

## October-November 2024, Bi-Monthly Education Report

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

November 21, 2024

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### October-November, 2024 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 and projects.
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Sub-Task, #4, SJRC&D, 319h Basin Retrofit Grant - Lakewood: Becky and Brittany Moore are working together on the Lakewood Township Stormwater Basins Retrofit Grant Project. Becky and Brittany created a Lakewood Township Stormwater Basins [Self-Guided Tour](#); flyers were created to provide a QR code to the Stormwater Basins Self-Guided Tour webpage, and were passed out at the 2024 Fall Festival which took place at the [Common Grounds Community Garden](#), at John F. Patrick Sports Complex, Lakewood, on November 3. Becky created a [Stormwater Basins Tool Kit](#), and updated the [project webpage](#). Becky regularly attends the SJRC&D meetings.

### **(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.

**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 / watershed stewardship was renewed on February 12, 2024, for a period of one year. There is discussion as to whether we need to extend the contract to the end of next school year. (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 #3 for the reporting quarter, July 1 – September 30.
  - Becky provided age-appropriate outreach programs to five 5<sup>th</sup> grade classes at Nellie Bennett Elementary School, and to four high school classes at Pinelands Regional High School.
  - Becky provided a school site visit to Elms Elementary School to assess the potential garden; and scheduled outreach programs for several classes.

##### **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.

- Updates to the "Tour de' Basins":
  - Becky and Brittany created a Lakewood Township Stormwater Basins [Self-Guided Tour](#);
  - Becky created flyers advertising the Self-Guided Tour, which provides a QR code to the Stormwater Basins Self-Guided Tour webpage. The flyers were passed out at the 2024 Fall Festival which took place at the [Common Grounds Community Garden](#), at John F. Patrick Sports Complex, Lakewood, on November 3.
  - Becky created a [Stormwater Basins Tool Kit](#), and updated the [project webpage](#).
  - Becky and Brittany created a PPT presentation highlighting the achievements of the Lakewood Township Stormwater Basins Retrofit Project. This PPT will be presented by Craig McGee, Director of the Camden County SCD at the NJACD Annual Meeting on November 25.

#### **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 and Brittany tabled at the Common Grounds Community Garden 2024 Fall Festival on November 3<sup>rd</sup> where a Pollinator Garden was recently installed through funding from Xerces Society. We highlighted the Lakewood Township Stormwater Basins Project, including the Self-Guided Tour (See APO Item #4, Activity 1, above), as well as the new Pollinator Garden. We also provided a soil craft activity for kids, which was overwhelmingly popular! **Over 800 people were in attendance.**

### **(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".
  - [October Newsletter](#)
  - [November 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.
- [2022-2023 Annual Report](#): has been published and is available on our website. This Report captures both the technical and educational accomplishments of the past two years. Becky is working on the 2024 Annual Report.
- 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 is representing OCSCD at the monthly [New Jersey Bay Islands Initiative \(NJBII\)](#) "Communications Working Group". Becky and Kristin Adams also attend 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 "Press Team", who meets once a month. The Press Team develop educational materials to highlight the work of the NJBII. Becky completed an [article](#) about high school student, Nora Morton, and her summer research on wave attenuation and coastal erosion. Nora's family is active in the NJBII and Nora has incorporated the goals and objectives of NJBII into her school research project. The article is available on OCSCD's blog, and was featured in our [October Newsletter](#).

**3. (APO Item #5, Activity 3) Poster Contest:** The winners for the 2024 Poster Contest can be viewed on OCSCD's [Annual NJ Conservation Poster Contest webpage](#). The 2024 theme was: "**May The Forest Be With You, Always**". OCSCD's Grand Champion Winner was Saoirse Parsons, Grade 10, New Egypt High School, who received a Certificate of Recognition and a \$50 check from OCSCD. First Place Winners were Abigail Scanlon, Grade 8, Veterans Memorial Middle School, and Abigail Alaimo, Grade 6, Veterans Memorial Middle School, who both received Certificates of Recognition.

**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.

- Several boxes of the Spanish version of the LML Guides were provided to Common Grounds Community Garden to be distributed to their Spanish-speaking constituents.

**5. (APO Item #5, Activity 5) Barnegat Bay Environmental Educators Roundtable:** Becky has created a “Call for Presenters” form in an effort to feature new and different presenters at our 2025 Roundtable which will take place on **Wednesday, April 16, 3:00pm-8:00pm**. OCSCD, Steering Committee members and watershed partners will also send an announcement in their respective newsletters to save the date and will include the Call for Presenters form. Our theme will be: **“Our Precious Natural Resources: Considering Conservation, Climate and Community”**. Please visit our [BBEERT webpage](#) to view information and a Gallery of Photos of this past year’s [27<sup>th</sup> Annual Barnegat Bay Environmental Educators Roundtable](#).

**6. (APO Item #5, Activity 6) Internship & Volunteer Opportunities and Agreements:** OCSCD now has an intern helping with Chapter 251, Erin McGrath. 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.**

2024 E&O programs completed and on the schedule:

- **Mar 8:** Becky presented a workshop at the Pinelands Short Course, *Soil Toils*, which took place at Stockton University. **(25 attendees)**
- **May 17:** Becky presented a *Soil Assessment* workshop for **Point Pleasant Borough High School** AP Environmental Science students. The program was part of *Pollinator Point Environmental Sciences Symposium* developed and facilitated by the Point Pleasant Garden Club. It took place at the Point Pleasant Borough Municipal Complex, at the new Pollinator Point garden, founded in 2022 by the Point Pleasant Garden Club, and supported through participation in the Jersey Friendly Yards Municipal Certification Grant Program. **(25 attendees)**
- **May 29:** Becky presented a 45-minute webinar on “Soils 101” to the **Barnegat Bay Partnership’s Barnegat Bay Volunteer Master Naturalists**. The program was an overview of soils and an introduction to some local soil series, including their properties and characteristics. The webinar was followed by an in-person workshop on May 31. **(15 attendees)**
- **May 31:** Becky provided an in-person workshop on local soils to the **Barnegat Bay Partnership’s Barnegat Bay Volunteer Master Naturalists** at Wells Mills County Park. The group of 15 participants delved into soil properties through hands-on activities using soil sieves and NPK/pH tests, followed by trail walking to dig-up and examine the horizons of Manahawkin Muck and Downer soil series, along with identification of the vegetation associated with these two distinct soil series. **(15 attendees)**
- **June 2:** Becky provided a *Healthy Soils & Water Conservation* workshop, in collaboration with Shari Kondrup of the **Brick Township Municipal Utilities Authority**, for an audience at the Common Grounds Community Garden, Lakewood. Becky introduced participants to the local soil under the newly installed pollinator garden, demonstrated how to take a soil sample, and used sieves to determine the texture. Discussions related soil texture to water holding capacity and water conservation practices in the garden. **(10 attendees)**
- **July 21:** Becky will be providing a program, *Healthy Soils, Healthy Gardens*, hosted by Shari Kondrup of the **Brick Township Municipal Utilities Authority**, as part of BTMUA’s “Weekends at the Reservoir” summer series. Currently, there are 20 participants signed-up. Becky will introduce participants to the properties of soil, the importance of healthy soil to a healthy garden, demonstrate how to collect a soil sample and have it tested at Rutgers Soil Testing Lab, then conduct a soil sieve test to determine the texture of the soil, and discuss how texture relates to water conservation and nutrient holding capacity. Becky will share BBP’s *Going Native* resource and discuss the Jersey-Friendly Yards Resident Certification program. **(15 attendees)**
- **July 23:** Becky will be provided a program *Soils 101* to children enrolled in **JCNERR’s** Children’s Creature Feature summer series. Becky will introduce the kids to soil texture using the soil sieve sets, and sort through soil/compost to look for and identify soil critters. Soil texture, organic matter, air and soil moisture will be discussed as important components of healthy soil and a healthy soil ecosystem. **(25 attendees)**
- **July 24:** Becky will be providing a program *Soils 101* to children enrolled in **Long Beach Township Marine Education Field Station’s** summer education series. Becky will introduce the participants to soil texture using the soil sieve sets,

and sort through soil/compost to look for and identify soil critters. Soil texture, organic matter, air and soil moisture will be discussed as important components of healthy soil and a healthy soil ecosystem. **(13 attendees)**

- **August 5:** Becky provided a program *Soils 101* to children enrolled in the **Spray Beach Yacht Club's** summer education series for sailors. Becky will introduce the participants to soil texture using the soil sieve sets, and sort through soil/compost to look for and identify soil critters. Soil texture, organic matter, air and soil moisture will be discussed as important components of healthy soil and a healthy soil ecosystem. **(15 attendees)**
- **September 14:** Becky and Jessica presented a workshop at this year's **Jersey-Friendly Yards Conference**, *Exploring Soil Texture*, through two rotations. The 45-minute workshop highlighted the sandy soils of the Coastal Plain. Participants used soil sieves to determine the soil texture classification of several soil samples. This hands-on workshop was received by participants. **(40 attendees to workshops; 130 attendees to conference)** Mary Ellen assisted with the OCSCD table display.
- **September 24:** Becky provided a program *Soils 101* to **Arc of Ocean County** participants. Becky introduced the participants to soil texture using the soil sieve sets, and sort through soil/compost to look for and identify soil critters. Soil texture, organic matter, air and soil moisture was discussed as important components of healthy soil and a healthy soil ecosystem. **(25 attendees)**
- **October 29:** Becky presented at the **AP Colloquium for the Advanced Placement Science Teachers of Ocean and Monmouth County**, hosted by Ocean County College. Through several rotations, Becky introduced participants to the educational outreach programs offered by the District. **(30 attendees)** One teacher from High School North in Toms River has reached out to request programs for her students. Becky is currently setting-up dates to provide the outreach programs.
- **November 3:** Becky and Brittany attended the **2024 Fall Festival at Common Grounds Community Garden** and provided a table display, outreach, and crafts for kids. **(800 attendees at the Festival)**

**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:**

Becky and Christine sit on the Jersey-Friendly Yards Conference Planning Committee. This year's JFY Conference took place on Saturday, September 14. The half-day Conference title was *The Hows and Whys for Spaces of Any Size*. Keynote Speaker, Bobbie Herbs, presented *Backyard Transformation in Just Three Years*. Several workshops were offered, including *Exploring Soil Texture* presented by Becky Laboy and Jessica Pinto, *Native Plant Propagation*, *Got Invasives*, and *Q&A Panel Discussion*. **(130 attendees)** A native plant sale was offered by several vendors.