

The Voice of Local Conservation Fall 2022

A Celebration of Partnerships - 2022 NWCD Annual Meeting

On a dark and stormy night in Salisbury, our annual meeting was a warm and welcoming celebration for partners from our 34 service towns. Salisbury First Selectman, Curtis Rand, welcomed attendees to The Grove at Lake Wononscopomuc, a town facility open to town citizens and partners for community events.

After a brief annual meeting electing board directors and alternates, and approving the NWCD annual report, the meeting was adjourned to our second “Farm-to-Table Dinner”. Lovingly prepared by NWCD Treasurer, Doreen Lynch-Sudol, and her able assistant, NWCD Natural Resource Specialist, Kelsey Sudol, the dinner and accompanying libations were locally sourced from agricultural producers in 9 of our 34 towns. Following the meal and Pumpkin Pie, two conservation awards were presented:

The 2022 Conservation Agriculture Award was presented by NRCS District Conservationist, Catherine Pruss, to Joanne Charon, owner of Autumn Harvest Orchard in Norfolk. Joanne was honored for her naturally grown produce supplied to local schools and the surrounding community. For years, Joanne’s focus has been to improve crops and soil fertility without synthetic fertilizers or herbicides. Joanne was also recognized for her decades of military service in the Air Force and Navy Reserves and her steadfast support for sustainable local agriculture.

The 2022 Conservation Education Award, awarded to the staff of the Beardsley and Memorial Library, was presented by NWCD staff, Kelsey Sudol, and Soil Conservationist with USDA-NRCS, Sarah Ammirato. The library staff was honored for their dedication to conservation and agricultural programs, and their partnership with NWCD on delivering programs focused on food resiliency and community gardening to an underserved community. Carol Parent, Children’s Services Director, accepted the award on behalf of the Library and her staff partner, Teen Librarian Director, Kimmie Killmer.

Three videos, created by Kelsey Sudol, were presented. A Year in Review highlighted three NWCD projects; an Overview of Lake Sampling discussed NWCD’s partnership with the Lake Wononscopomuc Association; and the last video highlighted the 50th anniversary of the Inland Wetlands and Watercourses Act.

NWCD staff and Board members then addressed the culmination of a long-term initiative to award scholarships to graduating seniors from high schools in NWCD’s service towns. The scholarships are named for three conservation heroes, Dick Leavenworth of Woodbury; Jacolyn Mott and the Reverend Ledlie Laughlin from Cornwall. The four recipients are entering environmental fields of study in college this fall.

The evening closed with presenting the CT Envirothon 2022 winning team plaque to Housatonic Valley Regional team adviser, Dave Moran. He was joined by Audra Leach, Envirothon Team Adviser (formerly Housatonic, now Nonnewaug), and Team Adviser, Jen Perga, of Northwest Regional High School, the 2020 winning team.

Special thanks to Mary Silks and Michael Sconyers for helping coordinate the event, and to all attendees for making our annual meeting a warm celebration.



Joanne Charon, owner of Autumn Harvest Orchard in Norfolk



Left to Right: Kelsey Sudol (NWCD), Sarah Ammirato (USDA-NRCS) and Carol Parent (Beardsley and Memorial Library)



Envirothon Advisors left to right: Jen Perga (Northwest Regional 7), Audra Leach (Nonnewaug formally Housatonic) and Dave Moran (Housatonic Regional)

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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 thirteen farms from throughout our district, who supplied or donated ingredients. The food included - Mushroom Risotto, Beets with Goat Cheese, a Wintergreen Salad (with bacon or a vegetarian option), Grilled Chicken and Pumpkin Pie.

On the right is a list of all the farms with the ingredients they supplied. * indicates it's in the recipe below. Thank you to Doreen for another delicious meal, and thank you to the farmers for their support!



Highlighted Farms

- Briar Hill Farm, Goshen - Chicken Breast
- Chanticleer Acres, Litchfield - Mushrooms, Dandelion Greens*, Kale*, Swiss Chard*, Mint*
- Crosswicks Farm, Goshen - Sugar Pumpkins, Dandelion Greens*, Kale*, Swiss Chard*
- Cynthia Rabinowitz, Bethlehem - Garlic*
- Earth's Palate Farm, Warren - Thyme
- Gresczyk Farms, New Hartford - Bacon*
- Sunset Meadow Vineyards, Goshen - Wine
- Norbrook Farm Brewery, Colebrook - Beer
- Little Farm on Main, Bethlehem - Goat Cheese
- Ridgway Farm, Cornwall - Maple Syrup, Onions*
- Sunflower Hill Farm, Morris - Eggs
- Tara Farm, Watertown - Beets
- Thorncrest Farm, Goshen - Whole Milk

Winter Greens with Bacon and Mint

Original recipe from *Williams and Sonoma Entertaining, Complete Entertaining Cookbook*.

Total Time: 30 min, Yield: 6 servings.

Ingredients:

- ½ cup olive oil
- 8 slices bacon, cut into small strips
- For a vegetarian option, sub golden raisins
- 1 large onion, chopped about 2 cups
- 3 cloves garlic, minced
- ¼ cup red wine vinegar
- 1.5 lbs well-washed greens (dandelion, kale, chard, mustard greens or a combination), stemmed and cut into thin strips
- Salt and freshly ground pepper to taste
- 6 tbsp chopped fresh mint

Instructions for Recipe:

1. Heat the olive oil in a large saute pan with high sides. Add the diced bacon, and cook until translucent but not browned, about 3 minutes.
2. Add the onion and cook until soft, about 8 minutes. Add the garlic and cook for 1-2 minutes.
3. Add the vinegar and greens, and cover the pan.
4. Cook the greens until wilted, stirring occasionally, about 5 minutes.
5. Season with salt and pepper, and stir in the mint just before serving.



Establishing NWCD's Scholarship Program - Supporting Future Environmental Stewards

After many years of consideration, a scholarship subcommittee, comprised of NWCD Board members, established a scholarship fund for high school students from specific schools in NWCD's 34 town service area. It was the subcommittee's wish to establish scholarships in the name of 3 local champions of conservation and environmental education that had provided not only funding but overall support for NWCD over many years. The subcommittee asked the applicants to demonstrate their passion and interest in water and land preservation; and to demonstrate their intent to pursue environmental education as part of their studies in college or university. Four students meeting that criteria were awarded scholarships in August.

Jacolyn "Jackie" Mott Scholarships, as established, are to be awarded each year to a graduating high school senior from Northwestern Regional High School or Wamogo Regional High School. Jackie was a longtime District supporter and western Connecticut resident. Her seemingly quiet life overlooking the western hills was filled with a passion for land and river preservation, and a love of art and Native American history. Her faithful participation in NWCD's Earth Day Plant sale resulted in her gardens being filled with native habitat providing healthy food, clean water and safe shelter for her neighborhood's creatures. Her scholarships were awarded to two 2022 graduating seniors from Northwestern Regional High School; Lydia Beers from Norfolk, CT attending Worcester Polytechnic Institute (Worcester, MA) and Brianna Lauzon from Norfolk, CT, attending Northwestern Community College (Winsted, CT).

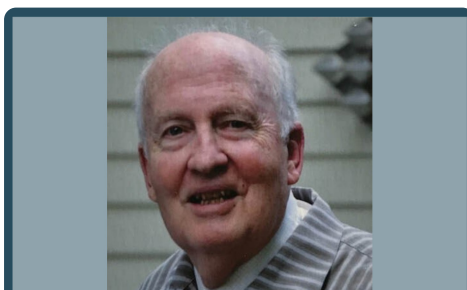
Dick Leavenworth Scholarships, as established, are to be awarded each year to a graduating high school senior from Nonnewaug High School or Shepaug High School. Dick Leavenworth was a longtime supporter and NWCD District Board member. Dick believed in the importance of educating the next generation about the environment in which we live: "We should raise our children as though they were our precious gift to the world and we should treat our world and its environment as though they were our most precious gift to our children." His scholarship was awarded to Hannah Kostka from Oxford, CT, a 2022 Nonnewaug High School graduate attending Valparaiso University, Indiana.

Reverend Ledlie Laughlin Scholarships, as established, are to be awarded each year to a graduating high school senior from Housatonic Valley High School or Marvelwood School. Reverend Ledlie Laughlin Jr. was a longtime NWCD supporter since his family's move to Cornwall in 2000 after serving 50 years in parish ministry. Ledlie's walk in life was based on his never failing spiritual belief that all of the creatures of the earth are equally entitled to the gifts of clean air, clean water and shelter, and fair and just treatment. His scholarship was awarded to Natalie Wadsworth from Falls Village, CT, a 2022 graduate of Housatonic Valley Regional High School attending the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, MA.

Information for the next round of NWCD's scholarships will be released early 2023. For specifics, watch <http://nwcd.org/scholarships/> and our social media.



"Jackie" Mott



Reverend Ledlie Laughlin Jr.



The Leavenworth Family

Expanding Agricultural Education at the Beardsley and Memorial Library

This summer, NWCD expanded our program at the Beardsley and Memorial Library Children's Community Garden Program in Winsted. Now in its second year, this program was originally created by Sarah Ammirato - Soil Conservationist for NRCS-USDA who continues to be a partner in this program.

The garden includes four raised beds set-up on the edge of the parking lot, where kids planted and cared for seedlings, while learning about a variety of environmental and agricultural topics. Each week kids harvested and took home their hard-grown produce.

This year, thanks to funding from the Northwest Connecticut Community Foundation, we expanded the garden

program to include 50



at-home container garden kits, one for each participating family. Each kit included a trowel, watering can, bottle of fertilizer, gardening gloves, 12-inch pot, and 4 plants - either a tomato or pepper for center, and 3 smaller plants either lettuce or herbs. Participants were able to practice what they learned at home.

We were also able to expand the program to include a teen program, where teens received at-home kits and came to a biweekly program at the garden. Each week highlighted a different in-season vegetable or fruit, encouraging kids to try new locally grown foods. Some of their favorites included sweet corn, sugar snap peas, and watermelon.

To commemorate the end of the program, the kids were given a copy of *Up in the Garden and Down in the Dirt*, by Kate Messner. The Teens were given a copy of *Trees, Leaves, Flowers and Seeds: A Visual Encyclopedia of the Plant Kingdom*, by the Smithsonian Institution.

The goals of this ongoing project are to increase access and education to locally grown produce, while expanding agricultural education at the local level. Projects like these are a great way to help underserved communities that may have limited access to nutritious food.

Thank you to Carol Parent, Children's Services Director, and Kimmie Killmer, Teen Librarian, for their support and assistance. And thank you to all of our participants this year - your dedication and enthusiasm were contagious! NWCD is looking forward to this continued partnership.



CT Envirothon - Returning to In-Person Competition

This year marked the 31th year of CT Envirothon, whose mission is to promote environmental awareness, knowledge and active personal stewardship among high school students through educational workshops and team competition. There are five main stations - Soils, Forestry, Aquatics, Wildlife, and a rotating Current Issue. This season, the Envirothon Steering Committee continued to post virtual content on our YouTube channel, host webinars and release at-home activity kits.

In May, we successfully held our first in-person competition since 2019, with nineteen participating teams from fifteen schools. Each station gave a 50 minute, hands-on test. For example, the Aquatics Station included specimens from Yale University's Peabody Museum of Natural History, a tabletop watershed simulator from the Kellogg Environmental Center (CT DEEP), and equipment from the Lake Waramaug Task Force. This year's current issue was, 'Waste to Resources', where students created a presentation on how to manage one-pound gas cylinders to ensure human safety, environmental protection and resource conservation.

First Place was awarded to Housatonic Valley Regional, Second Place to Marvelwood School, and Third Place to Nonnewaug High School. Katie Dykes, CT DEEP Commissioner, gave out awards while discussing the importance of preparing students to be future environmental leaders. Congratulations to all participating teams!

In July, Housatonic Valley Regional represented CT at the NCF Envirothon Competition, hosted in Oxford, Ohio where over 34 states and four Canadian provinces competed. Congratulations to Housatonic Valley and advisors David Moran and Audra Leach!

We are ecstatic to be back in-person this year. We appreciate the dedication and hard-work of our teams and advisors, and look forward to a great season.



First Place CT Team:
Audra Leach (Co-Advisor), Kara Franks, Spencer Markow, Anne Moran, Dana Saccardi, Hudson Sebranek, Natalie Wadsworth and CT DEEP Commissioner Katie Dykes.

Why We "Let it Grow"

In partnership with the USDA-NRCS, CT Resource Conservation and Development, and with grant funding from the Northwest Community Bank.

For the second year, NWCD offered free cover crop seed and technical assistance to farms through our Cover Crop Challenge! Twenty-one farms are participating this year, including many returning participants from last year's challenge. With the goals of improving and protecting soil health and increasing farm resiliency, participating farmers agreed to grow the cover crops to their maximum vegetative state so the cover crops have the highest potential to meet these goals.

Growing cover crops to their fullest extent ensures that their above ground biomass creates the thickest mulch cover when terminated, improves weed suppression, prevents evaporation, and moderates soil temperatures. Fully growing cover crops also ensures that their roots are fully developed, leaving more underground biomass to feed the soil and more

pathways for air and water to penetrate the earth. When cover crops are terminated too early, these benefits aren't wholly realized.

Therefore, growing cover crops can improve farm resiliency by increasing farm profits – less time and energy are spent on irrigation, pesticide, and herbicide use, while the healthier soil fosters healthier plants and better yields. Further, improving soil health with cover crops reduces the loss of nutrients in stormwater runoff and reduces soil erosion, both of which help to protect off-farm water quality.

We thank our participating farms for committing to this cause and hope to see the program expand even more in the future. If you are interested in trying out cover crops on your farm or garden, questions can be directed to Annette Lott at 860-626-7222 or email annettel@nwcd.org.



Cover crop this year in kale at Chanticleer Acres

Textile Recycling Saves Towns Money

Last fall, NWCD helped towns reduce trash dumping fees by reducing reusable textiles from the solid waste stream. Though Connecticut has single stream recycling, there are problems. A significant percentage of recyclables cannot be sold due to contamination, breakage, or no buyers.

MIRA, the state-sponsored recycling organization, is unable to share its profits with towns. Also, recyclables may be transported up to 4 times including: pickup from homes; transport to nearest collection center; transport to MIRA; and transport to incinerators or landfills in other states. For textiles alone, “This costs Connecticut municipalities and taxpayers close to \$5.7 million per year in unnecessary disposal tipping fees.” ([/ct.gov/DEEP](http://ct.gov/DEEP)) In July of this year, MIRA closed their trash-to-energy plant in Hartford due to overuse, emphasizing the increased need to address Connecticut’s solid waste management.

Over 96,500 tons* of textiles are annually trashed rather than being re-used. Recycling textiles helps manage and reduce our waste, creates new jobs, saves taxpayer money, and takes useful materials out of trash. At present, CT collects about 15% of all

possible reusable textiles. This initiative helps NWCD towns facilitate the placement of textile bins by recycling contractors who share their profits (\$100.00/ton) with those towns.

Though some already recycled textiles, now all but a few towns throughout the Northwest Corner have implemented textile recycling programs. Region School District #6 has joined the effort and according to Superintendent Chris Leone:

“The installation of the bins, unanimously approved by the Board of Education, has been a great community/school partnership for our towns and district. As a school district focused on sustainability, and the future, this is another important alliance for a better tomorrow.”

~Leya Edison, NWCD Board Member Alternate



Textiles sorted for reuse

Expanding In-Lake Sampling at Lake Wononscopomuc

In 2022, NWCD assisted the Lake Wononscopomuc Association in writing a grant to the Northwest Community Bank to purchase water monitoring equipment, specifically the YSI Pro Quatro handheld. Seen in the photo below, this comprehensive multiparameter water quality instrument, plus a 100 ft cable, can measure temperature/conductivity, dissolved oxygen, and pH/ORP (Oxidative Reductive Potential). To use the YSI, the sensor is lowered into the lake and takes a reading at every meter until you reach the bottom. The associated program then creates graphs to represent the water column.



NWCD will help train the Association on their new equipment. Supplementing

biyearly monitoring from a consultant, this consistent data will establish long-term climate trends and monitor the lake’s response to large stimuli such as droughts and large-storm events. Lakes are complex systems with ecological memory - what happens one summer can affect how they respond in the following year. The new data supports improved lake management planning and advocating for sound local land-use.

In-lake management and watershed management are often examined separately, but they are intrinsically connected. Successful lake management will take into account both. Watershed actions that positively impact in-lake water quality include implementing Low Impact Development (LID); reducing nutrients in stormwater runoff; and managing land use in the watershed.

Overall, NWCD is excited to support the Association in their volunteer monitoring program and look forward to working with them.

NWCD Welcomes New Staff

Natural Resources and Agricultural Technician - Annette Lott

I'm thrilled to have joined NWCD, and I am eager to serve communities in the Northwest District. I studied Environmental Science and Sustainable Development at Columbia University, graduating in 2020 during the pandemic. I came to Goshen and started working at Chanticleer Acres in Litchfield, a small farm focused on regenerative and sustainable agriculture. Shortly after, my partner and I started Crosswicks Farm on his family's property in Goshen, following the same principles. I currently serve on Goshen's Recycling and Trash Committee and the Sustainable Goshen team, and am passionate about increasing community resilience. I aim to continue advocating for all things related to sustainability, the environment, and local agriculture, and I hope that will you reach out to me if you would like any assistance related to these topics. You can reach me at annet-tel@nwcd.org.

This position was funded in part by a National Association of Conservation Districts Technical Services Grant.



Conservation Specialist - Kathy Castagnetta

I am excited to be joining the Northwest Conservation District to help to protect the natural resources of northwestern Connecticut, where I love to hike and that I call home! I am a graduate of Allegheny College with a degree in Aquatic Environments. I have over 20 years experience working in Land Use. During this time period I have worked in many of the municipalities in Northwest Connecticut in my role as a Zoning and Wetlands Enforcement Officer, Town Planner and Land Planner in a private consulting firm. I also served for several years as a member of the New Milford Farmland and Forest Preservation Committee. In addition to hiking, I have a passion for gardening and sustainable living. I look forward to using my connections and expertise to assist the District with projects and programming.

If you are interested in any of the technical services or educational programs offered by the District, please contact me at kathyc@nwcd.org.



SAVE THE DATE **NWCD's Annual Earth Day** **Plant Sale**

AT THE GOSHEN FAIRGROUNDS
APRIL 21-23, 2023

Order forms and webstore released by March.
Please watch nwcd.org for future details.





Northwest Conservation District
1185 New Litchfield Street
Torrington, CT 06790

Non-Profit Org
US Postage Paid
Winsted, CT
Permit No. 11

Conservation Corner

nwcd.org 860 626 7222

November:

29 Giving Tuesday - support your local non-profits!

December:

- 8 Agriculture in a Warming World, Flanders Nature Center, info at <https://flandersnaturecenter.org/program-events/>
- 12 Western CT State University Regional Lake Communities Symposium Series, Where have the aquatic plants gone? 7-9PM, <https://www.ctlakes.org/current-upcoming-events>
- 18 Christmas Bird Count - Litchfield Hills Audubon, to help with the count, contact Dave Tripp at: dtrippjr@gmail.com

Presentation on newly installed rain garden at Booth Free School in Roxbury



To Support NWCD....

- 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 nwcd.org
- OR Follow NWCD on [instagram.com/northwestconservationdistrict](https://www.instagram.com/northwestconservationdistrict), [facebook.com/nwcd.org](https://www.facebook.com/nwcd.org) and [youtube.com/@northwestconservationdistrict](https://www.youtube.com/@northwestconservationdistrict)