

U.S. Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service

Helping People Help The Land

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Connecticut

March/April 2012

From the State Conservationist ...



Jay T. Mar

Canaan Valley Agricultural Cooperative

I recently had the opportunity to attend the Canaan Valley Agricultural Cooperative's (CVAC) Annual Meeting. CVAC is a cooperative consisting of several dairy farms that welcome attendance by other operations, agricultural stakeholders, and conservation partners.

Progressive farm operations from Connecticut such as Freund's, Laurel Brook, Birch Mill, Jasmine, Elm Knoll, and others were represented, as were farm operations from Vermont and Massachusetts. Participants were treated to a home cooked meal of lasagna and – yes – Dottie Jacquier's homemade apple pie! After that we got down to the business at hand, which was a discussion on family operations – what works, what doesn't, what we can do better.

These stewards have installed many conservation practices over the years utilizing the EQIP Program including composting facilities, ag waste separators, ag waste systems, methane digesters, phosphorous removal systems, buffers, rainwater runoff systems, covered heavy use structures, and pasture systems – and they are still making improvements. I found the discussion both interesting and impressive. Their knowledge about the digesters and the different qualities of wastes that can be put into the systems to fuel the productions of methane for alternative energy sources ... **there is no substitute for experience.**

A forward-thinking father and son team from Massachusetts shared their experience with their digester. Matt Freud talked about a similar experience with his system, and about his desire to replace it with a new, updated version.

State, local, and federal agency representatives provided updates on the latest agricultural and conservation programs, Conservation Nutrient Management Plan assistance/guidance, and grant opportunities to install improvements.

Freund Farms provided an update on their success with Cow Pots for the greenhouse industry, (pots made from waste from their farm, which effectively utilizes nature's gift). A producer from Vermont commented he heard so much about the cooperative he had to come here to participate. He expressed his desire to have one established in his area, as he is now the last remaining dairy operation.

I offer my hearty congratulations to CVAC on working together to conserve our resources and making things happen for the Connecticut Dairy industry.

Jay

75
Years

A Legacy of Conservation
Helping People Help the Land

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NOTICE TO HISPANIC AND/OR WOMEN FARMERS OR RANCHERS

If you are a woman or Hispanic farmer and believe you were improperly denied farm loan benefits by USDA between 1981 and 2000. You may be eligible for compensation.

To register your name to receive a claims packet, call the Farmer and Rancher Call Center at 1-888-508-4429 or visit: www.farmerclaims.gov



USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

Mar Serves as Opening Speaker at Connecticut Land Conservation Council Conference

Connecticut State Conservationist Jay Mar recently had the privilege of serving as opening speaker at the Connecticut Land Conservation Council Conference.

Mar talked about how much he admires the CLCC for their work with individuals and groups to further the cause of conservation, and about the many strides they have made in empowering municipalities, local governments, and private citizens to realize their potential to secure a better Connecticut and a better world for the coming generations.

He talked about how along those same lines, NRCS has been working hand-in-hand with the Conservation Districts to drive locally led efforts.

Mar gave the group an update of the successes NRCS had last year and our efforts for the future, including Long Island Sound.

Mar was also asked to introduce the keynote speaker for the day – Senator Richard Blumenthal.

He spoke about how the Senator introduced legislation to assist Connecticut’s shellfish industry; his efforts as Attorney General to fight against environmental wrongdoing; and his strong support of developing clean, renewable sources of energy.



Mar opens the Connecticut Land Conservation Council Conference.



Jay Mar with Senator Richard Blumenthal.



(l to r) Jay Mar, Amy Paterson from the CLCC, and Senator Richard Blumenthal.

Photos courtesy Jeanne Donegan and Zack Wussow, University of Connecticut

USDA Features KYF2 Compass on Web

USDA has created a new section of their website called the **Know Your Farmer Know Your Food Compass**. Here people can learn about local and regional food systems; read case studies, watch videos, see pictures from the field, and discover how USDA is supporting this growing market segment.

Visitors can view USDA-supported local and regional food projects by visiting the interactive map, which shows USDA-supported food projects and programs for the years 2009-2011. Check it out at www.usda.gov/wps/portal/usda/usdahome?navid=KYF_COMPASS

USDA
United States Department of Agriculture

Topics Programs and Services Newsroom Blog

You are here: Home / KYF Compass - Home

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KNOW YOUR FARMER KNOW YOUR FOOD COMPASS

"Local food systems work for America: when we create opportunities for farmers and ranchers, our entire nation reaps the benefit."
- President Barack Obama

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KYF Interactive Map

Welcome to the Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food Compass

Welcome to the Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food. [Share] [More info]

READ

Learn about local and regional food systems; read case studies, watch videos, and see pictures from the field, and discover how USDA is supporting this growing market segment in the *Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food Compass*.

USE

View USDA-supported local and regional food projects by visiting the interactive *Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food Map*. The map shows USDA-supported food projects and programs for the years 2009-2011.

KNOW YOUR FARMER KNOW YOUR FOOD

For the best experience, save the KYF Compass PDF file to your computer and open it with Acrobat Reader.

NRCS Holds Irrigation Training Session

Contact Dan DePietro 860.871.4059

The Tolland Ag Center, in Vernon, was the backdrop for a very successful training session recently.

Irrigation Water Management Plan Criteria, hosted by NRCS, was intended for potential and existing Technical Service Providers (TSPs), including current TSPs, Conservation District staff, and consultants. Many NRCS employees also attended to come up to speed on the plan's requirements, as well as learn how to better be able to review and accept plans submitted by TSPs.

Instructors included Soil Interpretations Specialist Lisa Krall, who talked about soils; Civil Engineer Dan DePietro who gave a presentation on engineering/planning spreadsheets and programs. Matt Cass, a private agricultural engineer whose entire career has been in Connecticut's irrigation industry, gave a presentation on the finer points of the CAP 118, as well as related irrigation planning and design considerations.



Civil Engineer Dan DePietro



District Conservationist Jim Hyde addresses the audience.



Matt Cass, Private Agricultural Engineer, gives a presentation to the group.

State Conservation Engineer Arthur Ramthun says hopes additional training will be made available for the future for all who could benefit from it.

Ramthun sends out a big thank you to District Conservationist Jim Hyde who was instrumental in organizing and planning the content and facilitating the delivery of presentations.



Soil Interpretations Specialist Lisa Krall talks about soils.

News You Can Use

Bulletin Board

Spotted in the UConn Alumni News & Notes

Connecticut Soil Scientist Donald Parizek was recently featured in the Alumni News & Notes Section of UConn Magazine:

Donald Parizek '88 (CANR), a soil scientist with the United States Department of Agriculture - Natural Resources Conservation Service, received the Million-Acre Mapper Award in 2011 for mapping over 1 million acres for the National Cooperative Soil Survey Partnership in Alaska and Maine. He lives in Willington, Conn., with his wife and three children.

Connecticut Has a New Grazing Lands Coordinator!

State Resource Conservationist Nancy Ferlow has announced Soil Conservationist Bill Purcell has been named the new Grazing Lands Conservation Innovation Coordinator for Connecticut. Bill can be reached at (860) 779-0557, Ext. 100.

Nancy sends a special thank you out to Jim Hyde who formerly served in that capacity.

Native Plants – Changing Perceptions

Using a tag-team approach, NRCS Landscape Ecologist Charlotte Pyle and Mystic Natives Consultant Charles Boos recently presented a talk on native plants to the Mountain Laurel Chapter of Wild Ones at Connecticut College. The pair covered topics such as What is a Native Plant?, Are Natives Really the Best?, Successfully Incorporating Native Plants in Your Garden Design, and more. The Wild Ones and their guests were an appreciative audience that kept Pyle and Boos on their toes answering questions.

Save the Date!

The next CIPWG Symposium will be held Thursday, October 25, 2012, at the University of Connecticut, Storrs, in the Rome Ballroom. This year's theme is *Getting Real About Invasive Plants: Prioritize, Strategize, Mobilize.*

Connecticut Employees Celebrate Black History Month

Contact Marissa Theve 860.871.4018

This year, Connecticut NRCS employees celebrated Black History Month with a luncheon at the new Danielson Field Office.

The day's guest speakers both hailed from Norwich Free Academy (NFA) in Norwich:

- Leo Butler, Director of Diversity and Community Relations works to close the achievement gap, improve academic issues surrounding ethnicity, foster parent empowerment, and improve community/school relations. He has received the Thurmond Marshall Community Service Award, and the Duncan Robertstine Award, presented by the NAACP for service to the youth of Norwich.
- Henry Laudone has been teaching at NFA for 33 years, and currently instructs a Multi-Racial/Multi-Cultural History Class, as well as U.S. History. Laudone holds honors such as NFA Teacher-of-the-Year, has received the distinction of having the yearbook dedicated to him three times, and is a Joseph Korzenik Fellow.



(l to r) Henry Laudone, Marissa Theve, Leo Butler, and Jay Mar.

Their presentations highlighted some of the ways people are exposed to Black culture and included a short film clip emphasizing how the media – in particular mainstream movies – affect our perception of Africans and African Americans.

Following the presentation, the audience asked many thought-provoking questions. Both presenters made a positive impression significantly helping our efforts to increase cultural awareness and sensitivity within our workforce.

Events such as these are not only enjoyable, but bring employees together to work toward a more culturally-sensitive workplace. On behalf of all Connecticut NRCS employees I thank our guests and look forward to a growing relationship with the Norwich Free Academy.

Putting Women Back into History

Contact Debbie Surabian 860.871.4042

This year's Women's History Month theme is *Women's Education – Women's Empowerment*.

Although women now outnumber men in colleges nationwide, the reversal of the gender gap is a very recent phenomenon. Women's supposed intellectual and moral weakness was used to argue against co-education. While Harvard (the first college chartered in America) was founded in 1636, it would be almost two centuries before the first college to admit women would be established. Below are some fascinating facts that show just how far women have come:

By the Numbers:

- Percentage of employed mothers with children under 18: Today – 71%; 1975 – 47%
- Women currently hold 17% of the seats in the House and Senate, and 18% of gubernatorial positions
- Number of active members of the U.S. armed forces: Today – 14%; 1950 – less than 2%
- Over 60% of college degrees awarded each year are earned by women
- The two highest IQs ever recorded through standardized testing both belong to women

Sports:

- No females were allowed at the first Olympics
- In 1966, Roberta Gibb was the first woman to run and finish the Boston Marathon; however, she didn't get official credit because women were not allowed to enter the race until 1972.
- Pitcher Virne "Jackie" Mitchell was the first woman in professional baseball. During an exhibition game, she struck out both Babe Ruth and Lou Gehrig, this was most likely why Baseball commissioner Landis banned females later that year

Culture

- The world's first novel, *The Tale of Genji*, was published in Japan around 1000 A.D. by female author Murasaki Shikibu. It is still revered today
Women often wrote under pen names in times when it was not seen as appropriate. Even some female authors who are highly acclaimed today had to resort to fake names (i.e., Jane Austen, the Bronte Sisters, Mary Ann Evans [better known as George Eliot], and Louisa May Alcott)

Each time a girl opens a book and reads a womanless history, she learns she is worth less.

Myra Pollack Sadker

- New research shows in the early years of the blues the vast majority of singers and the biggest players were actually women

Amazing Women

- Hatshepsut was only female pharaoh in recorded history. She was the 5th pharaoh of the 18th Dynasty of Ancient Egypt after taking over for her son. She reigned for 20+ years
- Queen Victoria ruled one of the largest empires, at one point controlling land on nearly every continent
- Upon her husband's death, Cherokee Leader Nancy Ward took his place in a 1775 battle against the Creeks, and led the Cherokee to victory. She played a key role in social and political changes to the Cherokee nation throughout her life
- In 1777, 16-year-old Sybil Ludington raced through the night to warn patriots in New York that the British were attacking nearby Danbury, Connecticut. While Paul Revere is recognized for nighttime rides, her journey took her twice the distance and helped the troops prepare and repel a British attack.
- African-American performer Josephine Baker was working in France during WWII, not only as a performer – she was also helping the war movement, smuggling messages to French soldiers
- Martha Wright Griffiths, an American lawyer and judge, pushed through the Sex Discrimination Act in 1964 as part of the Civil Rights Act; protecting countless women from discrimination based on gender

Famous Firsts

- The earliest recorded female physician was Merit Ptah, a doctor in ancient Egypt who lived around 2700 B.C
- On May 15, 1809, Mary Dixon Kies received the first U.S. patent issued to a woman. Most female inventors didn't bother because they couldn't legally own property independent of their husbands
- During the 19th century, factory workers were primarily young, single women. Men and married women stayed home to work the farm or manage the house.

Cultural Resources Update

Contact Debbie Surabian 860.871.4042

At the request of the Connecticut State Archaeologist Nicholas Bellantoni, NRCS recently conducted ground-penetrating radar (GPR) surveys at two sites – in Harwinton and Ellington.

Principal Participants:

Participating in the surveys were Bellantoni; NRCS Landscape Ecologist and Cultural Resources Coordinator Charlotte Pyle; and Soil Survey Office Leader Debbie Surabian.

The first site the group addressed as the T.A. Hungerford Library and Museum (listed on the Connecticut Register of Historic Places) in Harwinton.

Background: Theodore Hungerford was born in 1838 the son of a well-known Harwinton merchant. As a young man, Hungerford left his small town behind and moved to Chicago, where he did very well in the publishing business. Before his death in 1903, Hungerford set aside money in his will to fund a library building as well as a trust fund for its maintenance. He also had provisions put in to construct a tomb that would be included in the foundation of the building. The T.A. Hungerford Library (and tomb) was completed in 1909. History reported the tomb was located in the basement of the building; however, modern day searches for it have come up empty. Today, new research indicates the tomb may be located outside on the northwest corner of the building. The GPR provided added insight into subsurface conditions and showed the presence of glacial till features, as well as an area of disturbed soil. The data revealed an anomalous feature that may be attributed to a burial. This area may be worthy of further investigations by Bellantoni.

The second site was the Nellie McKnight Museum (formerly the McKnight family house) in Ellington.

Background: Nellie McKnight was born in 1894, in the house built by her grandfather in 1950, in Ellington. McKnight was educated in the local schools, graduated from Rockville High, and attended Mount Holyoke College, graduating in 1917. She taught school until 1929 when she returned to Ellington and became librarian of the Hall Memorial Library until her retirement in 1967. Following her death in 1981 the house bequeathed to the Ellington Historical Society to be used as a museum. This year, there is considerable interest by the Ellington Historical Society to conduct an archaeological dig on-site to coincide with the house's 200th birthday. The use of geophysical techniques provided added insight into subsurface conditions and the presence of outwash features. This data revealed anomalous features attributed to fill materials directly behind the house.



Area of interest at the T. A. Hungerford Memorial Library and Museum, located directly next to a large flat rock holding the base of an emergency staircase. Rock is similar in size to a headstone seen at the South Street Cemetery.



Headstone located at South Street Cemetery in Harwinton. Stone under the staircase of the Hungerford Museum is similar to this one and should be examined for writing on the other side.



Front of the Nellie McKnight Museum.

FOCUS ON ABILITY: What to Do When Interviewing

Applicants with Disabilities *(Submitted by Lisa Krall, Chair, Connecticut Civil Rights Team - taken from the March 2012 issue of My USDA)*

Good interviews allow managers an opportunity to identify the individual with the best mix of knowledge, skills, and abilities. Here's some advice for gaining maximum benefit when the person being interviewed has a disability.

When scheduling, inform all applicants that USDA provides reasonable accommodations on a case-by-case basis during the interview process and throughout employment. Inform them if they will be required to take a test to demonstrate their ability to perform certain tasks. This will allow time for a request.

Make the applicant feel relaxed. Concentrate on an individual's skills, knowledge, experiences, and interests, not the disability. Describe the job functions and ask only job-related questions. Don't speculate about how you would perform a job if you had the applicant's disability. The applicant will have mastered alternate ways of living and working. It is fair and appropriate to ask all applicants if they can do the job and how they would perform it.

Hold all individuals to the same standards and treat them with the same respect. Requiring a medical exam before making a job offer is prohibited under Federal law unless all applicants are required to do so. If the applicant is not hired, the employer must demonstrate a job-related reason.

When Applicants Use a Wheelchair – Ensure the meeting room is wheelchair accessible. Don't lean on the wheelchair. Stand or sit at eye level with the applicant if the conversation lasts more than a few minutes. Don't push the wheelchair unless you are asked to do so.

When Applicants Have an Intellectual or Cognitive Disability – Use simple, concrete language – don't use baby talk. When giving instructions or directions, proceed slowly; be patient and repeat directions, if necessary. Ask the applicant to summarize the information you have given to make sure it was understood. Give positive feedback whenever possible.

When Interviewing Applicants Who are Visually Impaired – Immediately identify yourself and others present; cue a handshake verbally or physically. Be descriptive in giving directions,

e.g., the table is about five steps to your left. Verbalize chair location, or place the person's hand on the back of the chair, but do not place the person in the chair. Don't be embarrassed to use such phrases as, "Do you see what I mean?" Don't shout. Keep doors either open or closed; a half-open door is a serious hazard. Ask if the applicant needs a guide to the room, etc. Give a verbal cue that you're offering your arm. Let the applicant grasp your left arm, usually just above the elbow. Ask first; do not be surprised if assistance is declined. Do not touch an applicant's cane. If the person has a guide dog, resist the urge to pet or interact with the animal. The guide dog is working while in harness and must remain focused on the needs of its owner.

When Applicants Are Hearing Impaired – If the applicant requests an interpreter, contact your Disability Employment Program Manager. Forward your request as soon as possible to schedule the service for your interview. There are different types of interpreting services available so it's vital to ensure that when forwarding the request, you also provide the applicant's email address for follow up.

Try to allocate 15-30 additional minutes prior to the interview for the applicant to meet the interpreters. There are variances in the types of sign language and with the terminology used for different occupations. Providing this lead time will increase the effectiveness of communication exchanged during the interview. Keep in mind that the interpreter's job is to translate, not to get involved. When working with interpreters, always face and speak directly to the applicant. Don't say to the interpreter, "Tell her..."

It is appropriate in Deaf culture to use a visual gesture such as a light wave to get the applicant's attention. If the applicant is speech/lip reading, speak clearly and a little slowly, keeping your mouth clear of obstructions. Place yourself where there is ample lighting. If possible, do not sit directly in front of a window, or draw the blinds to avoid sunlight obstructing your face. Keep in mind that an accomplished speech/lip reader will be able to clearly understand only 30-35% of what you are saying. If you don't understand what the applicant is telling you, don't pretend. Ask the candidate to repeat.



Celebrate National Volunteer Week

Contact Carol Donzella 203.287.8038, Ext. 100

NRCS is celebrating National Volunteer Week (April 15-21) by honoring Earth Team volunteers and expressing appreciation for their dedicated service and commitment to conservation (the Earth Team is NRCS' volunteer workforce). Nationally, in FY2011, 22,000 Earth Team volunteers donated 435,653 hours of service totaling \$9.3 million.

State Conservationist Jay Mar said Earth Team volunteers are making an environmental impact in Connecticut. Last year, 98 volunteers donated over 897 hours in Connecticut.

"That's worth \$19,159.92 of benefit to our customers and savings to the taxpayers," said Mar. "These are impressive numbers and we're grateful for the help, but also recognize that more conservation work needs to be done."

Created in 1985, the Earth Team program offers many opportunities to individuals over the age of 14 interested in helping improve natural resources. Earth Team volunteers help offer private landowners and others a range of services, from conservation technical assistance to teaching and generating awareness about conservation through the use of community projects. Over a half-million Earth Team volunteers have donated \$336 million worth of time helping NRCS with its conservation mission since being formed in 1985.

"The NRCS theme for this year puts it best," said Mar. "We are *Celebrating Earth Team Volunteers in Action*. These volunteers allow us to stretch available resources and help us put additional conservation practices on the ground. Their efforts help us improve our land and wildlife habitats, clean our water and air, and help us improve the environment for everyone."

Mar said he hopes National Volunteer Week will motivate others to volunteer to help NRCS with our conservation mission. "Earth Team volunteers work closely with our staff and they play an important role in Connecticut's conservation work. They take on a variety of conservation assignments and many Earth Team volunteers tell us they find their volunteer work enjoyable and personally very rewarding."

To learn more about the Earth Team Volunteer Program contact Carol Donzella, Earth Team Volunteer Coordinator, at 203.287.8038, Ext. 100.

News From Partners ...

District Receives Recognition for Flower Show Display

Contact Ellie Tessmer, Administrative Assistant, Southwest Conservation District



The Southwest Conservation District was recently recognized for the educational display they presented at the 2012 Federated Garden Clubs of Connecticut Flower Show, held at the Hartford Convention Center.

The display focused on the role Connecticut's Conservation Districts play in protecting aquatic ecosystems. It contained information about the five districts,

what towns they service, contact names, websites, and photos that related to rivers/streams, ponds/lakes, wetlands, and coastal estuaries.

To round off the presentation, handouts included *After the Rain, Urban Runoff* (from Oregon State University Extension Service, *Importance of Streamside Buffers* (from Connecticut Rivers Alliance; and the NRCS publication *What is a Watershed*.

District personnel who both provided information and staffed the booth were Ellie Tessmer, Roman Mrozinski, and Chris Bowley.

For more information, visit the Southwest Conservation District's website at www.conservect.org. For more information on the National Garden Clubs, visit their website at www.gardenclub.org.

Partners Attend NACD Meeting

NRCS State Conservationist Jay Mar, Assistant State Conservationist for Programs Joyce Purcell, and Connecticut Association of Conservation Districts President Denise Savageau were on hand recently to represent Connecticut at the Northeast NACD Conference in Portsmouth, New Hampshire.



Ag Commissioner Announces \$1+ Million in Matching Ag Viability Grant Awards – Investments

Designed to Strengthen Job Base and Support Agriculture

Agriculture Commissioner Steven Reviczky recently announced state investments in agriculture as part of an ongoing grant program that will expand and advance Connecticut's agricultural economy.

Sixteen agricultural producers, 13 non-profit ag organizations, and seven municipalities from throughout the state have been awarded Agriculture Viability Grants, designed to strengthen the state's agricultural job base and support and promote agriculture in the state.

"Our state has a rich agricultural history, and these grants will bolster how we protect and preserve that heritage, while at the same time help us to find the best ways to expand the market for Connecticut-grown products," said Governor Dannel Malloy. "Creating jobs and opportunity in the agricultural sector is in keeping with our past, and will prepare us for a strong future."

The grantees have up to a year to complete the project, according to the terms of their contract. Grants were awarded on a competitive basis and a match must be supplied by the applicant. The Department of Agriculture's (DOAG) share of the budget is capped at \$49,999 in matching funds. Funding is not limited to producers. Non-profit organizations and municipalities also are eligible and may use the grants for town or regional planning purposes, as long as agricultural components are involved.

"Agriculture plays a significant role in Connecticut's economy and has a total impact of up to \$3.5 billion," said Reviczky. "Farms tend to be long-lived businesses that don't pick up and move easily. These grants are smart investments in projects that will continue to strengthen the state's economy for many years to come."

The Agricultural Viability Grants are made available through Public Act 05-228, *An Act Concerning Farmland Preservation, Land Protection, Affordable Housing and Historic Preservation*. This landmark legislation serves to protect and preserve Connecticut for future generations by providing funding for municipal open space grants, farm

viability and preservation, historic preservation, and new and existing affordable housing programs, along with new infrastructure to support and promote agriculture in the state.

The funding is generated through a \$40 fee collected by town/city clerks for the recording of all documents into municipal land records. Documents subject to this fee include deeds, mortgages, mechanics' liens, judgment liens, notices of lease, releases of mortgages and liens, name change certificates, notices of variances, and condominium declarations.

DOAG plans to open the grant application period again in late fall. For more information visit www.ct.gov/doag/ (Click on "Programs and Services" then "Agriculture Viability Grants.")

2012 Agriculture Viability Grants Awarded Farm Transition Grants (Producers)

Total Grants: \$466,611, Project Value: \$1,094,896

Butler Farm, Pine Meadow, New Hartford. Double greenhouse size to begin production of lettuce. Grant: \$20,000, Project Value: \$40,000

Devon Point Farm, Woodstock. Road access road for bus traffic and construction of toilet facilities for compliance standards for Good Agricultural Practices and Good Handling Practices. Grant: \$49,999, Project Value: \$105,721

George Hall Farm, Simsbury. Construct new barn roof and chicken coop to increase production. Grant: \$16,562, Project Value: \$33,125

Gourmavian Farms, Bolton. Mobile refrigeration transportation system for fresh poultry and shell eggs. Grant: \$15,700, Project Value: \$31,700

Hastings Farm, Suffield. Dairy barn and milk room renovations. Grant: \$49,999, Project Value: \$108,678

The Hickories Farm, Ridgefield. Construct new livestock handling system. Grant \$2,999, Project Value \$6,352

Hickory Hill Orchards, Cheshire. Improvements to orchard and apple storage facility Grant: \$25,000, Project Value \$54,322

Jewett City Greenhouses, Jewett City. Energy improvements to greenhouses, replacing glass and vents. Grant: \$37,045, Project Value: \$74,090

Longmeadow Farm, West Cornwall. Construction of chicken house. Grant: \$9,153, Project Value: \$18,306

Mountaintop Mushrooms, Waterbury. Expand indoor mushroom growing facility to increase retail sales of exotic mushrooms. Grant \$49,999, Project Value \$100,000

Pramer Oyster Company, Norwalk. Expand and diversify shellfish operations. Grant: \$25,000, Project Value: \$153,000

Prides Corner Farms, Lebanon. Shade/heat retention system for propagation greenhouse. Grant: \$18,692, Project Value: \$37,384

Sharon Pheasant Farm, Sharon. Rebuilding seven pheasant pens. Grant: \$46,091, Project Value: 92,182

News From Partners ... (continued)

Stone Acres Farm, Stonington. CSA Greenhouse construction, deer fencing and tractor attachments for vegetables. Grant: \$11,433, Project Value: \$22,866

Sunnyside Farm, Voluntown. Purchase tractor and loader for increased efficiency in field crops. Grant: \$38,940, Project Value: \$77,880

Thorncrest Farm, Goshen. Construct milk house creamery for cheesemaking. Grant: \$49,999, Project Value: \$139,290

Farm Viability Grants (Municipalities and Non-Profits)

Total Grants: \$468,490, Project Value: \$1,056,947

Town of Bethany. Promotion of farmers' market. Grant: \$950, Project Value: \$1,900

Town of Bozrah. Promotion of farmers' market. Grant: \$2,205, Project Value: \$4,410

(Nonprofit) Cheshire Land Trust. Replacement of main barn to pack and ship produce and storage. Grant: \$40,000, Project Value: \$108,264

(Nonprofit) City Seed, New Haven. Unified marketing strategy for New Haven farmers' markets. Grant: \$7,100, Project Value: \$13,680

Town of Colchester. Develop a community services cost report and ag awareness project. Grant: \$17,300, Project Value: \$34,978

(Nonprofit) Common Ground, New Haven. FoodCorps project focusing on five municipalities to improve school food environments. Grant: \$49,070, Project Value: \$84,024

(Nonprofit) Coventry Regional Farmers Market. Site development for Coventry Farmers' Market. Grant: \$49,999, Project Value: \$130,109

(Nonprofit) CT Agricultural Education Foundation, Windsor. Emergency preparedness planning for ag producers. Grant: \$15,000, Project Value: \$25,000

(Nonprofit) CT Farmland Trust, Hartford. A municipally focused acceleration of Agricultural Conservation. Grant: \$25,000, Project Value: \$50,000

(Nonprofit) Eastern CT Resource Conservation & Development Area, Vernon. Pilot study for value chain partnership for local meat. Grant: \$37,500, Project Value: \$67,100

(Nonprofit) Friends of Ambler Farm, Wilton. Purchase reverse osmosis machine to increase maple syrup production. Grant: \$2,890, Project Value: \$5,780

Town of Haddam. Farmers' market promotions. Grant: \$4,500, Project Value: \$9,000

(Nonprofit) Hartford Food System, Hartford. Construction of greenhouse to support CSA. Grant: \$14,615, Project Value: \$20,461

(Nonprofit) Holcomb Farm, West Granby. New irrigation system for vegetable fields. Grant: \$29,805, Project Value: \$49,675

(Nonprofit) Knox Park Foundation, Hartford. Establish new community garden. Grant: \$29,757, Project Value: \$149,550

(Nonprofit) North Central Conservation District, Vernon. Administer ag restoration grant program for farmers. Grant: \$49,999, Project Value: \$83,331

Town of Southbury. Farmers' market promotions. Grant: \$2,500, Project Value: \$5,000

Town of Sprague. Farmland and open space preservation. Grant: \$25,000, Project Value: \$50,000

(Nonprofit) Town of Westport, Harbor Watch. Tracking and ID'ing storm drain contamination of shellfish waters. Grant: \$38,000, Project Value: \$119,185

(Nonprofit) Wind Hill Community Farm & Learning Center. Expansion of CSA and educational programming. Grant: \$27,300, Project Value: \$45,500

Coventry Farmers' Market Will Return to Hale Homestead

Agriculture Commissioner Steven Reviczky recently announced the Coventry Regional Farmers Market, Connecticut Landmarks, and the Town of Coventry have worked out a new, 10-year arrangement that will bring the farmers' market back to the Hale Homestead for the summer season.

"This is excellent news for the residents of Coventry and the farmers market," said Reviczky. "I commend the town and the market for their work to ensure this great Connecticut tradition was not lost; and I thank Governor Malloy for getting the parties talking again. Connecticut has a rich agricultural history, one that we want to encourage and expand."

Negotiations to renew the lease between the Hale Homestead and the farmer's market stumbled last fall over mutual concerns about expense and liability issues. During winter discussions, the parties reached an agreement to establish the town as the tenant, with the farmer's market sub-leasing the property.

Of the state's 125 farmers' markets, the Coventry Regional Farmers' Market (now in its 8th year) is one of the largest and most heavily attended. In 2011, it accounted for \$500,000 in sales and was visited by over 75,000 people.

The Nathan Hale Homestead was the family home of State Hero Nathan Hale, whose father, Richard, was a prosperous livestock farmer. The house on the homestead, built in 1776, was deeded to Connecticut Landmarks in the 1940s. Much of the acreage associated with the Hale farm is now the Nathan Hale State Forest.

"It took considerable time, effort, and energy from everyone involved to reach this new agreement, but it was worth it," Reviczky said. "This is a marriage of one of the state's most popular farmers' markets and one of Connecticut's historical treasures. The complete package is much greater than the sum of its parts."

NRCS Staff Attends Connecticut Conference on Natural Resources

Contact: Marissa Theve 860.871.4018

For the past several years NRCS staff has been a part of the Connecticut Conference on Natural Resources (CCNR), hosted by UConn's Department of Natural Resources and the Environment. Representing NRCS were Lisa Krall, Charlotte Pyle, Donald Parizek, Debbie Surabian, Marissa Theve, Petra Volinski, Nels Barrett, Ben Smith, Jacob Isleib, Fernando Rincon, Barbara Alexander, Robert Purcell, Diane Lambert, Margie Faber, Abbie Cadman, Carol Grasis, and Lesley Sweeny.

Highlights from the event included a talk by Keynote Speaker Donald Strait, Executive Director for the Connecticut Fund for the Environment; and the presentation of the Outstanding Environmental Leadership Award to UConn Botanist Dr. Les Mehrhoff.

Over 200 people were in attendance to view presentations, posters, and participate in the workshops which included topics such as Threats and Ecosystem Health, Urban Environmental Issues, Long Island Sound and Coastal Connecticut, Fish & Wildlife Management, Green Infrastructure, Environmental Law, and Groundwater Supply.

NRCS staff significantly contributed to the presentation portion of the event with ... Biologist Nels Barret with a presentation titled *Ecologic Site Description* (with David Clausnitzer, Northeast Regional Ecological Site Indicator Specialist); Soil Scientist Marissa Theve with a talk about the *Soil Survey Office 12-6 Project Concerning Soil Halinity*; and Engineer Ben Smith with a poster presentation on *Changes in NRCS Design Rainfall in Connecticut 1958 vs. 2008*. NRCS was also on hand with a very popular booth that included displays on the *Use of Native Species in Landscaping*,

Anthropogenic Soils, the Use of Web Soil Survey Data, and career opportunities. As the agency continues to establish itself as a resource for the Connecticut community, events such as CCNR are a priceless resource to accomplish our outreach goals and network with an ever-increasing number of clients.



Landscape Architect Fernando Rincon takes a turn staffing the NRCS booth.

GIS Specialist Barb Alexander (center) networks with the staff of the Environmental Review Team.



Attending CCNR – A First Timer's Perspective

by Robert Purcell 860.871.4048

As a first time attendee to the Connecticut Conference on Natural Resources, I really did not know what to expect. By the end, I already knew that I would want to attend next year.

All the different seminar sessions were very informative as to what other individuals from other agencies were working on. The great part about it was seeing how many of these individuals' research tied into initiatives and program focuses of NRCS.

The wonderful part about the conference was getting to talk with others on the work they were doing and I came to the realization that NRCS cannot carry out our mission of "helping people help the land" alone. It was an eye opening experience seeing how collectively many different agencies and groups work comes together as one; partnerships and the sharing of data and knowledge is the way we will make a difference in the conservation of our precious resources.

The Naturalist's Niche

Beware What You Ask For

Contact Charlotte Pyle 860.871.4066

After last winter's excess, I spent this winter enjoying the absence of snow in my driveway. In early March, I went out to check on a pair of vernal pools I have been visiting for 15 years. One has a tendency to dry up somewhat early. The other holds water well into late spring or early summer.

Like all vernal pools, these pools are the kind of temporary ponds that fill during the fall, Winter thaws, and/or early spring, and hold water to provide Spring-time habitat for breeding and juvenile forms of Wood Frogs, Salamanders, and a variety of invertebrates including Fairy Shrimp. Generally when these seasonal ponds begin drying up, the Fairy Shrimp have completed their active life cycle and have gone into a resting state in the pool's mucky soil and the frogs and salamanders are beginning to transform into adult forms that live in the forest surrounding the dried up pool.

This year, the water level in my vernal pools is quite low. In March, I expect these pools to be fairly full, or even overflowing, depending on how recently it has rained. Instead, the water level in one pool was so low that tussocky sedges, whose tops are normally just poking out of the water, stood there as pedestals surrounded by icy, muddy leaves.

Around the pool edges, there was already a wide band of wet leaves of that dull black color that signals considerable time spent underwater. A widening band of blackened leaves is what you see when pools begin drying up. Yet at that time, in March, Wood frogs and Spotted Salamanders had not yet laid eggs in these pools.

At two other locations, the pool water level was down to half the full basin surface area.

For this pool, and for most pools, a loss of half the surface area translates into a loss of much more than half the pool volume.

The apparent reason for the lack of water in the pools is that we did not have much snow this winter. I was feeling as though we did not have much rain, either. But it is important to remember that the ballpark liquid equivalent of 12 inches of snow is but one inch of rain. NRCS hydrologist, Ben Smith, reports that our winter precipitation has been on the low side, but not drastically less than normal.

Yet, the vernal pools in my neighborhood are communicating a real lack of moisture in the soil. NRCS Environmental Engineer, Lesley Sweeney, points out that our warm winter may have resulted in lower water tables in spring. The way that could work is that with warmer temperatures, perhaps the water from rain and snowmelt that worked its way into the soil this winter was not then bound as ice to the typical depths in Winter-frozen soil where it normally waits to be released when soil temperatures warm in the Spring. Rather, some of that soil water may have already percolated through unfrozen soil down to a level below that of the vernal pool basins.

Are we having a funny year, or are we looking at an ecological effect of global warming? I don't know. The situation this year in the pools I monitor does serve as a reminder that the ecological ramifications of global warming are complicated. For animals and plants, it will not just be a straightforward matter of adapting to being surrounded by warmer air.

NRCS 2012 Program Update

Agricultural Management Assistance (AMA) –AMA provides payments to agricultural producers to voluntarily address issues such as water management, water quality, and erosion control by incorporating conservation practices into their farming operations. Producers may construct or improve water management structures or irrigation structures, and mitigate risk through production diversification or resource conservation practices.

Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) - CRP reduces soil erosion and sedimentation in streams and lakes, improves water quality, establishes wildlife habitat, and enhances forest and wetland resources. It encourages farmers to convert highly erodible cropland or other environmentally sensitive acreage to vegetative cover such as tame or native grasses, wildlife plantings, trees, filterstrips, or riparian buffers. Farmers receive an annual rental payment for the term of the multi-year contract. Cost sharing is provided to establish the vegetative cover practices. *CRP is administered by the Farm Service Agency, with NRCS providing technical land eligibility determinations, conservation planning, and practice implementation.*

Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) –A voluntary program that provides financial and technical assistance to promote the conservation and improvement of soil, water, air, energy, plant and animal life, and other conservation purposes on Tribal and private working lands.

Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) –EQIP is a voluntary program that provides financial and technical assistance to farmers and ranchers who face threats to soil, water, air, and related natural resources on their land. Through EQIP, NRCS provides financial incentives to producers to promote agricultural production and environmental quality as compatible goals, optimize environmental benefits, and help farmers and ranchers meet federal, state, Tribal, and local environmental regulations.

Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program (FRPP) –A voluntary program that helps farmers and ranchers keep their land in agriculture. The program provides matching funds to state, tribal, or local governments and non-governmental organizations with existing farm and ranch land protection programs to purchase conservation easements.

Grassland Reserve Program (GRP) - A voluntary program for landowners and operators to protect, restore, and enhance grassland. The program emphasizes support for working grazing operations; enhancement of plant and animal biodiversity; and protection of grassland and land containing shrubs and forbs under threat of conversion.

Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP) –A voluntary program that provides technical and financial assistance to private landowners to restore, protect, and enhance wetlands in exchange for retiring eligible land from agriculture. Includes 30-year and permanent easement options and funding for restoration.

Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program (WHIP) –WHIP is a voluntary program for private landowners to develop and improve high quality habitat that supports wildlife populations of national, state, Tribal, and local significance.

Office Locations

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Jay T. Mar
State Conservationist

Calendar of Events

April

- 1** **TURN THE CORNER WALK/RUN** – Sherwood Island State Park, Westport – 11 AM – 2 PM - 4th Annual Fundraiser Walk/Run to Turn the Corner on Lyme on behalf of Turn the Corner Foundation. Contact Orna Grand 646.450.4882
- 6** **THE ECOLOGY OF VERNAL POOLS** - Goodwin Forest Conservation Center, Hampton - 10 AM – 12 Noon - Visit a variety of small woodland pools, many of which reach maximum size in the spring and dry up by mid-summer. These vernal pools are hot spots of biodiversity and serve as breeding pools for a number of unique amphibians and other organisms. Contact Juan Sanchez at (860) 455-9534
- 8** **DINOSAUR EGG HUNT** - Dinosaur State Park, Rocky Hill - 2 PM - Contact Margaret Enkler 860.529.5816
- 12** **BIRDS OF PREY** – Dinosaur State Park, Rocky Hill – 1 PM - Massachusetts Birds of Prey program featuring live hawks, owls and an eagle. Contact Margaret Enkler 860.529.5816
- 12** **KAYAKING IN AND AROUND THE NORWALK ISLANDS BOOK SIGNING AND DISCUSSION by David Park** – Ridgefield Library – 7:00-8:30 PM. Hear all about kayaking the area between Darien and Westport including local rivers, coast and islands off-shore. Kayak safety and island nesting birds will also be discussed. Contact NRWA 877-NRWA-INFO
- 12** **POLLINATOR CONSERVATION PLANNING SHORT COURSE** – Tolland Ag Center, Vernon – 9 AM – 4 PM. Contact Ashley 855.232.6639
- 14** **SATURDAY MORNING BIRDWALK** – Kellogg Environmental Center, Derby – 8 AM - Observe birds in the wild, sharpen your ID skills, or enjoy a hike through the grounds. Contact Donna Kingston 203.734.2513
- 14** **CONNECTICUT BEE KEEPERS POTLUCK GENERAL MEETING** – Ag Experiment Station, New Haven – 9 AM – 4 PM. Contact Steve 860.739.2756
- 17** **WONDERFUL WORLD OF LICHENS** – Kellogg Environmental Center, Derby – 7:30 PM - An introductory lecture where participants learn to recognize different lichen forms and structures, their ecology, habitat requirements and ancient and modern uses. Contact Donna Kingston 203.734.2513
- 17** **ONE-ON-ONE CONSULTATION SESSIONS WITH AG PROFESSIONALS** – Wamoga Reg. High School, Litchfield - 9 AM – 3:30 PM. Contact Elsie 860.887.1608 or www.ctfarmrisk.uconn.edu
- 18** **NATIVE AMERICAN CRAFTS WITH RANGER RUSS** – Meigs Point Nature Center at Hammonasset Beach State Park, Madison – 1 PM – Make your own Native American game to take home. Contact Russ Miller 203.245.8743 or 860.462.9643
- 19** **NATIVE AMERICAN STORIES WITH RANGER RUSS** – Meigs Point Nature Center at Hammonasset Beach State Park, Madison – 11 AM - Experience traditional storytelling with stories that taught Native American children about nature and life lessons. Contact Russ Miller 203.245.8743 or 860.462.9643
- 19** **LIVE REPTILES AND AMPHIBIANS SHOW** – Dinosaur State Park, Rocky Hill – 11 AM – 12:30 PM - A program with a variety of live reptiles and amphibians. Contact Margaret Enkler 860.529.5816
- 19** **ONE-ON-ONE CONSULTATION SESSIONS WITH AG PROFESSIONALS** – Nonnewaug Agri-Science, Woodbury - 9 AM – 3:30 PM. Contact Elsie 860.887.1608 or www.ctfarmrisk.uconn.edu
- 20-22** **NORTHWEST CONSERVATION DISTRICT'S 30TH ANNUAL EARTH DAY PLANT AND TROUT SALE** – Torrington. Contact 860.626.7222
- 20-22** **CONNECTICUT RIVER COASTAL CONSERVATION DISTRICT ANNUAL PLANT SALE** – Middletown. Contact 860.346.3282
- 20-21** **NORTH CENTRAL CONSERVATION DISTRICT ANNUAL PLANT/SEEDLING SALE** – Vernon. Contact 860.875.3881
- 20-21, 27-28** **EASTERN CONNECTICUT CONSERVATION DISTRICT PLANT SALE** – 4/20-21 – Ocean State Job Lot, Gales Ferry; 4/27-28 – Brooklyn Fairgrounds. Contact 860-887-4163 x 400
- 21** **PLANTING AND PRUNING BASICS** – Tolland Ag Center, Vernon – 9-11 AM - In conjunction with the Spring Seedling Sale, Rob Rocks of DEEP is presenting two workshops – The History of Connecticut Forests: Past, Present Future; and Planting and Pruning Basics.

April (continued)

- 21 **AQUATIC INVASIVES INVESTIGATOR PROGRAM TRAINING** – Brookfield Library – 10 AM – 12:30 PM - Program designed to help educate boaters on ways to keep our waters clean and prevent the spread of aquatic invasives. Please register before event. *Contact Gwendolynn Flynn 860.447.4339*
- 22 **EARTH DAY BIRD WALK** - Belding Wildlife Management Center, Vernon – 8 AM - Celebrate Earth Day. Learn to identify birds by sight and sound. *Contact Jane Seymour 860.306.5418*
- 28 **GREAT PARK PURSUIT KICKOFF** – Goodwin State Forest, Hampton – 9 AM – 3 PM - Kickoff the 2012 Great Park Pursuit Spring Sprint as we celebrate Junior Forester Day in conjunction with the CT DEEP's Boating Division's Paddle Smart event. *Contact Rachael Sunny 860.418.5981*
- 28 **CONNECTICUT SHEEP, WOOL, AND FIBER FESTIVAL** - Tolland Ag Center, Vernon – 9 AM – 5 PM - Features fiber art demonstrations and workshops, sheep dog trials, sheep shearing, and a wool fashion show.

May

- 3 **FOOD, LAND AND PEOPLE EDUCATOR WORKSHOP: COWS & WORMS: IT ALL ENDS IN COMPOST** – Kellogg Environmental Center, Derby – 4 PM - Understand the process of soil production versus compost creation. Registration required. *Contact Susan Quincy (203) 734-2513*
- 5 **ORGANIC GARDENING WORKSHOP** – Common Ground High School, New Haven – 10 A – 12 PM – Instructions and seasonal tips on what can be planted in your garden now and what must wait for warmer weather. Learn how to prep garden beds, plan your plantings, deal with early garden pests, and improve soil fertility using organic methods. Sponsored by CT NOFA. \$10/person. *Contact 203.888.5146*
- 3 **CONNECTICUT FOREST AND PARK ANNUAL MEETING** – Archdiocesan Center, St. Thomas Seminary, Bloomfield – 5-8 PM – Keynote speaker will be Dr. Fred Carstensen, lead author of an economic study documenting an annual value of over \$1 Billion and 9,000 jobs directly tied to outdoor activities in Connecticut State Parks and Forests. *Contact 860.346.2372*
- 5 **GREAT PARK PURSUIT SPRING SPRINT #2** – Secret Location – 9 AM – 3 PM – The second Spring Sprint adventure. Celebrate International Migratory Bird Day. Decipher clues posted on the No Child Left Inside website to figure out which state park or forest we will be visiting each week. *Contact Rachael Sunny 860.418.5981 or visit www.nochildleftinside.org*
- 12 **SATURDAY MORNING BIRDWALK** – Kellogg Environmental Center, Derby – 8 AM - Come observe birds in the wild, sharpen your bird identification skills, or enjoy a morning hike through the grounds of the Kellogg Environmental Center and Osbornedale State Park. *Contact Donna Kingston 203.734.2513*
- 12 **GREAT PARK PURSUIT SPRINT SPRING #3** – Secret Location – 9 AM – 3 PM - Celebrate Free Family Fishing Day as part of the Great Park Pursuit Spring Sprint. Third of four Spring Sprint adventures. Decipher clues that will be posted on the No Child Left Inside website to figure out where we will be visiting each week. *Contact Rachael Sunny 860.418.5981 or visit www.nochildleftinside.org*
- 15 **SPRING WILDFLOWERS OF THE NORTHEAST: A Natural History** – Kellogg Environmental Center, Derby – 7:30 PM - Learn about the life histories of some of your favorite spring wildflowers. Topics will include adaptations for early blooming, medicinal and other uses, the origin of wildflower names, and pollination and seed dispersal. *Contact Donna Kingston 203.734.2513*
- 18, 19 **SOUTHWEST CONSERVATION DISTRICT SEEDLING SALE** – 5/18 – Lockwood Farm, Hamden; 5/19 – Wilton Town Hall Parking Lot. *Contact 203.287.8179*
- 19 **GREAT PARK PURSUIT SPRING SPRINT FINALE** – Secret Location – 9 AM – 3 PM - Come to the end of Great Park Pursuit Spring Sprint. Decipher clues that will be posted on the No Child Left Inside website to figure out which Connecticut state park or forest we will visit each week. *Contact Rachael Sunny 860.418.5981 or visit www.nochildleftinside.org*
- 19 **NATIONAL WALK IN THE WOODS DAY** – Sessions Woods, Burlington – 1:30-3:00 PM - Take an interpretive walk at Sessions Woods and learn about forests and their wildlife value. *Contact Laura Rogers-Castro 860.675.8130*
- 21 **HUMANE AND SUSTAINABLE LIVESTOCK FARMING WORKSHOP** –Footsteps Farm, Stonington - 4 PM - Learn about human certified and sustainable livestock farming. Since 2002, Craig and Sheryl have produce humanely raised, grass fed pork, chickens, turkeys, beef and other farm products.
- 22 **EARTH DAY**
- 24 **2012 CONNECTICUT ENVIROTHON** – Winding Trails, Farmington – *Contact Margie Faber 860.871.4040*
- 28 **HOLIDAY – MEMORIAL DAY**

June

- 9 **SATURDAY MORNING BIRDWALK** – Kellogg Environmental Center, Derby – 8 AM - Come observe birds in the wild, sharpen your bird identification skills, or enjoy a morning hike through the grounds of the Kellogg Environmental Center and Osbornedale State Park. *Contact Donna Kingston 203.734.2513*
- 23 **GREAT AMERICAN CAMP OUT** – www.backyardcampout.org
- 23 **TAI-CHI BY THE SEA** – Meigs Point Nature Center at Hammonasset Beach State Park Madison – 10-11 AM - Improve fitness, promote flexibility, and reduce stress in a tranquil natural setting. For all skill levels. *Contact Russ Miller 203.245.8743 or 860.462.9643*

July

- 4 **HOLIDAY – 4TH OF JULY**