

# New Jersey Conservation Partnership Congressional Report • March 2025



New Jersey Association of Conservation Districts  
USDA, Natural Resources Conservation Service  
New Jersey Department of Agriculture  
State Soil Conservation Committee





## New Jersey Conservation Partnership

### *Vision:*

*Leadership promoting stewardship of New Jersey's natural resources.*

### *Mission:*

*Protect the natural resources of New Jersey and meet the conservation needs of its residents.*

Through the New Jersey Conservation Partnership, the New Jersey Department of Agriculture (NJDA) State Soil Conservation Committee, the Soil Conservation Districts, the USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), and others have been working cooperatively for over 85 years. Promoting resource conservation activities on suburban, urban, and agricultural lands, the NJ Soil Conservation Districts and NRCS work together to address soil erosion issues on most of New Jersey's acres, helping to protect our valuable fields, our natural waterways, and our ecosystems. Beyond this legacy partnership, we work cooperatively with many other conservation partners to protect the natural resources of our great state. These partners include the New Jersey Department of Agriculture (NJDA), Rutgers University, the Department of

Forestry, the Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP), the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF), the National Audubon Society, and the Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D) Councils.



 Natural Resources Conservation Service  
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE



## New Jersey Association of Conservation Districts

### *Soil Conservation Districts in New Jersey*

As a qualified nonprofit 501c(3) organization, NJACD plays an important role in statewide and national conservation programs for the Soil Conservation Districts, as well as the general public. NJACD provides support and service in the development of statewide conservation education, leadership and professional programs. It is an important link to national organizations like the National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD), the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) and the Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS), just to name a few.



The New Jersey Association of Conservation Districts facilitates communication between the districts and their state and federal partners. In addition, the NJACD offers an Annual Conservation Scholarship to a college student from New Jersey, organizes the statewide Envirothon contest for high school students and a Conservation Poster Contest for students in grades 2 – 12.

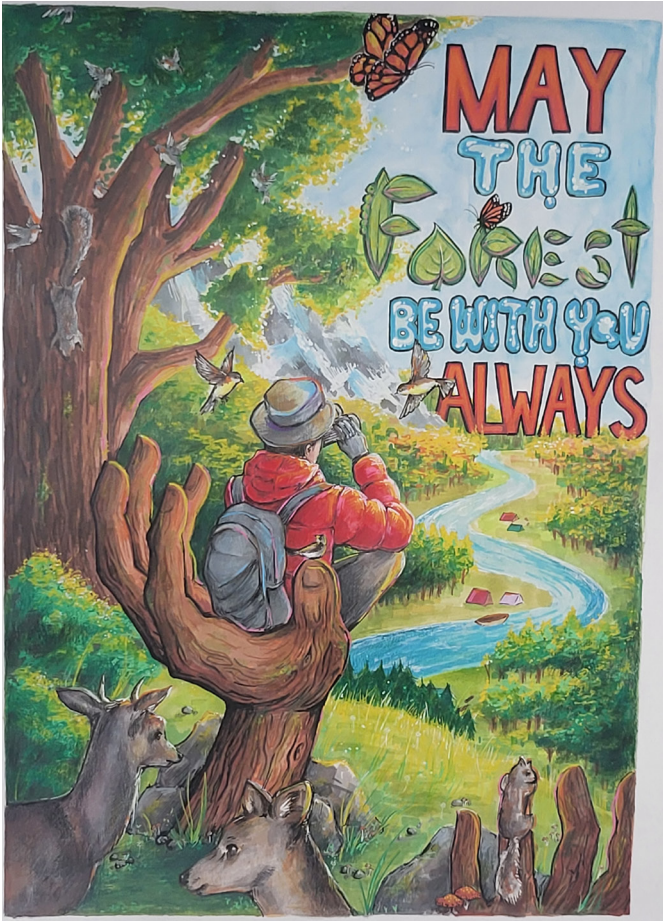


New Jersey Secretary of Agriculture Ed Wengryn presented Fields Without Fences farmers Lindsay Napolitano and Johann Rinkens with the Hugh Hammond Bennett Northeast Producer of the Year award at the New Jersey Association of Conservation Districts' Annual Conference. Located in the Delaware River watershed, their farm grows fruits, nuts, medicinal herbs, and wild edibles in naturalized plantings inspired by the wild ecology. They've partnered with organizations and peers to develop educational programs on permaculture, regenerative agriculture, plant medicine, and other agroecology topics.



The annual National Conservation Poster Contest provides students in second through twelfth grade an opportunity to convey their thoughts about soil, water and related natural resource issues through art. It also highlights the educational outreach efforts of conservation districts and their state conservation associations, auxiliaries and agencies. The 2024 New Jersey Conservation Poster Theme was “May the Forest Be With You, Always.”

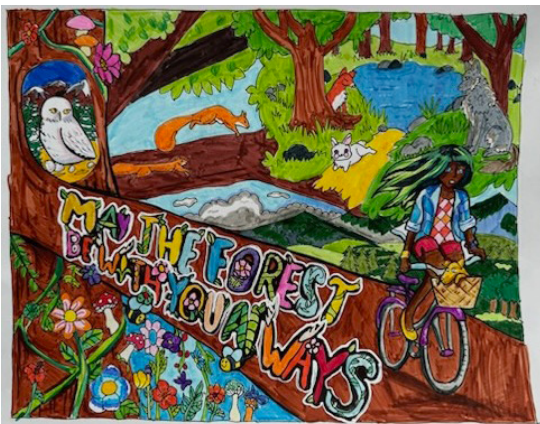
Each year, the poster contest starts at the district level. District winners advance to the state level. Cash prizes of \$100, \$50, and \$25 are awarded to first, second, and third place winners. Finally, state winners advance to the National Contest. National winners are recognized each year at the NACD Annual Meeting.



Yutong Lin (Grades 10-12) Freehold SCD.



Molli Giles (Grades 7-9) Somerset-Union SCD.



Sharanya Chauhan (Grades 4-6) Mercer SCD.



Lulu Wang (Grades 2-3) Freehold SCD



## New Jersey Envirothon

### *International Environmental Competition for High School Students*

The New Jersey Envirothon competition is a one-day event that takes place at the end of the school year. Teams are tested on environmental topics through hands-on interactive problem-solving at five testing stations. Test questions may cover any information in the study guide and suggested resource materials like web materials and links. The contest consists of hands-on questions along with some true/false, multiple choice and fill-in-the-blanks. There are 30 minutes allowed at each station. Team presentations last 10 minutes.

The team that best demonstrates a comprehensive understanding of natural resources, as well as teamwork and communication skills, moves on to represent New Jersey in the NCF Envirothon competition which is North America's largest High School Environmental Education Competition. This multi-day event further tests the team's understanding of the environment and involves teams from all regions of the United States, Canada, China, and Singapore.

The 2024 NJ Envirothon was held at Big Brook Park in Marlboro Township, Monmouth County.



Students using bird identification skills during the Envirothon Wildlife Station test.



# The Local Conservation Connection

## Soil Conservation Districts in New Jersey

Soil Conservation Districts were established in the 1930s as local government units and play a strong role in protecting New Jersey’s natural resources. A broad range of conservation services and assistance related to nonpoint source pollution prevention is available through the 14 districts. Districts help state and federal partners connect with their constituents and focus on local conservation issues.

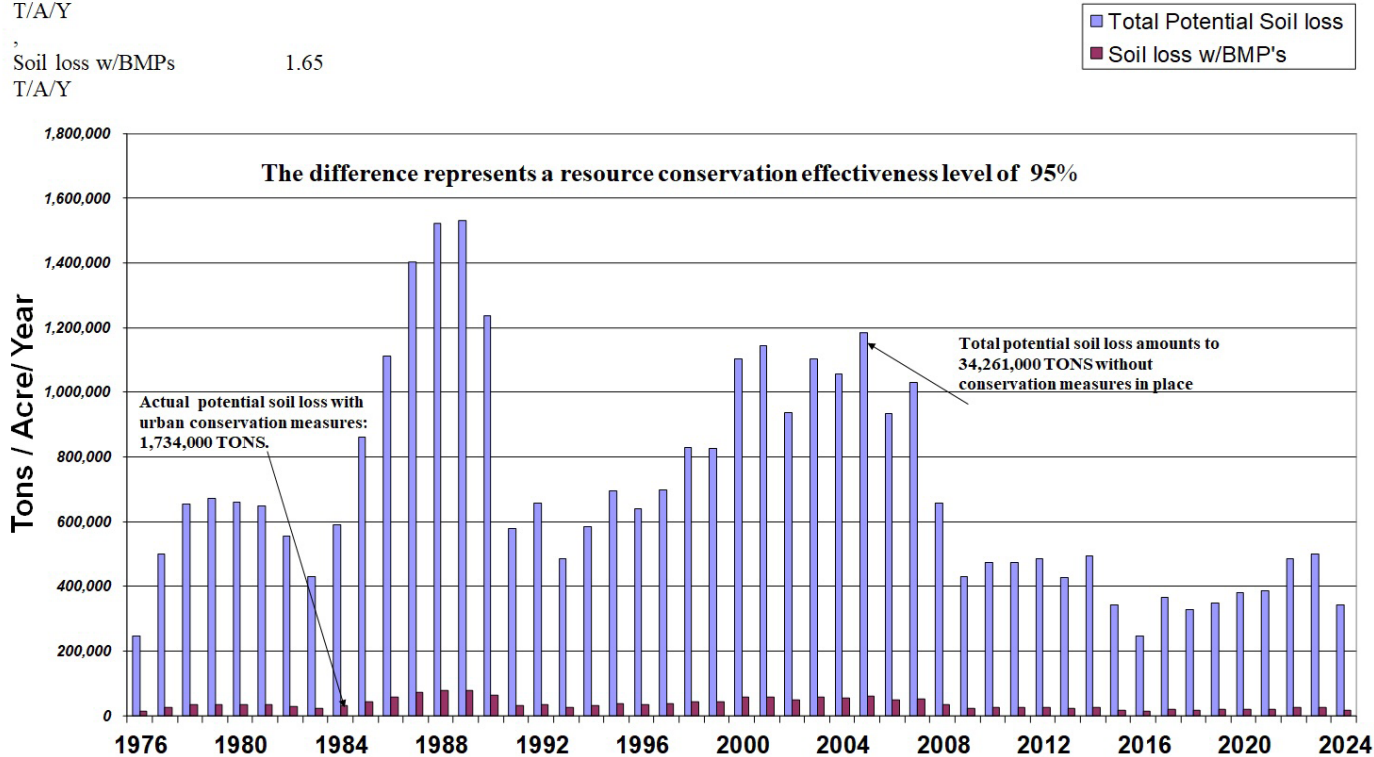


In 2024 New Jersey Soil Conservation Districts processed 6,215 Soil Erosion and Sediment Control applications to ensure that over 10,490 acres disturbed through construction activities were managed appropriately, ensuring that soil erosion and sediment loss were minimized at these sites. District staff reported 53,832 inspections (101,927 staff hours) to ensure compliance with the New Jersey Soil Erosion and Sediment Act, Chapter 251, P.L. 1975.

### New Jersey's Soil Resources Protected Through Urban Conservation 1976 - 2024

Soil Loss Estimates Using USDA  
Revised Universal Soil Loss Equation

Soil loss , No BMPs T/A/Y	32.6
Soil loss w/BMPs T/A/Y	1.65





## Local Program Highlights

Conservation districts, established under state law, are local units of government tasked with managing natural resources at the county level. These districts collaborate with millions of cooperating landowners and operators to help them manage and protect land and water resources on both private and public lands across the United States.

In New Jersey, conservation districts provide a wide range of services to their county constituents. From monitoring erosion control issues to offering conservation education opportunities, identifying agricultural production needs, and assisting with environmental compliance programs, these districts consistently strive to meet the community's needs.

The conservation districts in New Jersey maintain a dedicated staff of erosion control and conservation technicians. Their primary responsibilities include reviewing erosion control plans submitted by applicants and conducting on-site inspections to ensure approved practices are being followed. The district staff inspects development projects to ensure compliance with erosion control plans for residential, commercial, utility, mining, and other land grading activities.

The following are some notable projects the districts reviewed and inspected in 2024.

### Hudson Essex Passaic District

In Secaucus, Hudson County, the **Mori Tract Restoration** project revitalized a 7.22-acre area. Of this, 5.75 acres were mitigated to meet the soil restoration standard. The project entailed the removal of unlawfully placed fill from the early 1990s by the previous property owner. Under current ownership, Hartz Mountain excavated the fill, restored appropriate grades, and planted wetland plants. Prior to excavation, soil testing was conducted to ensure clean fill replaced contaminated material. Stone access roads were constructed, the area was cleared, and the fill was removed by truck to minimize erosion potential.



Wetland plug planting and goose netting deterrents are used to establish bay area wetlands. Typically, plants will reach maturity within three years.

To mitigate soil loss, erosion control matting was laid down during plant growth. The restoration plan also enhanced tidal flow, altered water flow, restored intertidal wetlands, and reintroduced native wetland plants to restore the Cromakill Marsh. Remediation was a prerequisite for any development on the land. The project commenced in October 2022 and concluded in September 2024.



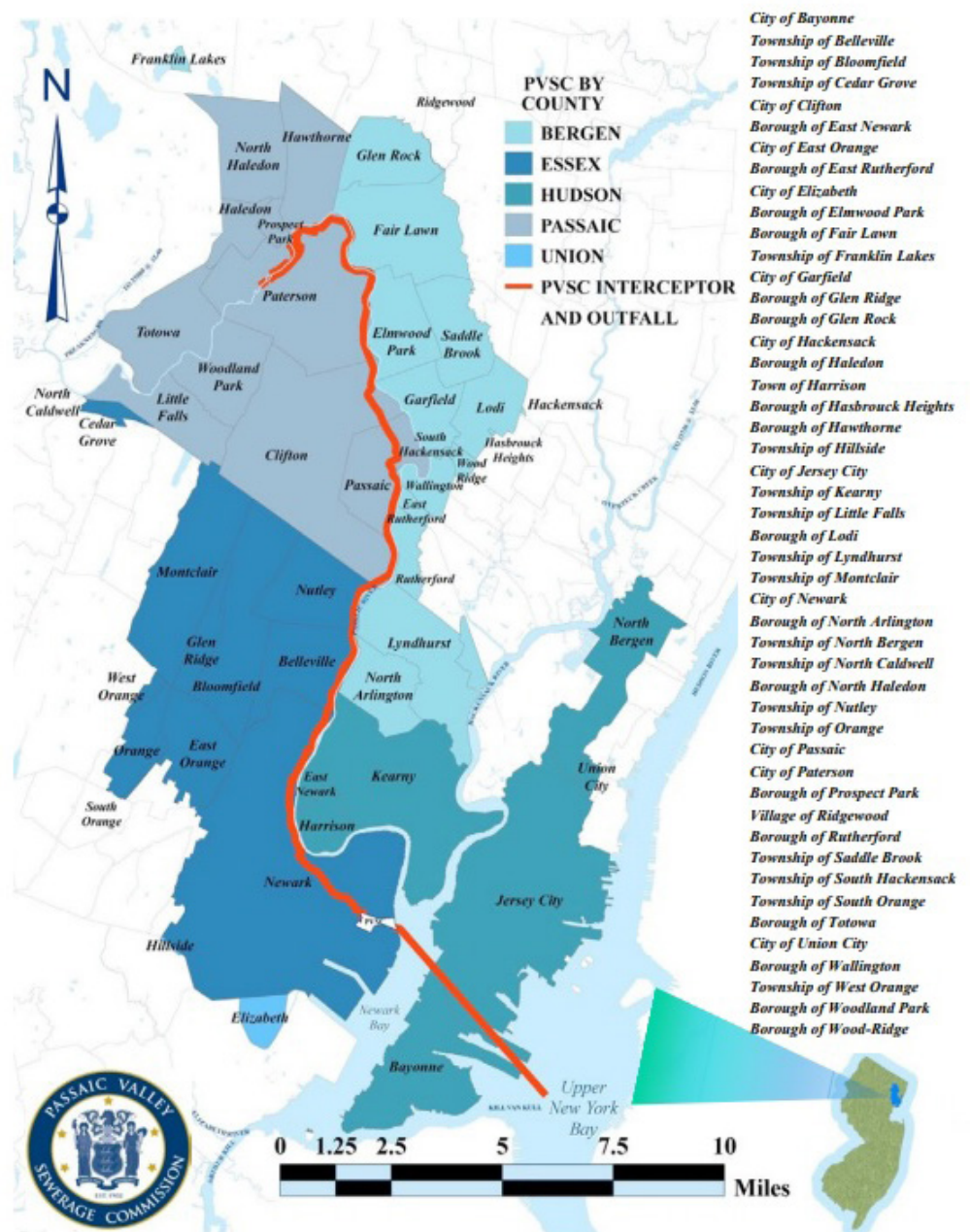
The marsh is adjacent to West Side Avenue and represents the largest open space remaining in Secaucus. The plant list from Langan Engineering indicates that over 40,000 saltmarsh cordgrass plugs were planted, which was the predominant plant species prior to human interference. Additionally, rooted nursery plants and a coastal plain riparian mix of forbs, grasses, and sedges were planted above the low marsh. It is anticipated that this restoration will provide habitat for numerous shore birds and aquatic creatures.

The PVSC Flood Wall in Newark, Essex County, is part of a larger project to make the system stronger after Super-storm Sandy. It's a 30.06-acre project including the construction of a permanent, two-zone floodwall that's 12,590 feet long and 10 to 12 feet high. This huge, concrete wall will protect the east and west sides of the plant from flooding. 90% of the money for this project came from FEMA, and the rest came from the New Jersey Water Bank.

The project is currently under construction. In addition to the floodwall, they're also planning to build:

- A 34-megawatt backup power plant on-site
- Replace and move switchgear and motor control centers throughout entire plant
- Replace electrical cables and utility tunnel bulkheads plant-wide
- Build stormwater pumping stations
- Upgrade and build PVSC's stormwater collection system
- Build new electrical substations

The Passaic Valley Sewerage Commission is located adjacent to the North Reach of Newark Bay. This area has been historically urban, with a lot of impervious surfaces that don't allow for stormwater infiltration. The erosion controls were tailored to protecting the bay by installing silt fences around each work area. A wheel wash station is used to capture the dirt that can get tracked onto roadways.





### Burlington County SCD

The New Jersey Municipal Stormwater Regulation Program was developed in response to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (USEPA) Phase II rules. The Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) program includes four general permits that allow stormwater discharges from Tier A and Tier B municipalities, as well as Public Complexes and Highway Agencies. These permits have been renewed regularly.



Technicians from the Burlington District photograph, digitally locate, and record stormwater structure data. Information is cataloged regarding maintenance needs and structural integrity.

Municipalities in New Jersey are required to map, inspect, and maintain stormwater infrastructure as part of the NJDEP Municipal Separate Storm Sewer Systems (MS4) permit. Under the leadership of District Chair Gina Berg, the Burlington County Soil Conservation District began offering fee-based and non-regulatory MS4 compliance services in 2018.

Leaning on the inspection experience and stormwater expertise prevalent to Soil Conservation District staffs in New Jersey, Burlington SCD initially offered only the inspection of stormwater management basins. They then grew the program by adding the ability to provide GPS location and GIS mapping services. Currently, the District staff is able to map and inspect stormwater management basins, stormwater outfalls, and stormsewer inlets for entire municipalities. In 2024, the Burlington Soil Conservation District provided services to 9 municipalities, inspecting approximately 550 stormwater management basins/outfalls and inspecting/mapping an additional 1,500 stormsewer inlets.

By expanding capabilities, the Burlington County Soil Conservation District has added a new revenue stream. Additionally, these services minimize both monetary costs and employee time for the municipalities and have resulted in stormwater management improvements within Burlington County.



### Conservation Education with the Ocean County SCD

In addition to the regulatory programs administered by the districts, natural resource conservation education is important for all New Jersey residents. The Ocean County Soil Conservation District offers a variety of educational programs for schools and community groups, including students, teachers, scouts, garden clubs, environmental commissions and professionals throughout Ocean County. Their programs bring awareness to the importance of healthy soil and clean water, build strong connections to our native landscapes, and inspire stewardship of our watershed. Each year, the District organizes the Barnegat Bay Environmental Educators Roundtable, which showcases various ways in which the Bay can be managed and protected, including a variety of fieldtrips, workshops, and exhibitors.

Becky Laboy, Education Outreach Coordinator for Ocean SCD presents an education program for students in the Barnegat Bay Watershed.



Becky Laboy, Education Outreach Coordinator and Dr. William Pollock, Chairman of the Ocean County Soil Conservation District, share hands-on activities and information featuring soil sieving, native plant materials and soil health for residents in Ocean County.





## The State Conservation Connection

*The State Of New Jersey Oversees Conservation And Preservation Of New Jersey's Agricultural Resources Through Two Committees And Offers A Cost Share Program To Help Steward Preserved Agricultural Lands*

### State Soil Conservation Committee

The New Jersey Department of Agriculture (NJDA) administers policies and programs to conserve and develop the state's soil, water, and related natural resources on agricultural and urban lands through NJDA's State Soil Conservation Committee (SSCC) and the 14 local soil conservation districts (SCDs) in partnership with other federal and state agencies. Department staff address issues including nonpoint source pollution control, animal waste management and water resources. The SSCC establishes standards and oversees the SCDs' implementation of programs regulating land disturbances for the control of soil erosion, sedimentation, and authorizes stormwater discharges and management in conjunction with the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection's NPDES permit authorities.

The NJ State Soil Conservation Committee and NJ Soil Conservation Districts conduct review and inspection of construction sites throughout New Jersey to ensure compliance with stormwater and erosion control measures.





### **NJ ManureLink Project, Hopeful to Improve Manure Management**

The New Jersey ManureLink Project, funded by the USDA-NRCS, aims to improve manure management in New Jersey. On July 10, 2024, the NJ ManureLink Composting webinar, hosted with collaboration from various agencies, attracted 25 attendees via Zoom. The recording and individual presentations are available on the NJ ManureLink website.

A NJ ManureLink Composting Field Day was held on August 14, 2024, at Copper Creek Nursery in Kingwood, NJ, with 23 attendees. The event featured composting education and hands-on activities led by the NJCC, supported by the NJDA, KES, NJ NRCS, NJWSA, NOFA, and North Jersey RC&D.

The NJ ManureLink initiative has engaged 123 registered users with 19 manure and 2 compost ads. A survey assesses the platform's success. Charlie West, owner of West Farm Nursery in Branchburg, Somerset County, NJ, made connections through NJ ManureLink. West Farm Nursery specializes in seed and grafted cultivated varieties of PawPaw, American Persimmon, and Figs, as well as other plants.



Mr. West discovered NJ ManureLink through Joe Heckman (Rutgers Extension Specialist in Soil Fertility). He found the platform user-friendly and helpful, especially the mapping feature for identifying manure suppliers. He connected with two local manure posting ads but believes not enough people are aware of the service, making securing a consistent manure source challenging. He suggests increasing advertising efforts to attract more users and ensure a reliable supply of materials.

New Jersey ManureLink plans a composting webinar and field day in Spring 2025. For more information, visit [njmanurelink.rutgers.edu](http://njmanurelink.rutgers.edu). This project is funded through a USDA-NRCS, Conservation Innovation Grant.



## State Agriculture Development Committee

### *New Jersey Farmland Preservation Program*

The State Agriculture Development Committee (SADC) leads in the preservation of New Jersey's farmland with over 250,000 acres preserved and promotes innovative approaches to maintaining the viability of agriculture. The SADC administers the Farmland Preservation Program, providing grants to counties, municipalities and nonprofit groups to fund the purchase of development easements on farmland; directly purchasing farms and development easements from landowners; and offering grants to landowners in the program to fund wildlife fencing and soil and water conservation projects. It also administers the Right to Farm Program, oversees the Transfer of Development Rights Bank, and operates the Farm Link Program, which helps connect farm owners with farmers seeking access to farmland and farming opportunities.

#### **Wildlife Fencing Grants**

On January 8, 2024, P.L. 2023, c. 233 was signed into law, enhancing the SADC deer fencing grant program. The program, now called the "Wildlife Fencing Grant Program," still provides cost-share grants for up to 50% of the costs of installing fencing on preserved farms to protect crops from extensive wildlife damage. Eligibility to apply has been expanded to include farm operators and lessees, not just landowners. Also, the grant funding has increased from the prior cap of \$20,000 to \$50,000 and now includes high-tensile woven wire deer fencing, electric bear fencing, and other wildlife fencing. Owners, operators, and lessees of permanently preserved farms can apply to the SADC for a cost-share grant to help cover the cost of installing wildlife fencing on their farms.

Since the beginning of the SADC's Wildlife Fencing Grant Program in 2017, 39 fencing projects have been completed totaling 34 miles of fencing installed and 1,378 acres of farmland fenced. SADC reimbursed farmers over \$473,000 for the costs of installing this fencing. In 2024 alone, the SADC received 8 applications for the Wildlife Fencing Grant Program, approving farmers to fence and protect an additional estimated 170 acres of New Jersey's farmland.



Deer fencing protecting grapevines at Natali Vineyards, LLC, Pittsgrove Township, Salem County.



### Soil & Water Cost-Share Grants

Farms permanently preserved or enrolled in the Term Farmland Preservation Program (for an 8 or 16-year term) can apply for soil and water conservation grants. Grant amounts are based on farm acreage and can fund up to 50% of approved project costs. Eligible projects are designed to prevent soil erosion and sediment damage; control and reduce pollution on farmland; impound, store, and manage water for agricultural purposes; and improve land, soil, and water management to achieve maximum agricultural productivity. The State Soil Conservation Committee (SSCC) has approved 20 eligible project types for cost-sharing through the SADC Soil and Water Grants Program, each having multiple eligible conservation practices:

1. Terrace systems
2. Diversions
3. Contour farming
4. Strip-cropping systems
5. Grassed waterways
6. Windbreak restoration or establishment
7. Stream protection
8. Permanent vegetative cover
9. Precision land shaping & grading
10. Water impoundment reservoirs
11. Irrigation systems
12. Sediment retention, erosion, or water control structures
13. Permanent open drainage systems
14. Underground drainage systems
15. Livestock water facilities
16. Forest tree stand improvement
17. Forest tree plantations
18. Site preparation for natural regeneration
19. Animal waste control facilities
20. Agrichemical handling facilities

In 2024, the SADC approved 27 projects in 19 municipalities across 11 counties totaling \$646,840.20 in obligated funds for planned conservation practices including irrigation systems, underground and open drainage systems, animal waste control facilities, and livestock watering facilities, which will be implemented in the next 3 years. Furthermore, farmers completed 20 approved projects and were reimbursed \$383,579.44 for successfully implementing irrigation systems, underground and open drainage systems, critical area plantings, grassed waterways, animal waste control facilities, and livestock watering facilities.



Open drainage system, Burlington County.

The SADC is in the process of expanding the Soil & Water Cost-Share Grants program in 2025 by increasing cost-share payment rates, doubling the maximum grant amount, changing the formula to make the program more beneficial for small farms, and other changes that will benefit New Jersey farm productivity, viability, and environmental sustainability. Additionally, the SADC is in the process of expanding the grant program so that eligible preserved farms can receive reimbursement up to \$10,000 to help cover the technical assistance costs associated with farm conservation planning.



# FY24 New Jersey Statewide Agency Factsheet

## Conservation Programs Implemented



**\$26.2 million\***

470 CONTRACTS  
51,234 ACRES

\* Includes \$11.8 million EQIP-IRA

**EQIP**

Environmental Quality Incentives Program

NRCS and producers invest in solutions that conserve natural resources while also improving agricultural operations



**\$3 million\***

3 MUNICIPALITIES

\*from FY23

**EWP**

Emergency Watershed Protection Program - Recovery

Helps local communities recover after a natural disaster strikes



**\$600,000**

20 CONTRACTS

**RCPP**

Regional Conservation Protection Program

Promotes coordination of conservation activities with partners that offer value-added contributions



**\$1.86 million\***

69 CONTRACTS  
9,836 ACRES

\* Includes \$732,000 CSP-IRA

**CSP**

Conservation Stewardship Program

For producers who want to take their operation to the next level with a five-year contract that expands on conservation practices



**\$5.6 million**

3 MUNICIPALITIES

**EWP**

Emergency Watershed Protection Program - Buyout

Assists sponsors and landowners protect lives and property from flooding or soil erosion after a natural disaster



**\$520,000**

22 CONTRACTS

**AMA**

Agricultural Management Assistance

Helps agricultural producers manage their financial risk through diversification, marketing or natural resource conservation practices

## Easements:

RCPP-Salem Bog Turtle  
\$53,636  
1 contract, 24.38 acres

Wetland Reserve (WRE)  
\$253,080  
1 contract, 29.6 acres

## Conservation Planning and Application Outcomes



**CONSERVATION PLANS**  
written on agricultural land

101,494 acres



**CONSERVATION PRACTICES**  
applied on forest land

47,102 acres



**SOIL HEALTH**  
improved on crop land

31,127 acres



**WATER QUALITY**  
conservation practices applied

16,305 acres



**WILDLIFE HABITAT**  
enhanced on agricultural land

912 acres



**IRRIGATION EFFICIENCY**  
through applied conservation practices

30,978 acres

## NJ Facts

- Number of Farms: **9,998**
- Land in Farms: **712,000 acres**
- Average Size of Farm: **71 acres**
- Total Cropland: **463,019 acres**
- 20% of land for Parks & Wildlife
- Acres of Forest Land: **1,988,518**
- Food & Agricultural Impact:
  - Output: \$164.1 B
  - Jobs: 965,764

## National Top 5 Producer:

Produce	Rank	Production	Value	Acres
Asparagus	2nd	6.1m lbs.	\$12.5m	1,900
Eggplant	3rd	14.7m lbs.	\$5.8m	800
Tomatoes	3rd	60m lbs.	\$36.2m	2,500
Cranberries	4th	58m lbs.	\$20m	2,900
Spinach	4th	13.6m lbs.	\$3.3m	1,300
Bell peppers	4th	94.8m lbs.	\$36.1m	2,500

## Julie Hawkins

### State Conservationist

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<https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/new-jersey>

USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer and lender.

NJ Facts data from the National Agricultural Statistics Service, the US Forest Service, and Feeding the Economy. Top 5 producer data from the NJDA.



**TOP 5 EQIP CONSERVATION PRACTICES IN NEW JERSEY FY2024**

FARM BILL	INFLATION REDUCTION ACT
1. High tunnel	1. Tree and shrub planting
2. Heavy use area protection	2. Cover Crop
3. Fence	3. Minimum till / No till
4. Livestock pipeline	4. Conservation cover
5. Irrigation pipeline	5. Forest stand improvement

**USDA, NRCS — NEW JERSEY FY2024 OBLIGATIONS  
BY CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT (EQIP, CSP, AMA Only)**

	FARM BILL				INFLATION REDUCTION ACT		DISTRICT TOTALS
	EQIP	CSP	AMA		EQIP	CSP	
District 1	\$334,474	\$83,767	\$29,240		\$535,513	\$53,940	\$1,036,934
District 2	\$6,475,440	\$217,025	\$67,622		\$4,798,667	\$140,480	\$11,699,234
District 3	\$1,604,337	\$236,260	\$207,824		\$247,500	\$22,409	\$2,318,330
District 4	\$539,468		\$145,610		\$82,245		\$767,323
District 5	\$931,844	\$212,386			\$1,924,421	\$136,657	\$3,205,308
District 6	\$4,869						\$4,869
District 7	\$3,546,181	\$246,473	\$36,670		\$3,829,394	\$318,279	\$7,976,997
District 8							
District 9		\$20,000					\$20,000
District 10	\$21,817						\$21,817
District 11	\$83,357				\$165,113	\$20,000	\$268,470
District 12	\$838,175	\$115,290	\$32,948		\$208,421	\$40,000	\$1,234,834
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$14,379,962</b>	<b>\$1,131,201</b>	<b>\$519,914</b>		<b>\$11,791,274</b>	<b>\$731,765</b>	

**CONGRESSIONALLY DIRECTED SPENDING**

District 3	\$55,000	FY23 Watershed and Flood Prevention Operations Program for Kennedy Lake Dredging Project Feasibility Study
District 7	\$450,000	FY23 Conservation Operations - slope stabilization for City of Lambertville
District 11	\$55,000	FY23 Watershed and Flood Prevention Operations Program for Whippany River Regional Improvement Initiative
District 11	\$55,000	FY23 Watershed and Flood Prevention Operations Program for Pine Brook stream desnagging, stabilization evaluation
District 11	\$1,500,000	FY23 Conservation Operations - stream desnagging and streambank stabilization activity in the Whippany River
District 11	\$500,000	FY24 Conservation Operations - stream desnagging and streambank stabilization activity in the Whippany River

**WATERSHED REHABILITATION PLAN (REHAB)**

District 4	\$2,500,000	Assunpink Watershed Dam Sites 4,5,6,18,19
District 7	\$927,000	Assunpink Watershed Dam Site 8

**EMERGENCY WATERSHED PROTECTION - RECOVERY**

District 7	\$3,000,000	Stream stabilization after the July 2023 storms in Warren County
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**EMERGENCY WATERSHED PROTECTION - BUYOUT**

District 7	\$2,600,000	Significant storm event, January 2024
District 11	\$3,000,000	Hurricane Ida, September 2021





## Soil Conservation Districts in New Jersey

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### **STATE SOIL CONSERVATION COMMITTEE NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE**

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Office Hours: 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.



## FOR MORE INFORMATION:

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