

# The Voice of Local Conservation Winter 2022

## 2021 NWCD Annual Meeting - A Celebration of Partnership

On October 6, 2021, with cautious optimism for a return to normalcy, NWCD's Executive Director Cynthia Rabinowitz and Board Chairman Larry Rousseau welcomed valued conservation partners from NWCD's 34 towns to an in-person annual meeting at the White Memorial Carriage House in Litchfield. Under sunny, crisp fall skies, guests were welcomed to a pre-meeting tour of the newly expanded pollinator garden conducted by Grace Yantag and returned to a festive Carriage House filled with the aromas of a Farm-to-Table dinner being prepared by NWCD treasurer, Doreen Lynch Sudol. After a brief business meeting to approve the Annual Report and nominate NWCD Board members, four conservation awards were presented.

The CONSERVATION ORGANIZATION AWARD was presented to White Memorial Conservation Center's Executive Director, Lucas Hyder by NWCD Board Chairman, Larry Rousseau. The Award honored the Center for its 57 years of introducing and educating tens of thousands of visitors annually to wonders of the natural world; for providing free public access to 4,000 acres of conserved open space for recreation in nature; and for conducting and fostering scientific research in all fields of natural sciences.

The CONSERVATION AGRICULTURE AWARD was presented to Earth's Palate Farm's owners, Renee Giroux and Kevin MacPherson by NRCS conservationist Catherine Pruss. Renee and Kevin were recognized for their dedication to local food production and availability; their commitment to the regional food and farming community; their awareness of the need for a local food system; and their willingness to adopt new agricultural practices.

The EDUCATOR AWARD was awarded to Marvelwood teacher Laurie Doss by NWCD's Kelsey Sudol. Laurie was recognized for her educational leadership in a critical time requiring adaptability, mentorship and personal dedication to her students. Her CT Envirothon's team's participation in the 2021 Virtual Event supported changes to this time tested program to better serve tomorrow's needed environmental leaders.

The CONSERVATION VOLUNTEER AWARD was presented to Brigitte Michaud, the Goshen Green Community Garden's founder by NWCD staff Karen Griswold Nelson and NRCS staff Sarah Ammirato. Brigitte was honored as the "Pollinator Protector" for her love for all the creatures of the earth from the birds and the bees to the flowers and the trees, and her passion and leadership to promote "No Mow May".

The highlight of the evening, The Farm-to-Table dinner, prepared by NWCD treasurer Doreen Lynch-Sudol, was followed with a heartfelt tribute to Jean Cronauer by former chair Curtis Read. The night finished with 3 videos, prepared by Kelsey Sudol, about the Forestry practices of White Memorial, the 'Let it Grow' Cover Crop Challenge, and a year-in-review of NWCD. Special thanks to Doreen and daughter Kelsey for making an annual meeting into a joyous celebration.



Top photo: Brigitte Michaud - Goshen Green Community Garden, Lucas Hyder - Executive Director of White Memorial Conservation Center, Renee Giroux and Kevin MacPherson - Earth's Palate Farm, Bottom photo: Laurie Doss - Marvelwood School and Envirothon Advisor.



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## Connecticut's Woodlands and Water Quality

*“Forests provide important protection for drinking water supplies. They filter pollutants, regulate flow and water temperature, stabilize soils and stream banks, and reduce water treatment costs. Approximately 61.5% of the forestland in the public water supply area in Connecticut is privately-owned with the remaining forestland being Class 1 water company land and public land including state, federal, and municipal lands. Much of the private forestland is not permanently protected and should be prioritized for conservation and landowner engagement.”*  
(Connecticut's 2020 Forest Action Plan, page 110, CT-DEEP)



Connecticut's woodlands provide many known benefits to the State's environment and society, but none more important than the role trees play in protecting and improving the State's water quality.

All parts of trees contribute to water quality. Starting with the canopy: the leaves, needles, and branches intercept rainwater, reducing its force and volume before it hits the ground. Some of the rainwater is absorbed by the canopy, while some evaporates back into the air cooling it. Trees use the absorbed water along with carbon dioxide and energy from sunlight and, through the process of photosynthesis, produce sugars - a form of tree food. Byproducts of this process are oxygen and excess water, which is evaporated into the air through transpiration. The canopy provides shade on water surfaces keeping the water cool for cold-water species of fish and other

wildlife. The stems and large branches of trees also dissipate the velocity of the rainfall and channel it to flow slowly down the trunks to the ground. The root systems of trees hold the soil and prevent it from washing away during rain events. The network of fine roots at or just below the soil surface help filter excess nutrients or pollutants and trap soil sediments carried in the water. Dense tree roots along waterbodies stabilize the banks and prevent erosion and sedimentation.

The forest floor, with its duff layer of leaves, branches, stems, and roots, act as a sponge soaking up the rainfall and slowing the overland flow of water. This allows the water to seep into the soil, recharging the water table.

In aquatic systems, woody debris consisting of fallen branches and trunks of trees provides nutrients and habitat for fish, arthropods, reptiles, and amphibians. Woody debris also adds to the systems' complexity by varying the bottom's structure and current.

*“Not only do forests protect the water quality for organisms living in or near the water, but they are the best tool to keep surface drinking water clean for humans to use. The New York City drinking water supply system, the largest unfiltered water supply in U.S., has found that keeping their watershed in forestland has allowed them to avoid having to build a multi-billion-dollar filtration plant while still providing some of the best drinking water anywhere.”* (Connecticut's 2020 Forest Action Plan, page 39, CT-DEEP)

*Larry Rousseau, Chairman of NWCD, recently retired from the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection's Division of Forestry.*



# Farm-to-Table at NWCD's Annual Meeting

At our annual meeting in October, NWCD served a Farm-to-Table meal prepared by our NWCD treasurer Doreen Lynch-Sudol. This meal highlighted nine farms from throughout our district, who supplied or donated ingredients used. The food included - Maple Glazed Acorn Squash with Apple, Parsnip and Sage; Penne with Butternut Squash and Goat Cheese; Roasted Spaghetti Squash with Kale and Parmesan; Marinated Roasted Boneless Chicken Breast; Pumpkin Cupcakes with Cream Cheese Frosting.

On the right is a list of all the farms with the ingredients supplied. \* indicates it's in the recipe below. Thank you to Doreen for the wonderful meal (with plenty of leftovers for everyone!), and thank you to the farmers for their wonderful support!



## Highlighted Farms

- Barden Farm, New Hartford - Spaghetti Squash, Butternut Squash
- Gresczyk Farms, New Hartford - Acorn Squash\*, Pumpkins
- Hopkins Vineyard, Warren - Wine\*
- Kent Falls Brewery, Kent - Beer
- Little Farm on Main, Bethlehem - Goat Cheese
- March Farms, Bethlehem - Apples\* and Cider
- Ridgeway Farm, Cornwall - Sausage, Onions\* and Parsnips\*
- Sullivan Farm, New Milford - Maple Syrup\*, Tomatoes, Garlic
- Vibrant Farm, Bantam - Kale

## Maple Glazed Acorn Squash with Apple, Parsnip and Sage

Original recipe from Syliva Fontaine from Feasting at Home Blog. Total Time 1 hr 10 min, Yield 6 servings.

### Ingredients for Main Recipe and Maple Pecans:

- 3 small acorn squash
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1 tablespoon maple syrup
- Salt and pepper to taste
- 1 cup Italian sausage
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 2 cups peeled, diced parsnips (2 mid-sized)
- ½ an onion, diced
- 1 cup diced apple (Gala)
- 2 tablespoons chopped sage
- Splash white wine (or sub water)
- 2 cups chopped kale
- ½ cup maple pecans or toasted pecans
- Fresh grated nutmeg (or ground)

### Instructions For Maple Pecans:

1. Preheat oven to 400°F. In a small bowl, coat pecans with real maple syrup. Add pinch of salt and cracked pepper.
2. Spread out on a greased baking sheet. Bake 8 minutes. Give them a mix, then bake another 7-13 minutes. Time will vary depending on oven, make sure they don't burn.
3. Remove, let cool 3-4 minutes. Use metal spatula to unstick. If stuck, place back in oven for 1-2 min and try again. Let cool before use.

### Instructions for Main Recipe:

1. Preheat oven to 400°F. Cut acorn squash lengthwise and scoop out seeds with a spoon. Brush insides with a mix of 1 tablespoon olive oil and 1 tablespoon maple syrup. Sprinkle generously with salt and pepper, and lay skin-side up on a greased or parchment lined baking sheet. Roast in oven at 400°F for 30-40 min, until you can pierce through skin and fresh with a fork. Remove from the oven and using a metal spatula turn them over, trying to keep caramelized edges intact, and let cool. Place in a baking dish.
2. While squash is roasting, brown Italian sausage, set aside and wipe out the pan.
3. In same pan, sauté parsnips and onions in olive oil, on medium heat until tender, about 10 minutes.
4. Add apples, kale and sage, and sauté 5 more minutes, until apples tender. May need to add a little more olive oil. Generously add salt and pepper.
5. Splash with a little white wine, add pecans. When the wine has evaporated, add 1 Tablespoon maple syrup. Add sausage back in. Taste for salt, adding if necessary. Add a little fresh grated nutmeg, or a pinch or two of ground. Fill the squash with the apple parsnip sausage mixture, and place in a 350F until heated through (about 15-20 min).



# A Container Garden Workshop at Brooker Memorial Center

In May of 2021, NWCD held a container garden workshop at Brooker Memorial Child Care Center in Torrington. Twenty families attended, learned the basics of at-home container garden care, and received the materials for two potted container gardens for vegetables and herbs. These materials included an instructional flyer, containers, growing medium, up to 8 seedlings, organic fertilizer, hand trowel, and a watering can.

During the last two years, food insecurity has increased throughout our district, but has hit families of at-risk communities the hardest. This program works to increase NWCD's ability to address this important problem. Post-surveys from several participants indicated the program and their summer container gardens were a success. We hope to use this workshop as a model to expand our programs relating to food insecurity. This project was made possible thanks to funding from the Northwest Connecticut Community Foundation.



## A New Partnership - Beardsley Memorial Library

A new partnership between the Beardsley Memorial Library in Winsted and NWCD was started this year to address food insecurity and agricultural education at the local level. After receiving funds from the Environmental Professionals Organization of CT (EPOC), NWCD was able to purchase and install 4 raised garden beds at the Beardsley Library.

The goals of this project were to increase access and education to locally grown produce. Winsted is an underserved community where many residents may have limited access to nutritious food,



especially in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. With the installation of the raised beds, kids planted seedlings and harvested vegetables each week throughout the summer, while learning about methods of growing food

and maintaining a garden.

A variety of vegetables were planted including cherry tomatoes, lettuce, bell peppers, yellow squash, zucchini, eggplant, basil as well as strawberries, watermelon and rhubarb. Each week kids were able to take home the vegetables that were ready to be harvested, leaving with a bag full of produce. At weekly programs, participants were also able to water, measure and tend to the garden, giving them a sense of ownership over the food they were producing. This project was very successful, on average 8 kids attended programs each week, with many returning for multiple weeks. Each week highlighted a different vegetable or fruit that was in season, encouraging kids to try new foods that were fresh and grown locally. Some of their favorites included sweet corn, sugar snap peas, watermelon, and cherry tomatoes.

The final week each participant was able to take home materials to start their own at-home gardens next spring. This project would not have been possible without funding from EPOC, and support and assistance from the staff at the Beardsley Library, especially Children's Librarian Carol Parent. NWCD is looking forward to this continued partnership and will continue to maintain a children's vegetable garden at Beardsley next year.



# CT Envirothon - Enriching Future Environmental Stewards

This year marked the 30th year of CT Envirothon, whose mission is to promote environmental awareness and active personal stewardship in high schoolers. There are five main program stations - Soils, Forestry, Aquatics, Wildlife, and a rotating Current Issue. This season, the CT Envirothon Steering Committee hosted a virtual series during the first full week of each month from December to April. Each day, a different station released materials on [ctenvirothon.org](http://ctenvirothon.org) or held hour-long webinars, which were also uploaded to our CT Envirothon YouTube channel.

In May, we successfully held our second virtual competition on Google Classroom with twelve participating teams from ten schools. Each station posted their test for 48-hours, and because of a timer extension, teams had one hour to complete each test. They also submitted a current issue scenario about Water Management. First Place was awarded to Marvelwood School, Second Place to Coginchaug Regional High School, and Third Place to Northwestern Regional High School #7. Cash prizes and team medals were awarded to the top three teams. Congratulations to all teams for persevering and competing!

In July, Marvelwood School in Kent represented CT at the National Virtual Envirothon Competition, hosted by Nebraska. Marvelwood School placed 34th overall, won the scavenger hunt contest, and Aiden (class of '23) won the photo contest with a photo of an American Kestrel nestling being banded. Congratulations to Marvelwood and advisor Laurie Doss!

Through team and advisor feedback, we are creating hands-on activities for next year. Each station is building at-home activity kits, contributing to our virtual Scavenger Hunt through the GooseChase app, and releasing presentations on our YouTube channel. We truly appreciate the support and feedback from our teams and advisors, and look forward to a great season next year.

"As someone who is interested in pursuing environmental science, it was enriching for me to participate in Envirothon and gain experience in the field early on...I believe that Envirothon at the state level is an invaluable experience for those students who are interested in the environment, as well as for those who haven't thought much about it. It was an honor to be part of the National competition this year. I treasure the knowledge I have gained and will cherish the moments spent with my wonderful team."  
~Olivia Pignataro, Marvelwood School



First Place Team: From left to right; Ashley Wilkins, Brennan Wilkins, Olivia Pignataro, Madeleine Paddock, Aiden Cherniske, Laurie Doss (Advisor).

## Installing Rain Gardens at Local Schools

In 2021, NWCD installed two rain gardens - one in Woodbury and one in Roxbury - as part of our initiative Building Resilient Local Communities with Low Impact Development (LID). This initiative aims to improve stormwater infrastructure and increase local resiliency through demonstration projects.

These rain gardens, which were funded by the Connecticut Community Foundation and were delayed due to the pandemic, are outfitted with signage. They are also excellent locations for native plants to create habitat for birds, butterflies and other wildlife year-round. To learn more about rain gardens and LID, visit our website [nwcd.org](http://nwcd.org).

The Woodbury rain garden, photo right, captures stormwater from a gym at Mitchell Elementary School. The rain garden installed in Roxbury captures stormwater from the roof of Booth Free School. Both

structures capture runoff from their nearby buildings and stop excess nutrients from entering local streams.

These rain gardens contribute to the Silver Sustainable CT certification in both Woodbury and Roxbury. Sustainable CT (<https://sustainablect.org>)

is a statewide initiative run through Eastern Connecticut State University to address resiliency and climate adaptation in CT Towns. NWCD is glad to aid Woodbury and Roxbury in reaching their higher-level certifications.

If your school is interested in collaborating with NWCD to create a rain garden or LID structure, please contact us at [info@nwcd.org](mailto:info@nwcd.org).



# Cover Crops - Improving and Protecting Soil Health

Cover crops have many applications to improve soil health. Traditionally, cover crops were used to protect the soil throughout the winter months by preventing erosion. Cover crops have additional benefits such as adding nutrients and organic matter, weed suppression and improving water quality.

Cover crops are typically planted in the late summer, after the cash crop has been harvested. Popular choices for single species cover crops are winter rye, oats or triticale. These provide a thick soil cover during the winter months and are terminated in the spring by mowing, roller crimping or applying herbicide. Multi-species mixes can be customized to fit the soil health goals of the producer. Cover crop mixes with legumes will fix nitrogen in the soil and increase nutrient cycling. Planting cover crops in between vegetable rows, or mid-season after an early cash crop is harvested, are other innovative ways to manage soil health.

Producers should schedule planting dates in the fall around rainy weather, while giving enough time for the seeds to germinate and cover crop to establish before a frost. Producers should also have a termination plan, and back-up plan, for a smooth transition to spring planting of a cash crop.

Implementing cover crops is different on every farm, so experimentation is necessary to find a protocol that works for you. If you are interested in trying out cover crops on your farm, questions can be directed to Sarah Ammirato at USDA-NRCS, 860-618-4535.



Top - clover in between corn.  
Bottom - March Farms in Bethlehem using cover crops between corn on a hill.



## NRCS Programs and Funding Opportunities

The Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) is a branch of the USDA that provides agricultural producers and landowners with financial and technical assistance to implement conservation practices and address resource concerns.

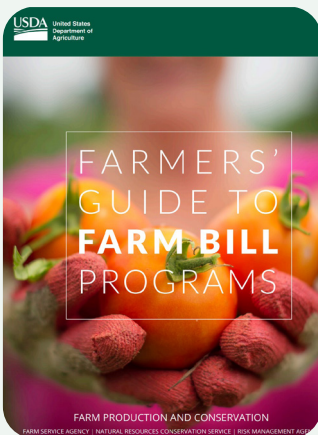
NRCS works with producers to identify goals and areas for improvement in soil and water management, production and conservation. Conservation programs and technical assistance are voluntary to participate in, and free of charge.

Some examples of

resource concerns are soil erosion, poor soil health, compaction or inadequate organic matter, excess water runoff, and plant productivity and health.

Conservation practices that address these concerns may include planting cover crops, installing contour field strips, reduced tillage and no-till, grassed waterways, livestock grazing management, and a myriad of other possible practices, some of which include engineering design, which is also provided at no cost to the individual. Financial assistance comes in the form of contracts which are cost-shared with the participant and not paid in full by NRCS.

If you are an agriculture producer or landowner interested in these services, please contact the Torrington Service Center at 860-626-8852.



## An Act Concerning Certain Soil Initiatives was signed by Governor Lamont, becoming Public Act No. 21-88

NWCD, with the CT Council on Soil and Water Conservation, worked for 2+ years to amend Section 2 & 3 of PA 21-88 of the CT General Statutes' Section 22a-314 and 315, on Soil and Water Conservation to include soil health as a mandate. Section 4 of the Act adds soil health to the erosion and sediment control statute, meaning that soil health measures can be required during construction and site stabilization.

This is the way forward to the goal of creating a soil health program that places funds, technical assistance, and knowledge in the hands of landowners promoting practices that protect, enhance and restore soil health on all landscapes. Ecosystem services provided by healthy soil include water quality and availability; food security; carbon sequestration; and a wide range of economic activities.

### “Let it Grow”: Cover Crop Challenge - A Collaborative New Program

NWCD has initiated soil health programming as a key component of our work with farms, Inland-Wetland Agencies, citizens and all entities involved in working with the land. One main initiative is the recent “Let It Grow”: Cover Crop Challenge underwritten by a grant from Berkshire Agriculture Ventures. Two other planning partners for this project are USDA-NRCS (United States Department of Agriculture - Natural Resource Conservation Service) and CT RC&D (Connecticut Resource Conservation and Development).

Fourteen participating farms, whose names are in the box below, received free seed and soil testing services to support growing cover crops to their maximum vegetative state to improve soil health.

To learn more about this program, watch our video at <https://nwcd.org/cover-crop-challenge/>

Photos on right - Top: Soil sampling at Koewing Farm in Harwinton, Middle: Chicken coup at Earth's Palate Farm in Warren, Bottom: Vibrant Farm in Bantam.



#### Farms Participating in the Challenge

- Adamah Farm, Falls Village
- Angevine Farm, Warren
- Beavertides Farm, Falls Village
- Camps Rd Farm, Kent
- Earth's Palate Farm, Warren
- Great Ring Farm, Sandy Hook
- Hamlet Hill Farm, Salisbury
- Howling Flats Farm, Canaan
- Koewing Manor Farm, Harwinton
- March Farms, Bethlehem
- Pleasant Valley Botanicals, Pleasant Valley
- SEAmarron Farmstead, Danbury
- Sweet Ring Farm, Sandy Hook
- Vibrant Farm, Bantam



# Community Science - An Evolution of Data Collection

Community science (or C\*Sci) is exciting, valuable, and widely used by scientific communities. Formerly known as 'citizen science', community science is a way of making observations and collecting data on the natural world by those who are not scientists by profession. Those who participate may do so for many different reasons. Common motivations include a love of nature and science, wanting to contribute to scientific knowledge, using the process as a hobby, and meeting people to build community.

Possibly the most familiar forms of community science are bird counts, such as Audubon's Christmas Bird Count or the Great Backyard Bird Count. Others include gathering data on garbage during beach cleanups and taking part in BioBlitzes. Now, the opportunities are as diverse as identifying organisms on trail cams in Panama to transcribing natural history notebooks to identifying galaxy shapes.

Previously, community science was looked upon with a bit of hesitancy by the scientific community because participants often lacked training and results could not be verified. However, in the last two decades, science has become increasingly community-based; many have recognized the resource limitations of traditional data collection. Many scientists now encourage community data collection by training participants in accurate and precise procedures so that the data is truly useful.

Community science participants generally meet their personal goals while contributing important information to the scientific field (and often have a lot of fun at the same time). In addition, by reaching out to the communities where data is being collected, science as a whole becomes less exclusive, more diverse and inclusive, and hopefully more equitable in communities being served and studied. Community science, when done well, is a win-win for all.

One of the most appealing aspects of community science is the variety of ways participants can be involved. From individuals and families to formal and informal learning settings, there are projects available for everyone! For example, students in biology courses at Northwestern Connecticut

Community College, take part in a wide variety of community science projects as part of their coursework. Known in higher education as course-based undergraduate research projects, or CURES, they really are a form of community science. To name just two examples, in general biology, they are researching previously unknown strains of antibiotic-resistant bacteria. In ecology, they take part in decades-long studies of the changing composition of regional forests and the health of local rivers. Students in all of these projects contribute their data to practicing scientists, who are then able to use the students' data to add to scientific knowledge as a whole.

Are you or your family interested in getting involved with a community science project in your area or online? Get outdoors and contribute through iNaturalist by photographing organisms and sharing with the community (requires an app on your phone). A great way to contribute from the comfort of your home is through Zooniverse ([www.zooniverse.org](http://www.zooniverse.org)), a collection of 50 different community science projects. With spring only a few months away, a project perfect for families is NestWatch ([www.nestwatch.org](http://www.nestwatch.org)) to help track the reproductive success of a variety of bird species.

Feel free to reach out to the District if you would like other ideas!

*Tara Jo Holmberg, NWCD Board Member*



NCCC students working on their citizen science projects





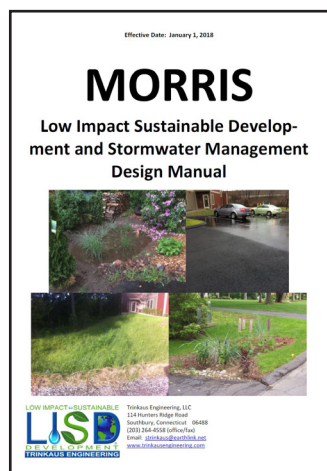
# Managing Your Watershed for Clean Water

Clean water is not a guarantee. Anthropogenic activities or human use of land alter our water resources. From paving our driveways, to building homes, tilling the land for agriculture, creating wastewater and industrial pollution, and more - all of these activities have varying effects on our water resources.

One form of non-point source pollution - untraceable pollution - is stormwater runoff, which occurs when rainwater flows over the ground, picking up chemicals and nutrients. Some examples of pollutants are phosphorus, nitrogen, Fecal Coliform or E. coli, and sediment. The elevated levels of nitrogen and phosphorus in our waterways make our lakes, rivers and streams vulnerable to artificial eutrophication - or nutrient enrichment - and increase their risk of toxic cyanobacteria blooms. Excess sediment from erosion can cause upstream riverbank failures, and downstream can cause deposition in recreational areas and sensitive habitats. What can we do about all of this?

Watershed Management, or balancing various land use types and activities in your watershed, is important for ensuring healthy water resources. Many lake and watershed organizations throughout northwestern Connecticut are actively working to protect our aquatic resources through watershed protection. NWCD provides technical services to these volunteer-based organizations to aid in this process.

One framework to decrease human impact in a watershed is called Low Impact Development or LID. This process applies sustainable techniques to new development, or to retrofit already developed land, avoiding negative impacts. There are many types of LID for a range of land use types and projects. If you are interested in learning more, go to: <https://nemo.uconn.edu/tools/index.htm>



Sediment and gravel deposited on side of a local road after extreme rain event, draining into nearby stream

All human land uses can be implemented in a manner that minimize their effect on the natural environment. The problem with the pollutants previously mentioned is that once they enter a lake, river or stream, they are extremely costly to remove. One estimate is that every dollar spent on prevention of excess nutrients entering a lake can save \$1,000 of in-lake management. Prevention is key. To learn more, visit: <https://nwcd.org/education-highlights/> or email NWCD at [info@nwcd.org](mailto:info@nwcd.org).

*Kelsey Sudol, NWCD Environmental Associate*

## Land Use Resources to Protect Water Quality in NWCT

The Northwest Hills Council of Governments (NHCOG) held their 5th Thursday forum in October focusing on Protecting Lakes & Water Quality. Presenters included Karen Griswold Nelson from NWCD, Sean Hayden from the Lake Waramaug Task Force, Mike Jastremski from the Housatonic Valley Association, Jamie Fischer and Connie Trolle from the Bantam Lake Protective Association. Topics included LID implementation, the importance of watersheds and their effects on their local waterbodies - even if they are miles away, examples of practices to protect Lakes and more. Visit NHCOG's YouTube Channel to watch the presentation or use the link here: <https://youtu.be/beScuDnQAKc> Also developed for the meeting, is a list of LID resources which can be found here: <https://nwcd.org/videos/>

## A Tribute to a NWCD Legend - Jean Cronauer

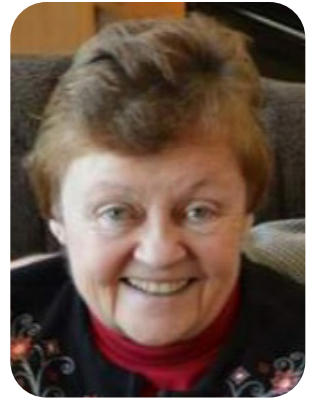
If you didn't know Jean Cronauer, you missed someone special. She was the force that took our NWCD organization from a fading relic of the Dust Bowl era to a modern powerhouse for conservation. She was a lone part-time employee when she arrived at our little office in Litchfield over thirty years ago. We were the Litchfield County Soil & Water Conservation District back then with few funds and a mission to help disappearing dairy farms. Jean however had a vision of what we could become and set out to make the District more effective and innovative. She had experience as a teacher and was already self-educated in conservation issues. I can offer some pairs of oppositional adjectives to describe Jean: like, relentless yet forgiving, considerate yet demanding, calming yet agitating, understanding yet impatient. If this sounds a bit complex, it was, but it enabled her to deal with every situation and personality type to solve problems. Nobody could put one over on her. When she ran the plant sale, Lord help the vendor who showed up with sad looking stock. He was summarily sent packing back to his nursery with a full load.

The annual Earth Day Plant Sale was Jean's pride and joy for so many reasons. It grew bigger and better every year. It was "old home week" for Master Gardeners, and Litchfield County flourished with

native plants as a result. In a way, Jean was the Master Pollinator. She was also the impetus who jump started the statewide Envirothon program that trained high school teams which always seem to win or place at the national competition. Jean arranged to educate the teachers who then educated all the students. How clever was that? She strolled around with her clipboard keeping tabs on everyone during annual trainings and competitions. She was like a mother hen there.

Jean could also write persuasively from small grants to large. She could turn a phrase on a dime too, and I must admit added some pithy flesh to my annual fundraising letters. Jean really made my role as Chairman easy. In retrospect, all I had to do was say "YES" to her ideas and insights. Together, we were able to reorganize the long suffering eight County Districts into five watershed based regional districts with secure state funding for their ongoing support. That was no small task! So.... I think the reader should realize by now that Jean was a Superstar with a Galaxy of accomplishments and a Universe of friends.

We will all miss her.....signed Curtis Read



I have a Bachelor of Science degree from UCONN in Natural Resources with a concentration in sustainable forest resources.

My associate's degree is in Environmental

Science from Northwestern Connecticut Community College. My background and experiences include working on several farms in Litchfield County, and as a River Steward on our Wild and Scenic Farmington River funded through a grant by the National Park Service. I was an intern at Great Mountain Forest, and had a seasonal position with DEEP working with the state-land forester's division. I volunteer with Friends of American Legion and Peoples State Forest, and with Farmington River Coordinating Committee. These positions have given me hands on experience in forestry and watershed management. I am very honored to be a part of the team here at Northwest Conservation District and the Natural Resources Conservation Service, and look forward to contributing and making a positive impact.

If you are interested in agriculture assistance or would like information on developing a conservation plan, please contact me [leeane@nwcd.org](mailto:leeane@nwcd.org). This position was funded partially by a National Association of Conservation Districts Technical Services grant.

## NWCD Welcomes Agricultural Technician Leeane Marvin



## 2022 Solar Programs for CT Farms and Residences

Forget everything you knew about solar programs in Connecticut; starting in 2022 it's a whole new ball game, with even a new umpire. "Residential Renewable Energy Solutions" will replace the former Green Bank programs and will be run by the utilities, Eversource in our Northwest corner.

Rate 01 customers installing solar, which includes 1-to-4 family residences and most family farms, may choose to be compensated through a net metering option similar to the present Green Bank program or a new "Buy-All tariff," a fixed amount paid by the utility for each kilowatt-hour of solar production. The Buy-All tariff set for 2022 is 29.43 cents; those choosing the netting option will enjoy their energy cost-avoided (what they would have paid Eversource, currently over 22 cents per kWh) plus a REC (Renewable Energy Credit) bonus of 3.18 cents for each kWh produced. These compensation rates will be adjusted annually, but once set are fixed for a 20-year contract life. (Note that under the Buy-All option, Eversource is literally buying all your solar production; you still must purchase what your home uses from Eversource.)

In addition to payment choices, there is new flexibility in system size, which in the past was limited

to historical usage. The new program allows systems to be sized larger in anticipation of installing electric heating and cooling (using ground- or air-source heat pumps) and buying up to two electric vehicles, although systems will be capped at 25 kilowatts total. (The average CT household would need 7.5 kW.) As before, a basic energy assessment (HES) will be required— go to [www.energizect.com](http://www.energizect.com) or call 877-947-3873 to schedule. For more details, ask your solar installer (a list can be found on the same website) and be sure to explore special income-eligible advantages.

A similar program is being rolled out for commercial (Rate 030) customers, including small businesses, schools, and municipal buildings, as well a a new program to support battery installation. Again, contact your installer or look for more information in our next newsletter.

Under either utility program, farms can also take advantage of the Rural Energy for America Program (REAP) run by the USDA, which offers grants of up to 25% of installation cost.

For more information on REAP contact Amanda Johnson ([amanda@ctfarmenergy.org](mailto:amanda@ctfarmenergy.org)). And remember, the 26% federal tax credit is still in place for 2022.

*Ray Furse, Vice-chair NWCD*

NWCD serves the following 34 northwestern CT towns. Sustainable CT towns are in **bold**, Bronze certified towns in **brown**, Silver certified towns in **green**:



**Barkhamsted, Bethel, Bethlehem, Bridgewater, Brookfield, Canaan (Falls Village), Colebrook, Cornwall, Danbury, Goshen, Hartland, Harwinton, Kent, Litchfield, Morris, New Fairfield, New Hartford, New Milford, Newtown, Norfolk, North Canaan, Plymouth, Roxbury, Salisbury, Sharon, Sherman, Southbury, Thomaston, Torrington, Warren, Washington, Watertown, Winchester and Woodbury.**

### SAVE THE DATE

EARTH DAY PLANT SALE AT THE GOSHEN FAIRGROUNDS APRIL 22-24, 2022

Order forms and webstore released by March. TBD if Preorder only - please watch [nwcd.org](http://nwcd.org) for future details.

**To support NWCD,** please make a charitable donation by either mailing a check made out to NWCD to: 1185 New Litchfield St, Torrington, CT 06790 or donate via Paypal on <http://nwcd.org/donate/>



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## Conservation Corner

nwcd.org 860 626 7222

**Programs, Materials and Events from NWCD  
and a few of our partners, follow the links below:**

- Benefits of Native Plants Storymap: <https://nwcd.org/storymaps/>
- Farmington River Watershed Association: <https://frwa.org/events/>
- Sharon Audubon: <https://sharon.audubon.org/events>
- Litchfield Hills Audubon: <https://lhasct.org/events--walks.html>
- Pollinator Pathway: <https://www.pollinator-pathway.org/connecticut>
- Housatonic Valley Association: <https://hvatoday.org/hva-news/>
- Follow the Forest StoryMap: <https://hvatoday.org/connecting-forest-corridors/>
- Pomperaug River Watershed Coalition: <https://www.pomperaug.org/events>
- Friends of American Legion and People's State Forest (FALPS): <https://falps.org/events/>
- White Memorial Conservation Center: <https://whitememorialcc.org/calendar>



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