

December 2010-March 2011

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## Message From Phou Vongkhamdy, State Conservationist



Greetings from the Rhode Island Natural Resources Conservation Service State Office. During the December 2010 to March 2011 period, NRCS staff diligently worked to implement conservation practices throughout Rhode Island.

Several outreach events were completed including six information session workshops to inform landowners on NRCS conservation programs and three Canada Goose abatement workshops. Other outreach events included exhibit booths at three conservation related events, one recruiting event, and a conservation partnership listening session.

Several cooperative agreements were either implemented or continued in support of strengthening outreach and partnership efforts and providing technical assistance throughout Rhode Island.

A total of 217 applications for NRCS conservation and easement programs have been received thus far in the 2011 Fiscal Year with several application ranking deadlines to occur by April 1, 2011.

Engineering continues to make progress on the implementation of the Pocasset River Flood Mitigation Plan and the near completion of four American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) projects funded under the Emergency Watershed Protection Program Floodplain Easements (EWP-FPE).

Regarding soil survey activity, Rhode Island completed the first subaqueous soil survey in the United States.

I enthusiastically look forward to working with the staff and partners as we continue to successfully put conservation on the ground. I am confident that FY 2011 will be another banner year in conservation efforts throughout Rhode Island.

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## Outreach, Communications, and Recruitment

*by Walter Marshall, Public Affairs Specialist*

During the December 2010 to March 2011 period, NRCS conducting a Conservation Partner Listening Session at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in Warwick, RI where over 50 conservation partners attended. The agenda included highlighting the positive impact that the 2002 and 2008 Farm Bills have had on the local conservation landscape. In addition attendees participated in workgroups to assess what is working and what needs to be improved in NRCS' delivery of technical and financial assistance throughout Rhode Island. NRCS subsequently completed a summary of recommendations to improve service delivery.

NRCS attending the 2011 Farm Fresh Local Food Forum at Brown University where approximately 400 people attended. NRCS had an exhibit booth and staff networked with attendees to highlight EQIP program initiatives such as the EQIP hoop house initiative and organic initiative.

NRCS sponsored an exhibit booth at the Rhode Island Flower Show held at the RI Convention Center where staff highlighted NRCS conservation programs to a largely general audience along with some prospective clients. The event was well attended and provided the opportunity for NRCS to showcase the breadth of program delivery.

NRCS staff attended the University of Rhode Island Green Industry Conference and Exposition at the Ryan Center which provided the opportunity to marketing NRCS' technical and financial assistance to green industry exhibitors and network with students and recent graduates who specialize in landscape design. NRCS was an exhibitor at the University of Rhode Island Summer and Internship Job Fair at Memorial Union with over 425 attendees. NRCS staff received prospective applicants' contact information for future job postings including internships and permanent positions.

NRCS worked with the three conservation districts to conduct 6 general information workshops in the three districts highlighting the benefits of implementing conservation plans for farm and forest land owners. In addition, NRCS worked in cooperation with the conservation districts to hold two Canada Goose Abatement workshops for livestock and agricultural producers in Bristol and Newport Counties and one Canada Goose Abatement workshop targeted to municipalities.

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## Cooperative Agreements

*by Walter Marshall, Public Affairs Specialist*

NRCS continued working with conservation partners to strengthen outreach and partnership efforts and also provide technical assistance through cooperative agreements. The cooperative agreements NRCS is actively involved with conservation partners include the following topics:

1. STRENGTHEN OUTREACH & PARTNERSHIP EFFORTS
  - a. WRP Program – riparian and corridor-based approach
  - b. Limited resource and historically under-served urban clients

- c. Agricultural inventory and Biosecurity effort
- d. Forestry Initiatives
- e. Coordination of federal efforts with our conservation partners' efforts
- f. Prioritization of Farmland Preservation Efforts

## 2. PROVIDE TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

- a. Energy Management plans
- b. Subaqueous soils
- c. Stream Continuity
- d. Canada Geese population control
- e. Flood Damage Assessments
- f. Erosion and Sediment Control Handbook
- g. Technical and Financial for Flood Exigencies

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## Programs

*by Walter Marshall, Public Affairs Specialist*

NRCS has received 217 applications so far this fiscal year. For the Eastern District which includes Bristol and Newport Counties, there were 36 Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP) applications, 5 Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program (WHIP) applications, 2 Agricultural Management Assistance Program (AMA) applications, and 5 Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) applications. The Southern District which includes Kent and Washington Counties received 70 EQIP applications, 13 WHIP applications, 4 AMA applications, and 3 CSP applications. The Northern District which includes Providence County received 61 EQIP applications, 10 WHIP applications, 4 AMA applications, and 13 CSP applications.

The following is a list of important application ranking deadlines for NRCS programs for FY 2011:

Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) Organic Initiative March 4, 2011

Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) General Application April 1, 2011

Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP) General Application and Forestry Initiative Application April 1, 2011

Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program (FRPP) Application Deadline February 14, 2011

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## Engineering

*by Kevin Farmer, State Engineer*

### **Pocasset River Flood Mitigation Project**

- Approximately \$1.8 million in earmarked funding was provided in an agreement to the Town of Johnston to begin the implementation of the Pocasset River Flood Mitigation Project.
- With these funds, they will conduct the acquisition of approximately 6 residential properties.
- NRCS-Rhode Island recently received the approval from National Headquarters to enter into a \$300,000 agreement with the City of Cranston to begin designs of flood walls for Fletcher Ave.
- Together, these two agreements will allow us to complete Phase I of the initial implementation of the Pocasset River Flood Mitigation Project.
- Two public meeting are being conducted in order to inform the public and obtain their input on the final watershed plan/EIS.
- The \$28 million is expected to be finalized and submitted to National Headquarters and Congress for funding approval in Fall 2011.

### **EWP-FPE ARRA**

- Construction activities for all four ARRA projects were either substantially complete or near completion in December. Inclement weather conditions including snow cover hindered the final completion of the projects.
- The remaining construction activities will resume this spring and will be completed by June 2011.
- The items of work remaining include installation of a bridge, final shaping and grading, installation hydraulic appurtenances, and permanent site stabilization.

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## Soils Program - Happenings

*by Jim Turenne, Assistant State Soil Scientist*

- Continued acting as lead for the Northeast Region Rapid Soil Carbon Assessment study, a 2 year assessment of soil carbon nationwide across soil types and land uses. The Northeast has 380 soil sampling sites to assess by



Sept 2011 and has conducted laboratory analysis on these samples in association with the University of Rhode Island. For more information contact Maggie Payne.

- Published the first soil survey including subaqueous soil mapping in the 2010 Rhode Island soil survey update which included an update of the coastal and subaqueous soils of Washington County. We are continuing the coastal and subaqueous update into Narragansett Bay for 2011 which will include Point Judith north to Greenwich Bay. Contact Jim Turenne or visit [http://www.ri.nrcs.usda.gov/technical/RI\\_Soil\\_Survey\\_2011.html](http://www.ri.nrcs.usda.gov/technical/RI_Soil_Survey_2011.html) for more information.