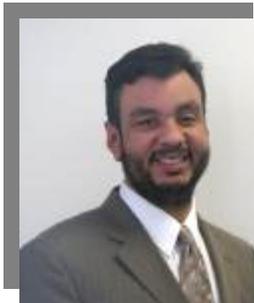




Maine Conservation News

A note from the State Conservationist



Summer is upon us, both on the calendar and weather wise, and field work has begun. Employees are

doing what they enjoy and are educated and trained to do...providing conservation technical and financial assistance to Maine's private landowners. NRCS programs and special initiatives have a lot to offer, and that information needs to be delivered to our current and potential customers through our employees and our partners. All of the 2010 signups have ended, with the exception of the Conservation Activity Plans funded through the EQIP program, which have a deadline of June 30. In fact, we are in the process of taking FY 2011 signups. See page 3 for more information.

This year we have put additional conservation on the landscape at a few of our USDA locations through the 'People's Gardens' initiative. Last year the 'People's Garden' in Washington, DC was unveiled and opened to the public as a living exhibit of what USDA does every day. Secretary Vilsack has announced that gardens now exist in all 50 states.

These gardens are demonstrating the connections we can make between pro-

viding access to nutritious food, while protecting the landscape where that food is grown, serving our communities, and helping those in need. In Maine, two gardens have been established in Bangor, one each in Augusta, Presque Isle and Skowhegan, and more are planned. After the harvest USDA will donate the fresh garden vegetables to local food pantries.

Each garden can vary in size and type, but all have a common purpose...to help the community they are within and the environment. A 'People's Garden' must include the following three components:

1. Benefit the community.
2. Be collaborative.
3. Incorporate sustainable practices.

I am proud that the USDA agencies in these five offices have joined together to establish a garden at their location, and hope that more gardens will be established at other USDA locations throughout the state next year.

See page 2 for the 'People's Gardens' photo gallery.

Have a great summer and thanks for all that you do for conservation in Maine.

— Juan C. Hernandez



What's the History Behind the Name?

When Abraham Lincoln founded USDA in 1862, he referred to it as "The People's Department." It is a description that is as true today as it was then. USDA touches the lives of Americans every day. To commemorate this significant link to all Americans, Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack broke ground on the first People's Garden at USDA Headquarters on February 12, 2009, the bicentennial of Lincoln's birthday. Today, the entire grounds are a part of this garden.

For more information about the 'Peoples Garden' initiative go to www.usda.gov/peoplesgarden.

**Helping People
Help the Land
For 75 Years
1935-2010**



Photo Gallery

Note: The off-site garden in Central Aroostook is in the process of being established.

USDA State Office - A garden containing tomatoes, cucumbers, lettuce, onions, broccoli, summer squash, and beets.

1. State Soil Scientist Tony Jenkins does soil testing on proposed garden area.
2. Rototilling completed by Resource Conservationist Jim Johnson.
3. USDA agency heads putting compost in the garden.
4. Planting in progress by USDA employees.
- 5/6. Garden completed.



1



2



3



4



Somerset County— Window boxes along front and one side of building containing parsley, cilantro, lettuces, chard, beet greens, carrots, and edible flowers.



Penobscot County— Raised bed containing lettuce, tomatoes, peas, carrots, beans and peppers.



Kennebec County— Two raised beds containing tomatoes, potatoes, bush beans, summer squash, zucchini, cucumbers, gourds, and winter squash.



5



6

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Learning and Instructing on the Agenda of Cultural Resources Specialist
—by Gary Shaffer, Cultural Resource Specialist



In April 2010, I participated in professional development activities that involved both learning and instructing. First, I attended the 75th Annual Meeting of the Society for American Archaeology in St. Louis, Missouri.

There I attended symposia on several subjects, including the contributions of avocational archaeologists, prehistoric interactions in eastern North America, and cultural resources education efforts of the Department of Defense. There was also an opportunity to discuss with several NRCS archaeologists issues in project reviews.

State Staff Forester Attends Black Ash Symposium
—by Sally Butler, Forester

I had the opportunity to participate in a Black Ash Symposium on May 21st at the University of Maine. Kolunkayowan wikipiyik - Protecting the Ash for Future Generations II, was sponsored by the Maine Indian Basketmakers Alliance and the University of Maine. All four of Maine’s tribal basketmakers were represented as well as several other federal and state agencies.

The day-long meeting was for the purpose of gathering information on the threat of the invasive Emerald Ash Borer to Black Ash, an essential tree for native basketmakers, and for developing action plans to deal with the threat. Maine does not have this pest yet.

Three major areas for action were developed including the need to identify where the black ash resource is located in the state, the process for collecting black ash seed, and education of the general public on the threat. Funding was also an issue and I offered to send information about the Maine NRCS EQIP Conservation Innovation Grant request for proposals, and also provided a handout on the NRCS Plant Materials Ash Seed Collection Initiative.



Emerald Ash Borer

More information is available at <http://www.umaine.edu/brownash/>.

Conservation Programs Update

Fiscal Year 2011 Sign Up

The following deadlines have been established for Fiscal Year 2011 program applications:

Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)
 General Sign Up—**July 1, 2010**
 EQIP Irrigation Initiative—**September 1, 2010**
 EQIP Seasonal High Tunnel—**September 1, 2010**



Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP) - General Sign Up—**September 1, 2010**

Conservation Innovation Grants Pre-Proposals Being Accepted

Up to \$100,000 is available in new grants to Maine farmers; landowners; State, tribal, and local government entities; and non-governmental organizations through NRCS. These funds will be awarded through Conservation Innovation Grants, a component of EQIP. The deadline for submitting pre-proposals is **June 30, 2010**.

Fiscal Year 2010 CIG proposals must address market-based approaches to conservation, including the advancement of emerging markets for ecosystem services and the development of market-based tools. The grants of up to \$75,000 for a project require a 50 percent non-federal match. Projects may be single or multi-year, not to exceed three years. Eligible projects must involve at least one agricultural producer who is eligible for the EQIP program.

NRCS will use a two-phased approach to award CIGs this fiscal year. Applicants must submit pre-proposals to the NRCS office in Vermont by close of business on June 30, 2010. Full applications for selected pre-proposals must be submitted by July 30, 2010.

CSP Final Rule Issued

NRCS has published the final regulations governing the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP). Authorized in the 2008 Farm Bill, CSP is a voluntary program that offers payments to producers who exercise good land stewardship and want to improve their conservation performance. Changes to the program expand access, increase payment limits, and promote greater environmental benefit while maintaining program goals.

CSP pays participants for conservation performance – the higher the performance, the higher the payment. Producers get credit both for conservation measures they have already implemented and for new measures they agree to add. CSP is offered in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and the Pacific and Caribbean areas through continuous sign-up, with announced cut-off dates for ranking and funding applications.

CSP is available to all producers regardless of operation size, crops produced, or geographic location. Eligible lands include cropland, pastureland, rangeland, non-industrial private forest land, and agricultural land under the jurisdiction of an Indian tribe.

Potential applicants are encouraged to use the CSP self-screening checklist to determine whether CSP is suitable for their operation. The checklist, which highlights basic information about CSP eligibility requirements, contract obligations, and payments, and additional information about CSP, may be obtained from the national CSP Web site at www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/new_csp/csp.html.

For details on changes to CSP, the final rule can be viewed at: <http://edocket.access.gpo.gov/2010/pdf/2010-12699.pdf>.

High Tunnels Being Built in Maine



These high tunnels in Penobscot County have cucumbers, tomatoes and peppers.

The first year of a three-year pilot project resulted in 19 high tunnels being funded statewide for a total of \$172,320. Under the “Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food” initiative, this pilot project will determine if high tunnels are effective in reducing pesticide use, keeping vital nutrients in the soil, extending the growing season, increasing yields, and providing other benefits to growers.



This high tunnel in Androscoggin Valley has specialty sweet cherry trees, interseeded with bush tomatoes, peppers, hot peppers, cucumbers and sunflowers.



Tomatoes and peppers are already 1.5 feet tall in this high tunnel in Piscataquis County.

A seasonal high tunnel is a greenhouse-like structure, at least six feet in height, which modifies the climate inside to create more favorable growing conditions for vegetable and other specialty crops grown in the natural soil beneath it. Made of ribs of metal pipe covered with a layer of plastic sheeting, high tunnels are easy to build, maintain, and move. This pilot will test the potential conservation benefits of growing crops under these structures.



A cover crop will be planted in this high tunnel in Kennebec County to get the soil prepared for next year.

Field offices are currently taking applications for high tunnels to be funded in Fiscal Year 2011 through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP). The deadline for applications is September 1, 2010.

Kneading Conference to be Held

The Kneading Conference, held annually in Skowhegan, brings together people who love bread: from growing and milling the grains to baking and tasting the finished product, and everything in between. Each year amateur and professional bakers, farmers, earth oven enthusiasts and food fanatics gather for two days of seminars, hands-on workshops, social networking and, of course, delicious food.



This year the conference will be held at the Skowhegan State Fair Grounds on July 29-30. The Heart of Maine RC&D is a major sponsor of the event. For more information visit the Heart of Maine website at www.heartofmaine.org.



Project SHARE Recognizes NRCS Employee

Ricky Hall (right), NRCS Civil Engineering Technician, recently received an award from Steve Koenig (left), Executive Director of Project SHARE (Salmon Habitat and River Enhancement) at a dinner commemorating Project SHARE's 15th anniversary. Ricky, the first recipient of Project SHARE's Habitat Restoration Action Award, was awarded for his extraordinary action in support of Atlantic salmon habitat restoration.

Ricky has provided Project SHARE with technical assistance on-site as it relates to the replacement of traditional round culverts on commercial forest logging roads with open-bottom structures that restore natural stream function.

Libby River Restoration Project Update—New Data Available

Photo courtesy of MDOT



The Libby River Restoration Project was initiated by the Friends of Scarborough Marsh in collaboration with Maine Department of Transportation, Maine Dept. of

Inland Fisheries and Wildlife, NRCS, Ducks Unlimited, and others, with the goal of enhancing tidal flows to the Libby River portion of the 3,100-acre Scarborough Marsh.

A single 5-foot diameter culvert under Black Point Road had restricted tidal flow to the upper marsh by approximately two-thirds, causing an alteration of the natural hydrology and vegetation of the marsh on the northeast side of the road. A restoration design was developed and the installation of two new 72-inch culverts under Black Point Road, supplementing the existing 60-inch culvert, was completed in November of 2006.

Following the construction, a 5-year monitoring program was initiated to collect data in year one, three and five post-construction.

Summary of Findings to Date—Years One and Three

- Tidal range in the restricted marsh was reduced to 81% of downstream conditions immediately above Black Point Road and to 77% at mid-marsh, representing an approximately 20% improvement.
- Increase of tidal water through culverts increased salinity and hydroperiod (pattern of flooding events) on the marsh surface, which may result in restoration of salt marsh habitat and improved wildlife habitat.
- Typical salt marsh vegetation was the predominant cover type near the culverts, and brackish communities were restricted to the upland edge.
- With distance from the culvert, the salt marsh community became narrowed along the channel and the brackish communities broadened across the marsh plain.
- While generally fewer brackish and freshwater species were observed in a number of plots, the invasive Phragmites was dominant in two more plots in 2009, compared with 2004, but average height of the plants was less.
- Incidental observations of wildlife included: a bald eagle; American bittern; great egrets; glossy ibis; marsh wren nests; salt marsh sparrow species; scat, tracks, dens and trails for several species; and a snapping turtle.

(Information taken from the Friends of Scarborough Marsh website at <http://www.scarboroughmaine.com/marsh/>)

Energizing a Community

“Energizing A Community” is a local effort led by the Time & Tide RC&D, Unity College, and the Unity Barn Raisers. This is an initiative involving eight Maine communities collaborating to lay out a vision of the communities’ desired energy future and the steps required to make it a reality. As an organized group, citizens compel that vision forward by working with other community members and civic leaders to set goals, plot a course, enact policies, and create incentives to achieve that vision.



Energizing a Community is driven by the fact that Maine has some of the oldest housing stock in the Nation of which a high proportion is under-insulated. Eighty percent of Mainers depend on oil to heat their homes compared to 8% nationally. In addition, Maine has some of the highest electrical rates in the Nation.

Energizing a Community has two components, an educational approach and a community action approach. The educational approach utilizes local public energy planning forums to identify energy-related topics that are of interest to local citizens. Since the winter of 2009 workshops have been held on 11 energy-related topics including community-owned wind, public transportation, weatherization training, interior storm window construction, etc. Currently a community energy plan is being completed for two of the



Air filtration check

focus communities in order to establish baselines for community energy use, emissions, and to establish an action plan for energy saving priorities.

Since 2009 the action component of Energizing a Community has completed 46 home energy assessments, four business energy audits and six farm energy audits. Over



Meeting at hardware store

100 volunteers have organized to weatherize 56 homes. In addition, training and bulk-purchased weatherization materials have been provided to do-it-yourselfers who weatherized an additional 36 homes. All materials are purchased at the local hardware store. Through a United Way grant this effort has recently acquired a blower door which is not only useful as an assessment tool but can also provide a before and after snapshot of cold air entry into the home.

Since 2009 Energizing a Community has raised more than \$7,400 in local donations and \$105,000 in state and federal funds, which include ARRA funds. The project to date has created two jobs, retained three and has logged more than 1,100 volunteer hours.

Energizing a Community has involved a growing number of local residents who envision a future built upon a broad mix of energy solutions including local purchasing, better utilization of transportation alternatives, home and business energy conservation, and development of renewable local energy sources. Energizing a community plans, organizes, and fully utilizes existing resources bringing these to the community so that citizens can begin to construct that clean energy future.

Environmental Justice in Maine

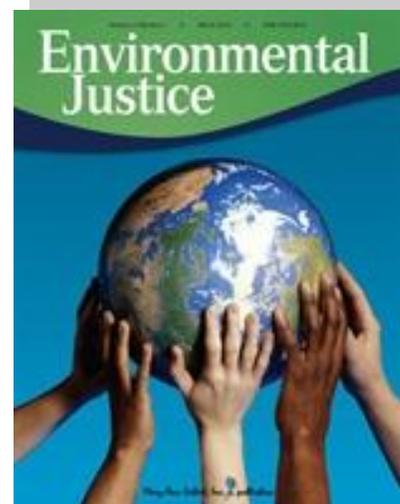
— by Mark Hews, RC&D Coordinator, Threshold to Maine RC&D/
Environmental Justice Coordinator

The concept of environmental justice emerged in the United States in the early 1980's in response to the growing recognition that minority and low income populations were being exposed to environmental hazards and pollution from industries predominately located in their communities. What was at stake was an inequitable distribution of risks and benefits associated with these industries and other environmental practices. Environmental justice serves to level the playing field when it comes to environmental risks and benefits for all populations as described in this quote.

“The goal of environmental justice is to ensure that all people, regardless of race, national origin or income, are protected from disproportionate impacts of environmental hazards. To be classified as an environmental justice community, residents must be a minority and/or low income group; excluded from the environmental policy setting and/or decision-making process; subject to a disproportionate

impact from one or more environmental hazards; and experience a disparate implementation of environmental regulations, requirements, practices and activities in their communities. The Environmental Justice program, established by Presidential Executive Order 12898, requires Federal agencies to ensure that all environmental policies and the disposal of toxic waste do not adversely impact minority and low-income communities. The common concern is that these communities are exposed to unfair levels of environmental risk arising from multiple sources, often coupled with inadequate government response.”

NRCS is committed to environmental justice and has established information, training, and resources to help all employees ensure that our programs and practices follow environmental justice policy. The easiest way to ensure that environmental



justice is part of our daily work is to ensure the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of ethnicity or income with respect to our programs, projects, and practices. This will result in everyone sharing equally in the protection from environmental and health hazards and afforded the same access to the decision making process that shapes where we live, work, and play.

For more information on Environmental Justice in Maine please contact Mark Hews, Environmental Justice Coordinator at mark.hews@me.usda.gov.

Down East RC&D Writes Grant for Passamaquoddy Tribe



The Passamaquoddy Tribe at Indian Township is the recipient of a \$30,000 Rural Business Enterprise Grant (RBEG) to purchase firewood processing equipment. This funding, announced by Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack on May 26, 2010 is part of a USDA program to increase economic opportunity in rural, Native American communities.

The equipment purchased will enable the Tribe to create a value-added firewood product to assist tribal members with heating needs. It will also create five jobs.

Down East RC&D wrote the grant for the project which is one of 27 in 12 states funded through this program.

NRCS Soil Survey: Structure and Function

— by *Tony Jenkins, State Soil Scientist*



Maine NRCS Soil Survey staff are stationed in Dover-Foxcroft and Presque Isle associ-

ated with their respective Major Land Resource Areas (144B and 143/146), which more or less divide the state in half. Each office consists of a Soil Survey Office Leader and two or three Soil Scientists. They are transitioning from county-based initial mapping to project plan-based work that is proposed and prioritized by input from soil survey users, especially at Work Planning Conferences.

Two Work Planning Conferences were held this year in Maine, one at Presque Isle in March and the other at Augusta in May. We plan to hold one for the State again next year. If you use soils information, I encourage you to attend them – you can see a few new things and learn what we are up to, but perhaps more importantly you can help to direct our efforts. With your input, we can update/correct/improve spatial or interpretive soils data digitally. These days, most paper soil survey publications are obsolete in some significant technical respect, and NRCS official soils information resides on the Web Soil Survey and Soils Data Mart. Updating of these sites based on continuous improvement in soil survey information is our focus.

So if you use soil surveys please seriously consider attending a Work Planning Conference next year.

Visit <http://www.me.nrcs.usda.gov/technical/SoilSurveyProgram.html> for more information on Maine’s Soil Survey Program.

Build your Own Home in 48 Hours

—by **Autumn Birt, Supervisory District Conservationist, Midcoast Area**

In May my husband, Adam, and I sold our 200-year-old timber frame home and erected a yurt. It took us from Friday evening until Sunday afternoon, in the rain, but we’ve been living in it since June 6th. We are still moving in and will be adding solar panels as well as many other amenities in the coming months.

The yurt is 24 feet in diameter and 13 feet high at the center dome. The walls have a lattice framework, but the rafters actually rest on a metal cable (not the lattice) and each rafter has a secondary support for snow load. The walls and roof are insulated polyvinyl.



If you ever have questions about our off-the-grid, off-the-beaten-path adventure, drop me a line!



Unexpected Opportunities as a SEPM

— by *Autumn Birt, Asian American/Pacific Islander SEPM/
Supervisory District Conservationist, Midcoast Area*



There are many reasons suggested for becoming a Special Emphasis Program Manager. It is a resume builder, an opportunity to work on projects outside of the scope of Programs or everyday work, and a great way to meet associates from other states. It was with these general benefits and an interest in the Asian and Pacific Island culture that prompted me to become a SEPM in 2006. What I did not anticipate was how rewarding beyond those general perceptions I had being a SEPM would be.

Yes, it was great to be able to put contracts and applications aside, especially those times when Protracts or Toolkit crashed and having something completely unrelated to programs to pick up. Sure, the opportunities to travel to the Asian Pacific Islander Organization (APIO) conferences was fun. But it has been the chance to hear about the changes in NRCS' organization, meet National leadership at conferences, interact with other NRCS members from other states, and meet landowners, students, and organizations in Maine that I never knew existed — that is now what comes to mind when I think of being a SEPM.

NRCS is constantly changing. Words like 'diversity' are often mentioned. Before I became a SEPM, it was just a word. As a SEPM, you learn why diversity is important, what the goal of diversity is, and begin to see what NRCS will look like in 5 to 10 years. You begin to realize how America is changing and more importantly, you become a part of that change.

National leadership speaks at many of the conferences and you get to hear their ideas and their vision for NRCS. It is one thing to read the emails or hear the teleconferences and another to see them speak and get to ask questions or meet them during breaks. It makes the new bulletins not so surprising when you realize you heard the idea before at a conference.

Finally, I can say it has been rewarding to work on the two Diversity Days we have held in Maine since I became a SEPM. I found the culture of Maine is changing. The ethnicity of the state is becoming more diverse. It isn't something that will happen, it is happening. I've gotten to make connections with groups and students in the state that changed my view of where I call home.

After three years as a SEPM, I have a broader view of Maine, America, and NRCS. I have a better idea of the changes that will be coming that we often don't see until the change has already happened. I would recommend being a SEPM to anyone. You would be surprised what you will learn and experience and the changes that you will take with you.

Great Quotes About Communication and Language!

- ◆ A spoonful of humor makes the message go down easier — *Frank Leahy*
- ◆ Be sincere; be brief; be seated — *Franklin Delano Roosevelt*
- ◆ The first duty of love is to listen — *Paul Tillich*
- ◆ If you wouldn't write it and sign it, don't say it — *Earl Wilson*





Stress Management Reminders

- Complete what you started
- Prioritize your inbox, email, and voicemail (what’s due when)
- Do the most important things first
- Know your limits—do you have the knowledge to complete the task?
- Work to please yourself and don’t forget to recognize the good work of others
- Examine your attitude towards a task—where appropriate ADJUST!
- Create wide support networks—remember you don’t work alone
- Take direct action
- Respond rather than react
- Allow for differences of opinion and ways of doing things
- Reduce clutter and work in organized spaces
- And don’t forget to **Eat, Sleep, Exercise, and Relax!**



Personnel Update

Meet Vasco “Buster” Carter

Buster Carter joined the NRCS State Office Staff as Resource Conservationist on March 28. He worked in the private sector and for two State of Maine agencies prior to coming to NRCS, working in northern and eastern Maine for much of his professional career.

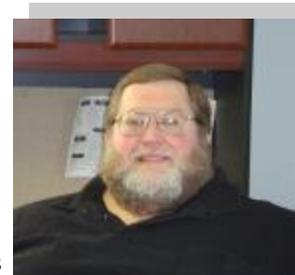


The most recent agency was the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife, for which he worked for 18 years. During the last four years of service Buster was stationed at their State Office in Augusta, coordinating and administering a number of agency programs and served as the agency liaison with other state and federal agencies and programs. One of his responsibilities was Farm Bill Coordinator for the agency, serving on National, Regional and State level committees and working groups related to Farm Bill issues.

Buster and his wife, Linda, live in Ellsworth and have two grown daughters and three teenage granddaughters. He enjoys outdoor recreational activities including fishing, hunting, gardening, managing his woodlot, and boating on the saltwater.

Meet Doug Aberhalden

Doug Aberhalden reported for duty on June 21 as a Soil Conservationist in the Houlton Field Office. Doug was raised in central Illinois farm country where he graduated from the University of Illinois with a BS in Forestry.



His first professional position was with the State of Maryland as the Charles County Forester. He then joined the Maryland Department of the Environment and served first in the Enforcement Division and then as a Permit Writer in the wetland program. After leaving Maryland, Doug worked with the Illinois Department of Natural Resources on their Agency Action Plan for the implementation of their new wetland statutes before accepting a position with the State of Idaho as the statewide Coordinator for their §401 Water Quality Certification and FERC Programs. Doug’s last position was as the Project Coordinator for Angelaaberhalden.com.

Meet Tina, Earth Team Volunteer

Tina Parady is an Earth Team Volunteer in the State Office. She started as a volunteer in April and is scanning old slides and photos so that all will be available electronically. She also provides assistance to other members of the State Office staff, upon request. This is the second time that Tina has volunteered at the State Office...with the first time being in 2003.

Tina is from Old Town and is a graduate from Old Town High School. She is the proud owner of a specially adapted Dodge Caliber and driver’s license, and loves her independence.



Calendar of Events

July

| | |
|-----------|---|
| 1 | 2010 UMO Sustainable Agriculture Field Day, UMO Rogers Forage and Crops Research Farm, Stillwater |
| 1-4 | Houlton Fair |
| 8-11 | Ossipee Valley Fair, Hiram |
| 16-18 | Waterford World's Fair |
| 22-25 | Pittston Fair |
| 25 | Open Farm Day |
| 30-Aug. 7 | Northern Maine Fair, |
| 30-Aug. 8 | Bangor State Fair |

August

| | |
|------------|---|
| July 30-7 | Northern Maine Fair, |
| July 30-8 | Bangor State Fair |
| 4-7 | Monmouth Fair |
| 6-8 | Athens Fair |
| 8-11 | NE NACD Meeting/MACD Summer Meeting, Portland |
| 8-14 | Topsham Fair |
| 12-21 | Skowhegan Fair |
| 20-21 | Maine Farm Days, Barker Farm, Leeds |
| 21-28 | Union Fair |
| 26-29 | Acton Fair |
| 29-Sept. 6 | Windsor Fair |

September

| | |
|-----------|-------------------------|
| Aug. 29-6 | Windsor Fair |
| 2-6 | Blue Hill Fair |
| 3-6 | Springfield Fair |
| 3-6 | Harmony Free Fair |
| 9-12 | Clinton Lions Fair |
| 10-12 | Litchfield Fair |
| 12-18 | Oxford County Fair |
| 17-19 | New Portland Lions Fair |
| 19-25 | Farmington Fair |
| 24-26 | Common Ground Fair |
| 26-Oct. 2 | Cumberland Fair |

October

| | |
|------------|-----------------|
| Sept. 26-2 | Cumberland Fair |
| 3-10 | Fryeburg Fair |

