

NORTHWEST CONSERVATION DISTRICT ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2020-2021

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The Northwest Conservation District (NWCD) is an environmental non-profit organization serving towns and residents in northwestern Connecticut. Since, 1953, our mission has been to promote conservation and protection of natural resources through education and technical assistance services. Our service area includes 34 unique municipalities, 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.

TECHNICAL SERVICES AND PROJECTS IN SUPPORT OF OUR MISSION

During 2020-2021, we partnered with our town's land use commissions and staff on site development reviews and field inspections for land use in residential, agricultural, commercial, and urban settings. When we review and make recommendations on proposed land use changes, we balance development with protection of natural resources. We provide practical, science-based solutions using the latest techniques, including Low Impact Development (LID), to ensure that projects work with the landscape and are designed to address changes in our climate.

We are currently working on the culmination of the design and construction of an LID design for two parks in Bethel. Bennett Park and Meckauer Park, including a dog park next to Lime Kiln Brook with 319 funding in partnership with the Housatonic Valley Association,

Due to the pandemic, we were delayed in finishing two rain garden projects in the Towns of Woodbury and Roxbury, funded by the Connecticut Community foundation. We are pleased to announce that the Woodbury garden has been completed and signage installed. The Roxbury garden will be installed this fall.

NATURAL RESOURCE EDUCATION

In order to safely continue our educational initiatives, we offered on-line formats workshops on topics including LID and stormwater management, residential rain gardens, soil health, renewable energy options, pollinator gardens, home composting, invasive plant management, and best agricultural management practices. Many of our "Virtual" programs also support SustainableCT towns with their certification efforts.

NWCD received a grant from Northwest Community Foundation made possible by the Robert V. Carr Fund, a fund of the Foundation. With this grant NWCD partnered with Brooker Memorial of Torrington to provide container growing supplies and plants for 20 families from the urban area with and an educational workshop where participants received instruction on planting and caring for a vegetable container garden.

ENVIROTHON

The CT Envirothon Program (www.ctenvirothon.org) provides hands-on science for high school students through workshops and educational support. Participating schools take part in an annual

May Field Day statewide competition. The winning team usually competes in a National Conservation Foundation (NCF) competition. This year due to the pandemic, both the typical workshops and competition were adapted to the online format. Monthly webinars or material releases for the four main stations – Aquatics, Forestry, Soils and wildlife – occurred the first week of each month, and were later placed on [CT Envirothon's Youtube channel](#). A virtual competition was held in May addressing “*Water Resources Management: Local Control and Local Solutions*”. Twelve teams participated in the virtual event. NWCD participating schools included Housatonic Valley Regional, Northwest Regional 7, who won the aquatics station and placed 3rd overall, and Marvelwood School from Kent Connecticut, who won the overall competition! Marvelwood went on to compete at the first virtual National NCF competition, where they won a national virtual scavenger hunt. NWCD looks forward to again aiding CT Envirothon in the Aquatics Station, where one of our staff acts as the station leader, and in the overall competition for the 2021-2022 season.

EARTH DAY PLANT SALE, AND ANNUAL FISH SALE

Our Earth Day Plant Sale returned to the Goshen Fairgrounds as a “Pre-order Only – Scheduled Pick-Up three-day event in late April with overwhelming support from our many faithful customers. As part of Plant Sale “virtual” outreach, we led a district-wide No-Mow-May initiative and lent support to the state-wide Pollinator Pathway Northeast program. (www.pollinatorpathway.org) We continue to encourage people to make changes to promote clean air, clean water, healthy soils, and quality habitat for Our Trout Stocking program promotes renewal of aquatic resources in ponds and streams.

2020 CONSERVATION AWARDS PRESENTED AT THE 2020 ANNUAL MEETING

Conservationist of the Year Award – Curtis S. Read

The award, presented by Lawrence Rousseau, NWCD Board, reads, “This award honors Curtis’s leadership role as Director and Chairman of the Northwest Conservation District for the last 31 years. Curtis was instrumental in the acquisition and restoration of a riparian wetland known as Native Meadows and its transfer, as open space, to the Town of New Milford. Curtis has contributed widely to conservation and agriculture in Northwest Connecticut.

Conservation Agriculture Award - Mark Mankin

The award, presented by Cynthia Rabinowitz, NWCD Executive Director, reads “This award recognizes Mark’s leadership with the New Milford Youth Service Agency where he revitalized the town’s Sullivan Farm, while introducing students to farming and creating a self-sustaining business model for the Farm. In retirement, Mark continues his commitment to young people, Sullivan Farm, and food security efforts in New Milford.

Conservation Education Awards – CTEnvirothon Team Leaders

Jennifer Perga and Kelsey Leach Northwestern Regional 7 H.S. and David Moran and Audra Leach Housatonic Valley Regional H.S.

Awards, presented by NWCD staff Kelsey Sudol and Karen G. Nelson, read “This award recognizes your (as named) educational leadership in a critical time requiring adaptability, mentorship, and personal dedication for your students and for public education. Your team’s participation in CTEnvirothon’s first “Virtual Event” has helped move this time tested program to a modern platform better able to serve tomorrow’s much needed environmental leaders.

OUTREACH AND WEBSITE

The "Voice of Conservation" bi-annual newsletter continues along with electronic offerings through our website, and Facebook. Recorded webinars and educational articles are now offered on our website and we are planning additional resources for on-line outreach which conserves valuable resources and to and makes our educational programming available to a wider audience. To be added to our mailing list, email info@nwcd.org.

PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SUPPORT

The NWCD Board of Directors gratefully acknowledges the ongoing support and partnership of the 34 municipalities that we serve and the generous contributions of local individuals, our funders, and many faithful volunteers. We also thank the many individuals and organizations that have provided financial support as well as in-kind services. The generous support that we have received this year has allowed us to move forward on a long-term goal to provide Scholarships for graduating high school seniors and college students interested in pursuing careers in environmental sciences and becoming future environmental stewards.

Lawrence Rousseau, Chairman

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