. **(15 attendees)**
 - **February 21**, Becky presented “Jersey-Friendly Trees and Shrubs for a Winter Wildlife Garden”, hosted by the Southeast Chapter of the Native Plant Society of NJ. (? Attendees – waiting to hear back from NPSNJ)
 - **March 15**, Becky presented “Jersey-Friendly Yards – Landscaping for a Healthy Environment”, hosted by Somers Point Green Team. **(16 attendees)**
 - **March 24**, Becky will present **Jersey-Friendly Yards – Landscaping for a Healthy Community**, hosted by Pinelands Adventures, co-presenting with Karen Walzer, BBP.

3. (APO Item #4, Activity 1)

Grant Projects: Lakewood Township Stormwater Basin Retrofit Project

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. The grant is funded by a Federal 319(h) Water Quality Restoration grant awarded by the NJ Department of Environmental Protection to the SJRC&D.

4. (APO Item #4, Activity 2)

Seeks Grants and Funding:

OCSCD’s Education Department continues to research potential grants that will support the District’s Mission. Becky looks forward to possibly collaborating with other District staff on application submittals and project implementation.

IV. EDUCATION INITIATIVES (APO Item #5)

1. (APO Item #5, Activity 1)

Communications: Website, Newsletter, Blogs, Social Media and Annual Report:

Becky has been working with a growing number of media communications platforms in an effort to engage a broader audience in support of the District’s Mission. These include:

- OCSCD’s new [website](#)
- [Newsletters](#) continue to be distributed monthly, typically on the first day of the month, to our growing audience of 1,889 contacts, of which, 284 are considered “most engaged”. We have a 36% email open rate”. Newsletters contain the latest updates about current educational programs, Jersey-Friendly Yards, and grant projects and

partnerships. Technical staff have also been contributing information to our “Staff in the Field” section, where they discuss soil conservation practices pertaining to SESC Standards.

- [Blog posts](#) on our website highlight the District’s many projects, as well as our soil conservation message.
- Newsletters, blogs and other soil conservation information are also distributed via the District’s social media platforms: [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#) and [Twitter](#)
- For access to all of our social media and project links, visit the “[connect](#)” page on our website
- Maintain database and emailing list of contacts in Constant Contact database. With the addition of schools throughout New Jersey, we now have a contacts list of 4,000 contacts.
- Develop an OCSCD Annual Report, highlighting the many projects, programs and partners with which the District staff are engaged. We are targeting a mid-to-end of January release date.

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

Special Projects:

- **Barnegat Bay Environmental Educators Roundtable:** Christine and Becky are organizing the District’s 25th **Annual Barnegat Bay Environmental Educators Roundtable** in 2022, in collaboration with Ocean County Parks & Recreation and OC Cultural & Heritage. This year’s Roundtable will be held outside, under tents, at Jakes Branch County Park. Exhibitors, dining and our “keynote” will all be “outside” under tents. Workshops will be predominantly outside, and contain an embedded soil theme threaded throughout each program. OCSCD staff will present “Soil Science Sampler” as one of the workshop in rotation. Our keynote this year will be an outdoor movie: “Kiss the Ground” – a film about the importance of soil in capturing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere. All details can be found on the OCSCD website, on the [Barnegat Bay Environmental Educators Roundtable webpage](#). The OCSCD Board are cordially invited to attend!
- **Poster Contest:** The 2022 Poster Contest deadline for entry was March 10. This year’s theme is: “Healthy Soil, Healthy Life”. As of the date of writing this report, OCSCD received only one entry. I ask the Board to determine the “placement status” of the entry for its Grade Group (7-9) and for the Grand Championship.
- **Envirothon:** The 2022 NJ Envirothon will take place on **Saturday, May 7**, and will again be virtual this year. Becky is assisting with the creation of the Wildlife Station written-test, and will assist with the “training” and with the facilitation of the Envirothon on May 7th. Our most recent meeting was on February 8th. We will be meeting again on March 22.
- **Trout-in-the-Classroom:** The status of TIC Release at FREC in 2022 is “to-be-determined”.

3. (APO Item #5, Activity 6)

Internships/Volunteers:

- The Education Department does not have any new interns at this time, however, an application has been received for a Technical Assistant internship.

4. (APO Item #5, Activity 7)

Outreach Programs, Conferences and Events:

- Numerous Jersey-Friendly Yards programs were presented during the last 2 months, as listed above under item #2 (APO Item #4, Activity 1).

5. (APO Item #5, Activity 7)

Outreach Programs, Conferences, Events Anticipated:

- **March 12**, Becky presented **Soil Toils** program as part of the Pinelands Short Course, hosted by Pinelands Commission and Stockton University. Becky shared an exhibit table with Karen Walzer to showcase OCSCD and JFY. **(15 people attended workshop)**