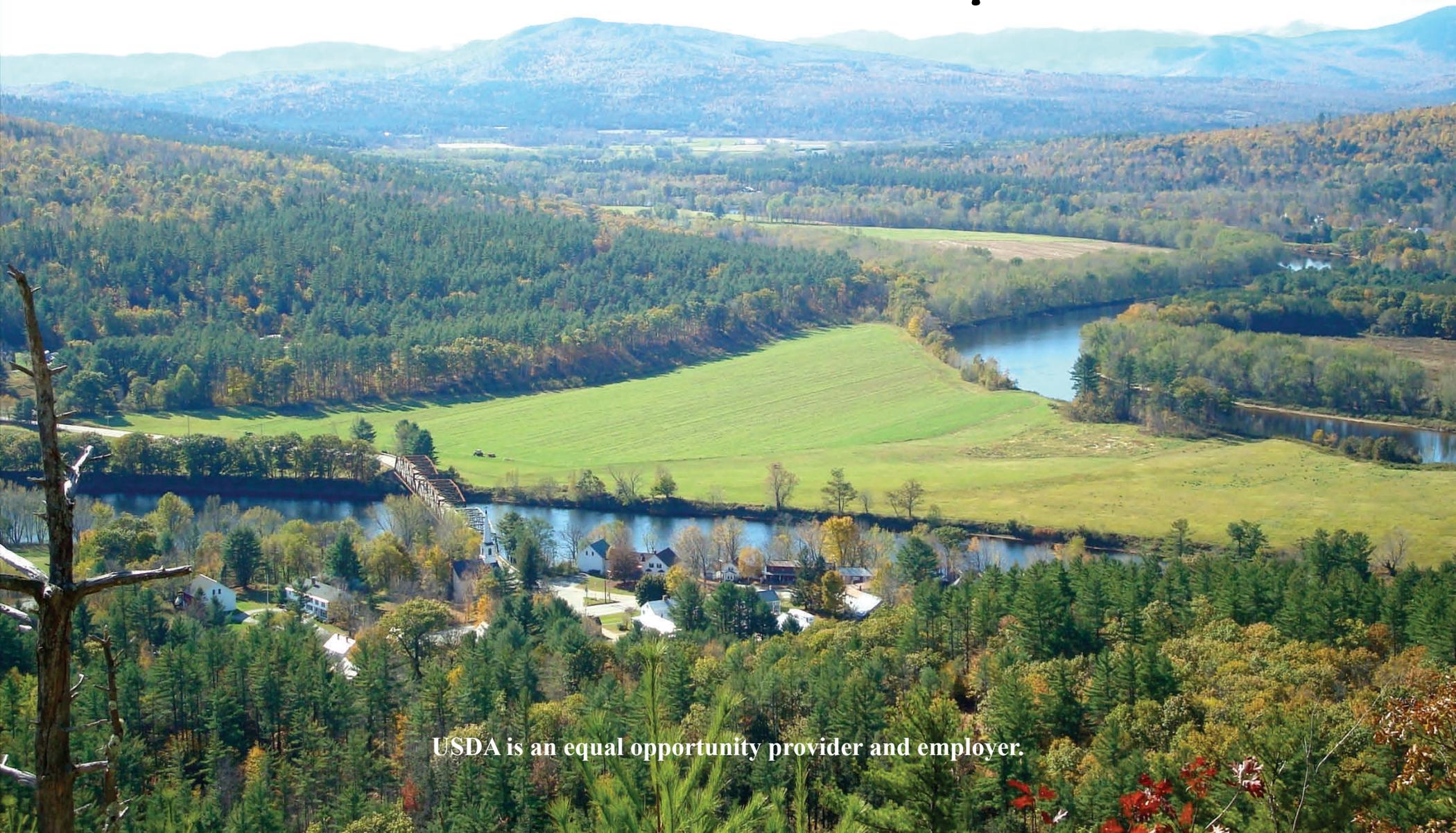




United States Department of Agriculture  
Natural Resources Conservation Service

Maine

# Fiscal Year 2010 Accomplishment Report



USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.



## About Maine NRCS

The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) provides leadership and technical assistance to address natural resource conservation issues on private land. NRCS employees work to improve and protect natural resources in partnership with Maine’s 16 Soil and Water Conservation Districts, federal, state and local agencies, 5 Resource Conservation and Development Councils, farmers, landowners and communities. The partnership’s commitment to conservation provides a solid foundation to a locally-led program delivery system. The partnership is also committed to a voluntary, incentive-based approach to private land stewardship and conservation treatment.



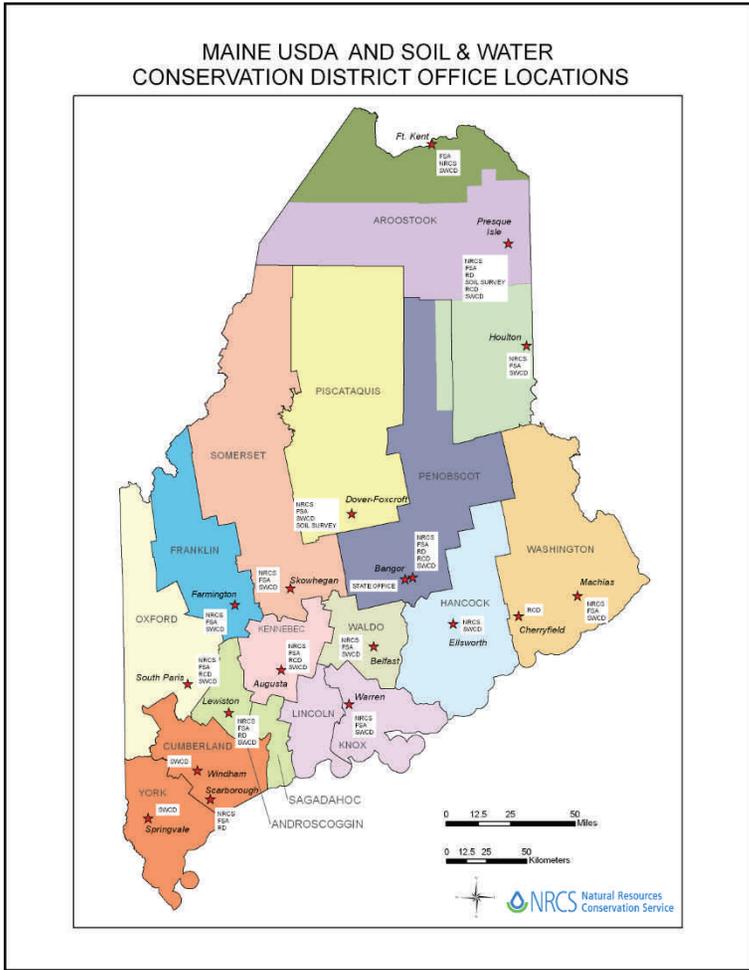
## Vision

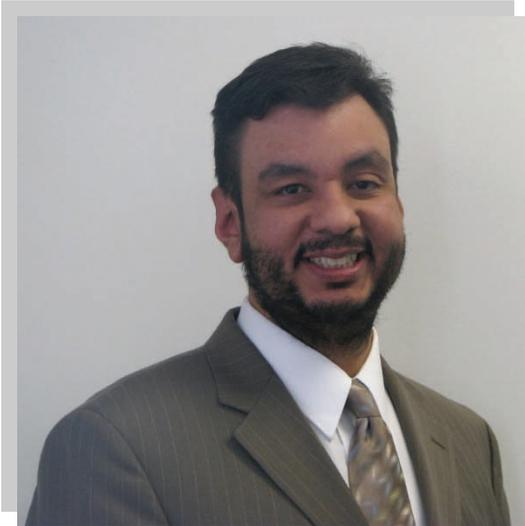
An effective team providing leadership and expertise in the use and stewardship of Maine’s natural resources.



## Mission

Provide technical assistance to help people conserve, improve and sustain our natural resources.





## A Message from the State Conservationist



I am pleased to provide you with a glance at Maine NRCS' accomplishments during Fiscal Year 2010. As you will see from the report, NRCS employees, along with conservation district employees and other partners, applied quality conservation through the USDA programs. With the 2008 Farm Bill Programs contributing significantly to our accomplishments, other key programs were Conservation Technical Assistance, Soil Survey, Resource Conservation and Development, and the Floodplain Easement Program. At the local level, Local Work Groups assured that locally-led conservation produced results.

I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge and thank individual land users, conservation partnership members and NRCS employees for their accomplishments during 2010 and for their commitment to conservation, ensuring that future generations enjoy a quality environment. Due to the dedication, knowledge and expertise of our employees in putting conservation on the ground, NRCS celebrated its 75th anniversary in 2010. I look forward to our continued efforts in 2011.

*- Juan Hernandez, State Conservationist*

## Helping People Help the Land

# Conservation Technical Assistance (CTA)

Conservation Technical Assistance (CTA) is the basic foundation for NRCS activities. Our locally-based NRCS staff works directly with farmers and others to provide technical and financial conservation assistance. Our guiding principles are service, partnership and technical expertise.

## NRCS and FSA Meet with Passamaquoddy Tribal Governors

NRCS State Conservationist Juan Hernandez, FSA State Executive Director Don Todd and appropriate staffs traveled to Downeast Maine to visit the two Governors of the Passamaquoddy Tribe. The purpose of the meeting was for the USDA leadership to meet the Tribal leadership and vice versa, talk about the Tribe's conservation needs, what USDA has to offer to meet those needs, and to sign a Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) contract for their blueberry land.



*William Nichols, Governor of Indian Township, signs CSP contract as State Conservationist Juan Hernandez (left) and District Conservationist David Garcelon (right) look on.*



## Working with Land Trusts

NRCS staff organized and conducted outreach to Maine's 100 Land Trusts who manage over 2 million acres of the land in Maine. As a result of the initial contacts, approximately one-third of the Land Trusts had a one-on-one meeting with a NRCS

representative to learn about NRCS and the 2008 Farm Bill programs. In addition, information was made available at the 2010 Maine Land Conservation Conference, at which 63 Land Trusts were represented.

Highlights of 2010 CTA Accomplishments		
Practice	Planned	Applied
Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plans	16	27
Conservation Plans (no.)	143	180
Conservation Plans (ac.)	35,257	13,685
Access Roads (ft.)	34,186	300
Conservation Crop Rotation (ac.)	2,957	4,684
Cover Crop (ac.)	798	467
Fencing (ft.)	8,640	450
Forage Harvest Management (ac.)	1,297	1,250
Forest Stand Improvement (ac.)	643	794
Integrated Pest Management (ac.)	113	241
Nutrient Management (ac.)	3,786	3,316
Pipeline (ft.)	1,655	
Prescribed Grazing (ac.)	283	470
Subsurface Drain (ft.)	1,900	1,100
Transition to Organic Production (ac.)		411
Upland Wildlife Habitat Management (ac.)	621	179
Waste Utilization (ac.)	299	905
Wetland Wildlife Habitat Management (ac.)	227	

# Agricultural Management Assistance (AMA) Program

Agricultural Management Assistance (AMA) provides cost share assistance to agricultural producers to voluntarily address issues such as water management, water quality, and erosion control by incorporating conservation into their farming operations. Producers may construct or improve water management structures or irrigation structures; plant trees for windbreaks or to improve water quality; and mitigate risk through production diversification or resource conservation practices, including soil erosion control, integrated pest management, or transition to organic farming.

*Landowner in Penobscot County had the first two NRCS-funded high tunnels in Maine.*



Seasonal high tunnels, which increase the availability of locally-grown produce in a conservation-friendly way, was the focus of AMA funding in FY 2010. It was the first year of a three-year pilot study established under the “Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food” Initiative. Maine is one of 38 states participating in the study to verify 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.

As a result, \$172,319 was obligated through 19 contracts for the establishment of high tunnels.

*High tunnel in Piscataquis County.*



*High tunnel completed in Aroostook County.*



*Owners of this high tunnel in Kennebec County are looking forward to an extended growing season.*



# Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)

The Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) is a voluntary program that provides assistance to farmers and ranchers who face threats to soil, water, air, and related natural resources on their land. Through EQIP, the NRCS provides assistance to agricultural producers in a manner that will promote agricultural production and environmental quality as compatible goals, optimize environmental benefits, and help farmers and ranchers meet Federal, State, Tribal, and local environmental requirements.

In FY 2010, Maine obligated more than \$10.2 million through 484 contracts in EQIP funding. This included general EQIP (\$7.9 million/231 contracts) and special initiatives (\$2.2 million/253 contracts). See page 7 for special initiatives.

Top EQIP General Practices in Fiscal Year 2010			
Practice	Number of Instances	# of Contracts	Total Obligation for Practice
Forest Management	187	187	\$288,157
Nutrient Management	169	40	\$144,541
Pest Management	106	33	\$93,451
Forest Stand Improvement	90	47	\$165,138
Access Road	87	71	\$567,852
Cover Crop	84	30	\$127,484
Fence	81	57	\$327,193
Conservation Crop Rotation	73	25	\$447,397
Heavy Use Area	67	56	\$1,512,625
Brush Management	58	32	\$29,198



*Roofed manure storage facility with 6' precast concrete walls. This structure was roofed due to the proximity to a spring and an inadequate filter area. Previously, the landowner had stacked manure 6 ft. high and was unable to manage it due to the ground being so wet. The new structure allows for better nutrient management while keeping the manure off the ground and away from a nearby spring.*

## NRCS/EQIP Program Join Forces on Diversified Farm in Maine

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

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

NRCS began working with Martha and Mary Ann in 2004. The farm consisted of 20 sheep and 2 horses. Planning was done to improve the efficiency of pastures by developing a rotational grazing system. Five paddock areas were developed with a residency period of 7 days per paddock. NRCS planned 3,000 feet of permanent and 650 feet of temporary fencing to accomplish the grazing system. Obstruction removal was planned to better manage the pastures. A pipeline and watering facility provided the distribution of water to the paddock areas. Compaction and the amount of non-vegetated heavy use area were reduced in each paddock. Total cost of these practices, installed in 2005, was \$10,000 funded through the EQIP program.

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

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

In 2010, to accommodate the increased sheep head of 40 animals, NRCS began updating the conservation plan to include additional fencing of pasture areas, additional pipeline, and obstruction removal. Through the NRCS Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), 6 additional acres of high tensile fence and a watering facility were installed to expand their pastures. Total cost of these practices was \$18,000 through the EQIP program.

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



## EQIP Initiatives

Special initiative efforts through EQIP add new options and more conservation funds for clients and partners. These include Conservation Innovation Grants (CIG), irrigation assistance, conservation activity plans and an organics initiative.

- **Irrigation Assistance:** One million dollars was made available in FY 2010 for irrigation assistance. **As a result, \$1,005,365 was obligated through 8 contracts in 4 counties.**
- **Conservation Activity Plans:** Funding is available to develop plans for agricultural energy audits at the farm's headquarters or on the landscape, for conservation nutrient management plans, forest management plans, and conservation plan supporting organic transition plans. Most recently fish and wildlife habitat plans have been added to the list. **In FY 2010, \$506,160 was obligated for 216 plans.**
- **Organic Farming:** Maine has provided funding specifically to help organic farmers and those agricultural producers transitioning to organic farming. This initiative will help make organic food producers eligible to compete for EQIP funds. **In FY 2010, \$707,756 was obligated through 29 contracts to organic producers.**
- **CIGs:** A way for clients and partners to put solutions on the land. **Two multi-state CIG proposals involving Maine were selected for national CIG funding in 2010, and four proposals were selected for funding by Maine NRCS.**

(continued on page 8)

## Irrigation Assistance in Aroostook County

For some farmers, supplemental irrigation of potatoes has been a part of their Aroostook County operation for 30 plus years. The associated benefits of irrigation, such as increased yields, improved quality, and risk reduction, are not without the potential for degradation of the soil and water and plant resources (increased erosion, poor soil quality, water quantity and quality, increased pest pressure, etc.). In 2010 NRCS provided financial and technical assistance to several growers in the area to address these issues.

In one such case, the grower was using two travelling gun sprinklers to irrigate 40 acres of potatoes on an annual basis. The sprinklers would be used on one field one year and an adjacent field the following year. Small grains and canola are used in rotation with the potatoes. Water was supplied from a pond/high yield well through a partially buried, partially overland pipeline. When soil and crop conditions indicated a need for water the existing system would be run for 27 hours and provide 0.75 inches of water to the crop. This required 1.12 inches of water to overcome the inefficiencies of the system. Soil erosion would sometimes occur during applications. The overland pipe system was not water tight and leakage would develop during operation, at times breaking defective and worn out pipeline and causing soil erosion and water loss. To address these resource concerns the landowner entered into an EQIP contract which included \$70,000 to replace the two traveling gun sprinklers with a moveable center pivot sprinkler, buried pipeline, and development and application of an irrigation water management plan. This allowed the grower to apply lesser amounts of water more frequently resulting in 25% less water used and no signs of irrigation induced erosion.



**EQIP Initiatives—continued from pg. 7**

The following are the four proposals selected for CIG funding by NRCS in Maine:

1. **Down East RC&D** to purchase soil testing equipment/supplies for the region's farmers use, to access soil quality and demonstrate the impacts of soil quality on the production yields, and develop the quality of crops.
2. **Office of Research and Sponsored Programs, University of Maine, Orono**, to provide information that Maine NRCS can use to further refine and develop the high tunnel practice standard and determine if high tunnels are an appropriate conservation practice.
3. **Small Woodland Owners Association of Maine** to develop and promote a series of modules covering the major areas of woodland ownership and stewardship.
4. **Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association** to conduct outreach to farmers about NRCS programs.

**Additional 2010 EQIP Projects**



*Before—Barnyard for Beef Animals*



*After—Heavy Use Area and Manure Storage Installed*



*(Before)*



*(After)*

## Farm and Ranchland Protection Program (FRPP)

The Farm and Ranch Land Protection Program (FRPP) provides matching funds to help purchase development rights to keep productive farm and ranchland in agricultural uses. Working through existing programs, USDA partners with State, tribal, or local governments and non-governmental organizations to acquire conservation easements or other interests in land from landowners. USDA provides up to 50 percent of the fair market easement value of the conservation easement.



Photo courtesy of  
Maine Farmland Trust

### River Rise Dairy Farm Protected

River Rise Farm in Turner (Androscoggin County) has operated most recently as a dairy farm with sustainable forest management being a significant part of the farm activity.

The farm is comprised of approximately 625 acres including 150 acres of fields and approximately 475 acres of working forest, located along nearly 2 miles of the Androscoggin River.

- In FY 2010, \$620,000 was obligated to four FRPP projects in Maine.
- Estimated Conservation Easement Value totaled \$1,240,000.
- Total number of acres was 840.
- The easement of one of the projects, the River Rise Farm in Androscoggin County, closed in 2010.

The owners, Adrian and Jennifer Wadsworth, have worked the woods in a sustainable manner, maintaining and improving the fields, and protecting and improving habitat for waterfowl and upland game.

Needing to sell, the Wadsworths hoped that this property could remain as working farmland. Working with Maine Farmland Trust, the property was divided into three parcels; the easements on two of the parcels, totaling 250 acres, will be held by the Androscoggin Land Trust. Fifty percent of the total purchase price of the two parcels, or \$375,000, was through the FRPP program. Maine Farmland Trust will hold easements on the third parcel.

Protective easements now prevent the land from being developed, but allow the fields and woods to be actively worked. Without the collaboration between land trusts, NRCS, and other funders, this property would not have been preserved as farmland.

# Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP)

The Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program is a voluntary conservation program that provides technical and financial assistance to landowners for developing, improving or managing wildlife habitat or for restoring natural ecosystems on eligible land. Landowners agree to prepare and implement a wildlife habitat conservation plan. NRCS provides technical and financial assistance to implement the wildlife habitat restoration practices.

## Breakdown of WHIP Dollars

Type	# of Contracts	Total Obligation
Aquatic	9	\$121,237
Terrestrial	29	\$427,042
Essential Habitat	5	\$167,613
Forestry *	49	\$1,464,776

\* A New England/New York Forestry Initiative was initiated in 2010. This initiative aims to assist landowners to improve wildlife habitat, forest health and productivity, and water quality on private forest lands. Maine is one of seven states participating in this special initiative. Eligible conservation practices include forest stand improvement, integrated pest management, early successional habitat development and management, tree and shrub establishment, upland wildlife habitat management, stream crossings, riparian forest buffer, fish passage, stream habitat improvement and management, forest trails and landings, conservation cover, access roads, road/trail/landing closure and treatment, wetland restoration, tree and shrub site preparation, and wetland wildlife habitat management.

## WHIP Projects Assist AGRI

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



The founder of AGRI was a first responder following the 9/11 disaster at the World Trade Center. Inspired by the courage displayed by thousands of emergency responders, AGRI was set up to restore and assist those who suffer both mentally and physically as a result of their service.

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

The site shows how specific conservation practices benefit wildlife. Forest stand improvement, planting conservation cover, bird nesting boxes, successional mowing, and cover crops were contracted and implemented in FY 2010 through WHIP. Total cost of these projects was \$15,000. Additional funding is scheduled for this project in FY 2011 through the WHIP Forestry Initiative.

## Additional 2010 WHIP Projects



*Mill Brook Fish Passage, Cumberland County*



*Paulette Brook, St. John Valley, fish passage (before)*

*Old crossing culverts exposed*



*New open-arch culverts and road (after)*

# Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP)

The Wetlands Reserve Program is a voluntary program offering landowners the opportunity to protect, restore, and enhance wetlands on their property. NRCS provides technical and financial support to help landowners with their wetland restoration efforts. The NRCS goal is to achieve the greatest wetland functions and values, along with optimum wildlife habitat, on every acre enrolled in the program. This program offers landowners an opportunity to establish long-term conservation and wildlife practices and protection.

A renewed push on the benefits of WRP for cropland frequently flooded has been initiated. WRP was promoted as an effective, long-term way to protect natural resources and support wildlife habitat. As a result, interest and applications in WRP have increased, with four new easement requests for enrollment in 2010. The last WRP easement in Maine was 15 years ago.



## Soil Survey Program

Soil surveys provide an orderly, on-the-ground, scientific inventory of soil resources that includes maps showing the locations and extent of soils, data about the physical and chemical properties of those soils, and information derived from that data about potentialities and problems of use on each kind of soil in sufficient detail to meet all reasonable needs for farmers, agricultural technicians, community planners, engineers, and scientists in planning and transferring the findings of research and experience to specific land areas. Soil surveys provide the basic information needed to manage soil sustainably. They also provide information needed to protect water quality, wetlands, and wildlife habitat.

- Maine completed the initial field soil survey activities in the fall of 2010. With the recent completion of the initial soil survey of Baxter State Park and the surrounding area, the entire State of Maine has soils information available for the very first time. NRCS has soil maps and data available for more than 95 percent of the nation's counties and anticipates having 100 percent in the near future.
- 2010 marked the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the publication of Maine's first Soil Survey, and the completion of the first draft initial soil survey.
- NRCS is currently working to increase the relevance of soil survey information to many areas of activity including forest management, environmental contaminant management, irrigation management, and community development.



*Surveying of Baxter State Park*

# Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D)

Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D) is a unique program that helps people care for and protect their natural resources in a way that will improve the area's economy, environment and living standards. It provides a way for people to work together to plan and carry out activities that will make their area a better place to live. It improves the capability of State, tribal and local units of government and local non-profit organizations in rural areas to plan, develop and carry out programs for resource conservation and development.

FY 2010 RC&D Accomplishments	
Projects Completed	40
Active projects at end of Fiscal Year	93
Contributed towards completed and active projects	\$2.2 million
Watershed or Area-wide Conservation	18
Local businesses created, expanded or	97



**Down East RC&D**—The Cherryfield Free Library project was a two-year project through which

the RC&D provided technical assistance with grants for an addition to the library and a Rural Development Community Equipment Grant for furnishing and equipping the new addition. Total project value was \$200,000 with grants, volunteer time and technical assistance.

**Time and Tide RC&D**—provided technical assistance to a greenhouse grower to implement energy conservation measures called for in a completed greenhouse energy audit. The project involved the installation of energy curtains and greenhouse side-wall insulation in five production greenhouses that are operated year round. Through the RC&D's grant writing assistance, \$45,215 was awarded for the \$60,406 project.



These energy conservation improvements are projected to save 13,585 gallons of fuel oil annually, and at \$2.75/gallon that will result in an annual savings of \$37,358 per year. The installation of these conservation measures

will reduce CO2 emissions into the atmosphere by more than 152 tons annually. This project resulted in the creation of one job and helped to retain two others.

**St. John Aroostook RC&D**—Through the “Community Wind-Local Ownership” project the RC&D has provided Arc Map geographic information system data layers to 52 farmers and other landowners. The data is supporting farmers in the development of locally-owned wind farms. Data included project names, property boundaries, acreages, landowners, color aerial photography and topographic maps for 49 landowners covering 5,775 acres. The data is being used by the farmers, consultants and engineers in the development of six wind farms that would lie within seven municipalities. If successful, the wind farms would generate approximately 100 megawatts of electricity, enough to supply electricity to 48,000 homes.



**Heart of Maine RC&D**—Assisted the town of Dexter, Eastern Maine Development Council and area farmers in planning, grant development and fund raising efforts for the Dexter Community Farms Project. This project is a community-wide initiative to foster economic growth within Dexter by supporting its many

local, small-scale agricultural and goods producers through the development of a year-round indoor farmer’s market that will provide them with a consistent marketplace to sell their goods. As a result, \$200,000 in Community Development Block Grant/New Product Development Center funds were awarded to the Dexter Regional Development Council to aid in the rehabilitation of the Fossa Building located on the most visible corner of Dexter’s downtown district. Once the building has been renovated, the Fossa General Store will serve as the market place for locally-produced meats, vegetables, grains, fruits and specialty items. A licensed kitchen is also in the plans to provide teaching and value-added production opportunities to area producers and the vocational school students.

**Threshold to Maine RC&D**—is involved with the establishment of shared kitchens providing assistance to two projects and helping individuals find processing solutions. They are working to establish a cluster of kitchen facilities, in conjunction with existing co-packers and other licensed kitchens, that will meet the needs of users, add value to the local economy by expanding the number of food-related businesses, create jobs, and encourage investment that will re-build Maine’s food cluster infrastructure.



## NRCS Offices in Maine

### Field Offices

#### Androscoggin/Sagadahoc Counties

254 Goddard Road  
Lewiston, ME 04241-1938  
Tel: 207-753-9400

#### Aroostook County:

Central Aroostook  
735 Main Street, Suite #3  
Presque Isle, ME 04769  
Tel: 207-764-4153

Southern Aroostook  
304 North Street  
Houlton, ME 04730-9527  
Tel: 207-532-2087

St. John Valley  
139 Market Street  
Suite 106  
Fort Kent, ME 04743-1425  
Tel: 207-834-3311

#### Cumberland/York Counties

306 U.S. Route 1, Suite A1  
Scarborough, ME 04074-9774  
Tel: 207-883-0159

#### Franklin County

107 Park Street  
Farmington, ME 04938-1915  
Tel: 207-778-4767

#### Hancock County

190 Bangor Road  
Ellsworth, ME 04605-9806  
Tel: 207-667-8663

#### Kennebec County

Central Maine Commerce Ctr.  
21 Enterprise Drive, Suite #1  
Augusta, ME 04330  
Tel: 207-622-7847

#### Knox/Lincoln Counties

191 Camden Road  
Warren, ME 04864-4207  
Tel: 207-273-2005

#### Oxford County

17 Olson Road, Suite #2  
So. Paris, ME 04281  
Tel: 207-743-5789

#### Penobscot County

1423 Broadway, Suite #2  
Bangor, ME 04401  
Tel: 207-947-6622

#### Piscataquis County

42 Pine Crest Drive  
Dover-Foxcroft, ME 04426  
Tel: 207-564-2321

#### Somerset County

12 High Street, Suite #3  
Skowhegan, ME 04976-1998  
Tel: 207-474-8324

#### Waldo County

266 Waterville Road  
Belfast, ME 04915-1224  
Tel: 207-338-1964

#### Washington County

Federal Building and Post Office  
51 Court Street  
Machias, ME 04654-0121  
Tel: 207-255-3995

### RC&D Offices

#### Down East RC&D Office

(Hancock and Washington Counties)  
87 Milbridge Road  
Cherryfield, ME 04622  
Tel: 207-546-2368

#### Heart of Maine RC&D

Office (Penobscot, Piscataquis and Somerset Counties)  
1423 Broadway  
Bangor, ME 04401  
Tel: 207-947-6622

#### St. John-Aroostook RC&D

(Aroostook County)  
735 Main Street, Suite #3  
Presque Isle, ME 04769  
Tel: 207-764-4126

#### Threshold To Maine RC&D

Office (Cumberland, Franklin, Oxford and York Counties)  
17 Olson Road, Suite #4  
So. Paris, ME 04281  
Tel: 207-743-5789

#### Time and Tide RC&D Office

(Knox, Lincoln, Waldo, Kennebec, Androscoggin and Sagadahoc Counties)  
Central Maine Commerce Center  
21 Enterprise Drive, Suite #1  
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Tel: 207-622-7847

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Tel: 207-990-9100

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