



United States Department of Agriculture
Natural Resources Conservation Service

75
Years

**A Legacy of Conservation
Helping People Help the Land**

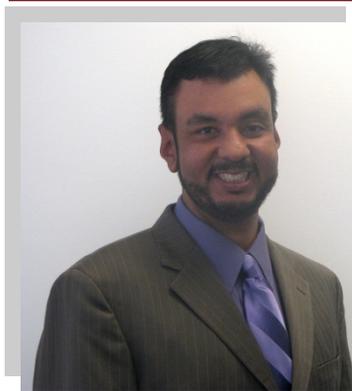
October 2010

A Message from the State Conservationist



USDA NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE

Conservation News



As we begin Fiscal Year 2011, and as we celebrate what we accomplished in 2010, I would like to acknowledge and thank NRCS employees, conservation partnership

members, and individual land users for their accomplishments and for their commitment to natural resource conservation this past year. It was a very busy year for NRCS and for conservation, as indicated in the following numbers:

FY 2010

Program	\$ Obligated	# Contracts
AMA	\$172,320	19
CSP	\$528,394	102
EQIP General	\$8,088,743	234
EQIP Organic	\$703,046	29
EQIP Irrigation	\$884,724	8
EQIP CAPs	\$502,495	216
FRPP	\$620,000	4
WRP	\$247,443	4
WHIP General	\$730,446	43
WHIP Forestry	\$1,440,554	49
Totals	\$13,918,165	708

These are very impressive numbers, but our job is not done. As we face great challenges ahead, I look forward to working with all of you as we continue to conserve Maine's natural resources.

As November and December are knocking at our door, I want to wish all of you a very happy holiday season. Be sure to take time to enjoy this special time of year with your family.

—Juan Hernandez

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ARRA Projects Completed

Financially supported by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, commonly referred to as the Stimulus or The Recovery Act, two projects were recently completed.

The Madawaska Water District Floodplain Easement and Restoration Project (Aroostook County)

was completed in late September 2010. The floodplain easement component of the Emergency Watershed Protection Program (EWP) allowed NRCS to acquire 2 acres of conservation easement on this privately-owned land along Martin Brook. The erosion and sedimentation that was occurring at a discontinued and unmaintained dam was threatening downstream infrastructure and degrading in-stream habitat.

The restoration activities that were performed included: (1) removal of the Martin Brook upper dam that was flooding 2 acres of the floodplain, and (2) reestablishing native riparian vegetation on the newly-reopened floodplain. The project provides approximately 600 feet of improved riparian buffer along Martin Brook. Several miles of stream habitat is now open along Martin Brook that was previously blocked to fish passage.

Total project cost was \$120,000.



The Chewonki Foundation Floodplain Easement and Restoration Project in Wiscasset (Lincoln County)

was just completed. The floodplain easement component of EWP allowed NRCS to acquire 34 acres of conservation easement on this privately-owned land along Montsweag Brook. The brook is critical habitat for the Gulf of Maine Distinct Population Segment Atlantic salmon, listed as endangered under the federal Endangered Species Act.

Restoration activities performed included: (1) removal of the Montsweag concrete dam that eliminates flooding of 17 acres of floodplain and opens up 2.2 miles of stream habitat that is currently blocked to fish passage, and (2) reestablished 4,200 feet of native riparian vegetation on the newly-reopened floodplain.

NRCS obligated \$414,412 to this project...\$385,000 of which was for the dam removal and vegetation costs. The remaining \$29,412 was put towards the cost of the 34 acres of conservation easement.

On September 29th the Chewonki Foundation hosted a public event to celebrate the removal of Lower Montsweag Brook Dam. At the Chewonki facility several speakers, including State Conservationist Juan Hernandez, discussed the project, followed by a tour of the dam removal site and long-term restoration monitoring efforts.

This project was supported by NRCS, the Gulf of Maine Council on the Marine Environment, National Oceanic and Atmosphere Administration, American Rivers, the Maine Natural Resource Conservation Program, and Maine Yankee Atomic Energy Company.



WHIP Projects Assist AGRI — Kevin White, NRCS, and Carol Weymouth, Somerset Co. SWCD

At Owen's Marsh Restoration Project in Somerset County the focus is on healing. As part of American Greenlands Restoration, Inc. (AGRI), the site exemplifies the non-profit organization's mission: *Healing Our World One Forest, One Creature, One Person at a Time.*

John Sferazo, AGRI founder, is the force behind an ongoing restoration effort. An iron worker from Long Island, NY, John was a first responder following the 9/11 disaster at the World Trade Center. Inspired by the courage displayed by thousands of emergency responders, law enforcement individuals, and volunteers, as well as military service personnel and their families, AGRI was set up to restore and assist those who suffer both mentally and physically as a result of their service.



Photo courtesy of Carol Weymouth, Somerset Co. SWCD

Consisting of approximately 775 acres, a portion of the Owen's Marsh Restoration Project was once an asphalt plant, the forest had poor harvesting practices, and sand and gravel were mined on a portion of the property. Now a nature and game preserve, the land provides a retreat for first responders and disabled vets, many suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder.

If you were to tour the site it would offer an opportunity to learn how specific conservation practices benefit wildlife. Forest stand improvement, planting conservation cover, bird nesting boxes, successional mowing, and cover crops are of particular interest, which were contracted and implemented in FY 2010 through the NRCS Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program. Total cost of these projects was approximately \$15,000.

“The Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program was a perfect fit to assist AGRI with their conservation goals. It's very gratifying to be part of this project.”

According to Kevin White, NRCS District Conservationist in Somerset County, “The Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program was a perfect fit to assist AGRI with their conservation goals. It's very gratifying to be part of this project.”

In FY 2011, through funding from the WHIP New England/New York Forestry Initiative, habitat for the American woodcock will be created, which are identified as a species of concern. Projects will include creating open spaces where woodcock will be able to roost, nest, feed and rear their young. This early successional habitat will mature and will be used for different activities by the woodcock. Eighty acres are scheduled to be converted to open areas. Additionally, eroded woods roads will be graded and seeded for stabilization and their edges planted to Red oak. The grassed-in roads will also be used by the woodcock for roosting and mating habitat. Estimated costs for these projects total \$100,000.



Photo courtesy of Carol Weymouth, Somerset Co. SWCD

Early successional habitat is not only used by woodcock, but by more than fifty other species of wildlife.

Other partners working with AGRI include: Maine Dept. of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife, Maine Forest Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Somerset County SWCD, Unity College, American Chestnut Foundation, Renegade Wheel Chairs, and Digital Spirit Media.

An Open House was held at AGRI on September 22nd. Attendees had the opportunity to see a wide variety of completed conservation projects.

NRCS and Partners Join Forces on Oxford County Diversified Farm



Photo from A Wrinkle in Thyme

Since 1997, farmers Marty Elkin and Mary Ann Haxton have raised laying hens, sheep and angora goats, and made maple syrup on the 30-acre farm which dates back to the 1850's. A Wrinkle in Thyme Farm in Sumner (Oxford County) is now implementing a plan to expand pastures, manage the flock of sheep and goats to increase the amount and quality of fiber, build a winter sheep feeding facility and a fiber processing building, and relocate/rebuild their maple sugar house.

Through the partnership of NRCS, Rural Development, Efficiency Maine, Finance Authority of Maine, Maine Small Business Development Corporation, ReVision Energy, and Maine Fiber Arts, all of these goals are coming to fruition.

NRCS began working with Martha and Mary Ann in 2004. The farm consisted of 20 sheep and 2 horses. Planning was done to improve the efficiency of pastures by developing a rotational grazing system. Five paddock areas were developed with a residency period of 7 days per paddock. NRCS planned 3,000 feet of permanent and 650 feet of tempo-

rary fencing to accomplish the grazing system. Obstruction removal was planned to better manage the pastures through clipping after the grazing during the 7-day residency period. A pipeline and watering facility provided the distribution of water to the paddock areas. Compaction and the amount of non-vegetated heavy use area was reduced in each paddock. Total cost of these practices, installed in 2005, was \$10,000 funded through the EQIP program.

In the fall of 2008, A Wrinkle in Thyme Farm received the first of two grants, both of which were through the Maine Farms for the Future Program with the Maine Dept. of Agriculture. As part of the Farms for the Future Grant it is participating in a 7-year farmland protection agreement with the Maine Dept. of Agriculture.

As a result of a grant from USDA Rural Development Rural Energy for America (REAP), the fiber building will use solar thermal energy, making it more efficient and cost effective to wash wool, pick and card it into roving, and will also heat the building with a radiant floor. ReVision Energy installed the solar panels and James Reid Heating installed the solar storage tank, boiler and radiant floor system.

In 2010, to accommodate the increased sheep head of 40 animals, NRCS began updating the

conservation plan to include additional fencing of pasture areas, additional pipeline, and obstruction removal. Through EQIP, 6 additional acres of high tensile fence and a watering facility were installed to expand their pastures. Total cost of these practices was \$18,000 through the EQIP program.



Photo from A Wrinkle in Thyme

On October 22-24 the farm opened their farm up to celebrate the advancements that they have made on their farm. Activities included the grand opening of "The Tesseract," its new fiber center, which will provide a Learning Center for gatherings for wool processing and fiber arts, a dye kitchen, and a farm store; a press conference with speakers from noted partners; a Fiber Art Showcase, a local farmers' market; farm tours and other activities.

"It is so encouraging to hear positive feedback as we reach out to grow a thriving fiber community in the Foothills of Western Maine," said Marty and Mary Ann.

USDA Agencies Provide Fresh Local Food to the Hungry



L to R: NRCS State Conservationist Juan Hernandez; Manna Ministries Executive Director Bill Rae; RD State Director Virginia Manuel, and FSA State Executive Director Don Todd

In early September the leaders of FSA, NRCS, and RD delivered a bounty of fresh vegetables to Manna Ministries in Bangor. This was the 11th and last delivery of the summer. The heaps of fresh tomatoes, summer squash, cucumbers and more were from the recent harvest of the People's Garden, a collaborative effort of the three agencies at the USDA State Office in Bangor. In addition, donations from staff members' own gardens were accepted.

Through the USDA's F5 Initiative (Feds, Farmers, and Friends Feed Families) the agencies were able to provide Manna with a total of 1,112 pounds of food. This included 572 pounds of food donated by staff, including non-perishable items and produce from their home

gardens, as well as an impressive 540 pounds of fresh vegetables grown by staff in the People's Garden.

Staff has already begun to prepare the ground for next year by "turning" the earth and planting oats as a cover crop.

Many thanks to all USDA State Office employees for their participation and contributions in this initiative. It was greatly appreciated. "This donation will help us not only put food on their plates, but ensure that the meal is nutritious, fresh, and local," said Manna's Executive Director Bill Rae. "We are thankful to the USDA for their kind donations."

Totals from other offices throughout the state:

- Down East RC&D:** Donated 74 lbs. of non-perishables to the Maine Seacoast Mission's Food Pantry in Cherryfield.
- Augusta Service Center:** Donated 123 pounds of fresh vegetables from their local People's Garden, and 173 lbs. of produce and canned goods from staffs, staffs' gardens, and a farm in Dixmont to the Bread of Life Soup Kitchen in Augusta.
- Bangor Service Center:** Donated 130 lbs. of fresh vegetables from their local People's Garden to Manna Ministries.
- Presque Isle Service Center:** Donated 477 lbs of fresh vegetables from their local People's Garden (on the property of an FSA employee) to Martha & Mary's kitchen and the Presque Isle Homeless Shelter.
- Skowhegan Service Center:** Donated 23 lbs of fresh vegetables from their local People's Garden window boxes and 20 lbs. of non-perishables to the Trinity Church Men's Shelter in Skowhegan.



Jim Johnson, NRCS Resource Conservationist (left) turns the soil while Tony Jenkins, NRCS State Soil Scientist, spreads oats as a cover crop.



Students ‘Dig In’ at Local Cemetery—by Carol Weymouth, Somerset County SWCD



In late October most images of graveyards are spooky, scary, and frightening. But in Ripley, a group of Carrabec High School Students discovered a burial site could be just the opposite. On Tuesday, October 26, five students volunteered to help restore a graveyard over-

looking Ripley Pond.

This past spring Peter Abello, Soil Conservationist in the Skowhegan Field Office, began working with a local dairy farmer on addressing nutrient management concerns. Included in the process as part of the required National History Preservation Act, was a survey of the area by Archaeologist Gary Shaffer.

Upon learning of the burial site, Shaffer worked with the local NRCS staff and the landowner to identify priorities and practices that would benefit not only the burial site, but the project as a whole. “To restore the area to its former condition, it first had to be mapped,” Shaffer explained. “A detailed record of artifacts was made by utilizing a metric system grid.”

Once the area had been mapped, excavation of tombstones could begin. Caren Roy, NRCS finance technician and Earth Team Volunteer, assisted with that process. She also studied the genealogy of those who had been buried in the small family plot.

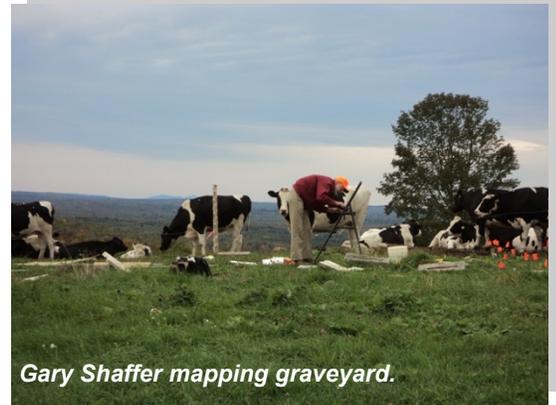
A Carrabec High School teacher contacted the Somerset County SWCD looking for opportunities for students to volunteer on conservation projects. Upon hearing about NRCS’s Earth Team Volunteer Program, she gathered a group of interested students who signed up to help with the graveyard restoration project.

In addition to raking and shoveling loam, picking rocks, and stabilizing tombstones, students learned how their current studies are relevant outside the classroom. “Algebra, geometry, and historical research are all utilized in restoration processes like these,” Shaffer told the volunteers. The students also learned about agricultural conservation practices such as erosion control, soil stabilization, and nutrient management from soil conservationists Peter Abello and Darol Wilson.

Shaffer described some of the unique methods that had been utilized for this restoration, including a ground penetrating radar device—a tool normally used by NRCS in soil surveys. This device, which sends radar waves into the ground to identify soil density, was used to search for additional graves.

Sixteen graves were positively identified, although all were not clearly marked. Some of the graves have carved marble and granite tombstones, while others are identified with fieldstones. Shaffer said that the tombstones would be stabilized for the winter and more research would be done to see how the old stones would be repaired.

The landowner was impressed by the volunteer efforts. “You don’t often see kids out working like this any more. It’s good to see.”



Gary Shaffer mapping graveyard.



Shaffer and Roy excavating stones.



Earth Team Volunteers at work.

Brief Notes

✓ Oxford County Service Center Move

The Oxford County Service Center, consisting of NRCS, FSA, SWCD, and Threshold to Maine RC&D, will be moving to South Paris the week of November 8th. Effective November 8, 2010, their address will be:

17 Olson Road
So. Paris, ME 04281

Their phone and fax numbers will remain the same:

Phone: 743-5789
Fax: 743-6256

✓ Conservation Stewardship Program Deadline

The deadline for the next ranking and funding period for the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) is January 7, 2011. All other programs are taking continuous signup.

✓ USDA Outreach Workshops to be Held in Aroostook County

Three workshops will be held in Aroostook County in the next three months to inform farmers and forest landowners how USDA can help them. Hosted by the local soil and water conservation districts, the workshops will consist of presentations from NRCS, FSA, RD, St. John Aroostook RC&D, and the local SWCD.



The meetings are designed to inform new or beginning farmers or agricultural/woodland owners who have had little or no participation in USDA or Conservation District programs. Presentations will provide an overview of available programs and services, as well as information they need to access those same programs and services.

The workshops are scheduled in the following locations:

- November 4, 2010—Meduxnekeag Ramblers Snowsled Club, Wiley Road, Littleton, 6:30-8:30 p.m.
- January 12, 2011—Northern Maine Community College Campus, Presque Isle, 6:00-8:00 p.m.
- January 26, 2011—St. John Valley Technology Center, Frenchville, 6:00-8:00 p.m.



Maine Farm Days Held

Maine Farm Days was held in August at the Barker Farm in Leeds. NRCS provided wagon tours of the farm and had a display.



Civil Rights Corner

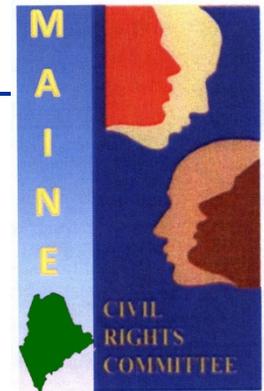
✓ NRCS and FSA Partner on CRAC — by Mary Anne Coffin, FSA

Under the guidance of NRCS State Conservationist Juan Hernandez and FSA State Director Don Todd, the two agencies have partnered to administer the civil rights program to its employees. Last year the two agencies held a Diversity Day in three different locations across the state and it was extremely successful. With the success of Diversity Day, the Agency leaders decided it would be beneficial for both agencies to join forces on this important program.

Effective October 1, 2010 the Civil Rights Action Committee (CRAC) from NRCS has an additional four members from FSA who will serve on a trial basis for the entire year. At the end of the fiscal year, members will assess the partnership and determine if it will be made permanent.

✓ Civil Rights Action Committee (CRAC) Membership

- Coleen Churchill, Chair
- Heidi Bunn, Member
- Lindsay Hodgman, Member
- Seth Jones, American Indian/Alaska Native SEPM
- Autumn Birt, Asian American/Pacific Islander SEPM
- Wayne Munroe, Black SEPM
- Heidi Nelson, Disabled SEPM
- Helena Swiatek, Federal Women's Program Mgr.
- Jade Gianforte, Hispanic SEPM
- Lance Gorham, Gay/Lesbian/
Bi-sexual/Transgender SEPM
- Mary Anne Coffin, FSA
- Ken Gustin, FSA
- Elisabeth Isbister, FSA
- Elaine Moceus, FSA
- John Gledhill, Advisor
- Elaine Tremble, Advisor/State
Outreach Coordinator



✓ New Program to Help Farmers Overcome Obstacles—by Corie Washow, UMCE



You may remember that AgrAbility had a presence in Maine a few years ago, under the auspices of the University of Vermont.

Maine now has their own AgrAbility program, made possible through a grant from the USDA's National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA).

University of Maine Cooperative Extension (UMCE), in collaboration with Goodwill Industries of Northern New England and Alpha One, has announced the launch of Maine AgrAbility, a program aimed at helping Maine farmers, farm workers, and farm family members with chronic health conditions and disabilities continue to farm successfully.

Conditions covered by Maine AgrAbility are extensive. A partial list includes arthritis, back injury, spinal cord injury, disabling diseases, amputations, and visual and hearing impairments, as well as many more. There are ways to address each of these conditions to limit their impact on the farm operation.

There are an estimated 5,700 farmers/farm workers in Maine with a chronic health condition or disability. Maine AgrAbility will provide consultation and technical assistance to help them continue farming independently. AgrAbility also works with rural agriculture, health care, and rehabilitation professionals to educate and inform about supporting

farmers with a disability. There is no charge for Maine AgrAbility services.

If you are or know of a farmer/ farm worker with a disability, a service provider interested in further education on the topic of farming with a disability, or simply want to more information, please call 353-5550 or 800-287-1458, or email: corie.washow@maine.edu. For more information, check out the Maine AgrAbility website, www.umaine.edu/agrability. Details about the National AgrAbility Project are available at www.agrability.org.

Note: You can also contact Heidi Nelson, Disabled SEPM, at 546-2368 for additional information.

✓ October is National Disability Employment Awareness Month/F.D.Roosevelt

- by David Tingley, past DEPM

I have enjoyed serving as the Disability/Veteran Special Emphasis Program Manager for the last three years., even though I was not sure what I was getting into back in 2007 when I took over this collateral position from Ron Olson. I want people to know that volunteering for any of the SEPM positions is a great way to increase your knowledge on a topic and it provides you with career opportunities to meet and work with other NRCS employees across the state and across the country. I learned some interesting things over the years and at times I wish I had had more time to put into the position.

Heidi Nelson has transitioned into this position and I will be helping her until February 16, 2011. Thanks for taking the time to read through emails that I have sent out over the past few years and please take the time to read through information that Heidi will be sending out in the coming years.

Below is a short informative article on Franklin D. Roosevelt that I would like you to read. I can't think of a better example of a person who had a disability, but FDR did not let that disability prevent him from leading our Country through a chaotic time in our history! Thank you again for your time

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October has been designated as National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM). The government's efforts to educate the American public about disability and employment issues began in 1945. Since then, NDEAM activities and programs are carried throughout the month of October to highlight the disability employment barriers that still need to be addressed and removed.

In honor of NDEAM, NRCS would like to invite you in celebrating Franklin D. Roosevelt, the 32nd president who overcame the stigma of his disability. In the summer of 1921, when he was 39, President Roosevelt fell ill to poliomyelitis, an illness to the nervous system that can affect muscular and nervous systems. President Roosevelt was permanently paralyzed, but through a wide range of therapies, particularly through hydrotherapy, was able to stand upright and walk a short distance. Even though he was able to gain some use of his legs, he still required the assistance of a wheel chair. He was elected president in November 1932 and would serve as president for four terms, battling the Great Depression and leading the United States in World War II.



President Roosevelt's successful career as the Governor of New York and later the President of the United States can be correlated to his political experience and his personal issues, which is best put by History Professor Jean Harvey Baker of Goucher College, "As a human being, his struggle against his infirmity is just as important as his experience in politics."

During his presidency, Roosevelt helped to find the March of Dimes, formerly known as National Foundation for Infantile Paralysis. The March of Dimes is a charity whose mission is to improve the health of babies by preventing birth defects, premature birth, and infant mortality. For more information on the March of Dimes, please visit: <http://www.marchofdimes.com/>.

In honor of Franklin D. Roosevelt and for more information, visit his Presidential Library and Museum: <http://www.fdrlibrary.marist.edu/>.

Personnel Corner

✓ Personnel Changes

New Hires:

Haley Flanders-Patten, GS-4 Soil Conservation Technician WAE, Warren Field Office, effective October 10, 2010.

Sam Wright, GS-7 Soil Conservationist under the Career Intern Program, Houlton Field Office, effective October 24, 2010.

Philip Quint, Jr., GS-5 Soil Conservation Technician, Houlton Field Office, effective November 8, 2010.

Jerry Jacobs, GS-12 Contracting Officer, State Office, effective December 5, 2010.

Promotions:

Lindsay Hodgman, GS-11 Soil Scientist in the State Office, to GS-12 Assistant State Soil Scientist, effective October 10, 2010.

New Appointment

Barry Southard, GS-5 Soil Conservation Technician WAE, to a GS-5 Soil Conservation Technician 2-year Term Appointment, effective October 10, 2010.

Transfers:

Joe Weber, GS-11 District Conservationist, Presque Isle Field Office, will be transferring to The Plains Field Office in Athens County, Ohio, effective November 21, 2010.

✓ Summer Intern Hired Through Envirothon



For the first time in Maine Envirothon history, a senior on one of Maine's State Envirothon winning teams had the opportunity to obtain experience with NRCS through the Summer Intern Program.

State Conservationist Juan Hernandez made the announcement of this opportunity at the opening of the State Envirothon, which was held at Husson University in late May. The conditions of the internship are that the student needs to be a senior and on the first place winning team. If there is not a senior on the first place team and/or the senior is not able or not interested in being a summer intern with NRCS, then NRCS would move on to the second place team, then the third if needed.



In 2010, there were no seniors on the Boghunter Home School team, the winner of the State Envirothon. The second place team, Mt. Ararat, had seniors on the team. Kristina Johnston applied and was hired to work in the Lewiston Field Office...located in the county in which she lives...working with the field office and engineering staffs. The staffs were very impressed with Kristina and enjoyed having the benefit of her assistance. Kristina in turn enjoyed the type of work that she performed and was very appreciative of the opportunity prior to starting college at Cornell University. She plans to major in Environmental Science.

Juan Hernandez has committed NRCS to another Summer Intern in 2011 through the Envirothon Program.