

# SustainableCT – An Opportunity For Connecticut To Maximize Resiliency and Preparedness

SustainableCT is a program that was developed by the Connecticut Conference of Municipalities and the Institute for Sustainable Energy at Eastern Connecticut State University to increase town-wide resiliency and public awareness. There are ten categories of actions on which towns can choose to focus. When actions are completed, and specific point levels earned, towns are awarded certification in either a bronze or silver certification level, bringing recognition to the town and its citizens. To learn more, visit <https://sustainablect.org/>



Northwest Conservation District is committed to helping towns that request assistance with their SustainableCT efforts. We are supporting SustainableCT actions in our 34 towns by offering presentations on a variety of topics such as best practices for storm water management e.g. rain gardens and LID design; water quality, conservation approaches in farming e.g. healthy soils and composting, designing and growing gardens that provide habitat for beneficial creatures such as pollinators including insects and birds. Hosting a workshop or presentation earns points or credits for towns towards SustainableCT certification. We have recently provided technical assistance in two communities, Bethlehem and Watertown, to implement LID projects with educational signage provided by NWCD with the support of funding through a grant from Connecticut Community Foundation.

In spring 2019, as a member of the Bethlehem Conservation Commission, I spearheaded the process of Bethlehem becoming a Sustainable CT town. NWCD used Connecticut Community Foundation funding for the design and construction of an LID demonstration rain garden behind Town Hall. The rain garden project and educational components may now be leveraged for points towards Bethlehem's effort to be Bronze Certified with the SustainableCT program. In addition, the demonstration rain garden in Bethlehem has already spurred an effort by the Bethlehem Land Trust to design and implement a large rain garden on its



In the top picture is NWCD staff installing a rain garden behind the Bethlehem Town Hall. The bottom two pictures are Taft School volunteers planting a rain garden by the Heminway Municipal Office Building in Watertown

flagship property, The Bellamy Preserve. This 81+ acre site is adjacent to the historic Bellamy-Ferriday house. There are many visitors to the house, gardens and preserve who will be able to learn about the benefits of rain gardens through educational signage.

In Watertown, the restoration of an old public school building into a town office complex provided the opportunity to demonstrate LID infrastructure in the form of a large rain garden which receives runoff from the impervious surfaces connected with the construction project. The rain garden is located below a new parking lot at the Municipal Office Building. The rain garden intercepts the runoff from the impervious surfaces of the parking area and the building roof, allowing it to infiltrate into the ground and be cleaned before entering Steele Brook, an important



watercourse nearby, and tributary in the Naugatuck River watershed. Project design and construction was funded in part by Connecticut Community Foundation and in-kind funding from the Town of Watertown.

As part of its mission, NWCD stands ready to provide technical and educational services and programs in the areas of conservation and protection of natural resources, e.g. farming, food security, soil health, stormwater management, sustainable resource and energy use, watershed, ecosystem and open space management. NWCD can provide GIS services to support towns land use and open space planning and reporting. We will advise and support those engaged with implementing sustainable actions in all our 34 towns regardless of whether the town is participating in SustainableCT. The staff at NWCD looks forward to assisting our towns on a path to a resilient and sustainable future by providing assistance wherever and whenever we are requested.

*Cynthia Rabinowitz, NWCD Executive Director*