

July-September 2012

In This Issue

- Administration
- Conservation Districts (Eastern, Northern, and Southern) and Program Funding
- Programs-Easements
- Outreach, Communications, and Recruitment
- Resources
- Soils Program
- Notice to Hispanic and/or Women Farmers or Ranchers

Message From R. Phou Vongkhamdy, State Conservationist



Greetings from the Rhode Island Natural Resources Conservation Service State Office. During the July to September 2012 period, NRCS staff continued work related to implementing conservation practices as part of contracts for the final quarter of the Fiscal Year (FY) 2012.

Regarding outreach activities, NRCS participated at the Green Market Festival which was geared to the general public along with some potential clients and conservation partners. Rhode Island NRCS hosted the National Employee Development Center's training class Extending Outreach to All Customers which provided students with the knowledge and skills to effectively serve and meet NRCS' customer needs as well as comply with OMB and OIG requirements to educate field employees about extending outreach to all NRCS customers. Attendees went on field tours including aquaculture, forestry, and urban farming and were then required to develop and present outreach plans based on their findings.

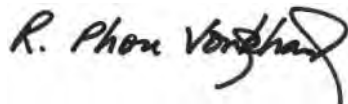
The field staff focused on completing contract obligations for the final quarter of FY 2012. Among applications received, 199 have been awarded contracts worth approximately \$2,769,000 covering approximately 12,200 acres of land.

Regarding easement programs in FY 2012, over \$6.3 million was obligated under the Farm and Ranchlands Protection Program (FRPP) to protect 200 acres of land. Under the Wetland Reserve Program (WRP), over \$536,000 was obligated to restore 102 acres of wetlands. In FY 2012, \$119,000 was obligated under the Grasslands Reserve Program (GRP) for 24 acres of land in Rhode Island.

The resource staff focused its efforts on implementing agreements to support the many forestry related practices available to forest landowners through Rhode Island.

Lastly, the soils staff completed the first phase of the Northeast Hills soil survey mapping which includes the towns of Foster and Glocester.

Contact Us
USDA NRCS
60 Quaker Lane, Suite 40
Warwick, RI 02886
Ph: 401-828-1300
Fax: 401-828-0433
www.ri.usda.nrcs.gov



R. PHOU VONGKHAMDY
State Conservationist

Administration

by Jacqueline Pashnik, Management Analyst

- Jeehye “Jee” Lee, joined the field staff as a Soil Conservationist, effective August 27, 2012. Jee comes to Rhode Island from Wisconsin NRCS where she had served as a soil conservationist since June 2010. Prior to that, she served as biological science technician at botany department of the U.S. Forest Service in Gold Beach, Oregon for one season.
- Debbie Surabian has been officially designated as the State Soil Scientist for Connecticut and Rhode Island, effective September 28, 2012, through a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) signed between the two states. Debbie is assigned to the Tolland, CT office and was appointed to the position of State Soil Scientist on September 10, 2012.
- Alan Gillespie, Civil Engineer, joined the engineering staff, effective September 10, 2012.
- Joe Rocks, Civil Engineer, joined the engineering staff, effective September 24, 2012.

Conservation District Happenings Including Program Funding:

Conservation District - Eastern District (Bristol and Newport Counties)

by Melissa Hayden, Eastern District Conservationist

During the period July to September 2012, the Eastern District completed FY 2012 contract obligations. Eastern District obligations in 2012 included a total of 72 contracts on 1,400 acres. A total of \$976,415 was obligated for the Environmental Quality Incentives Program, \$44,270 for the Agricultural Management Assistance Program, and 2 Conservation Stewardship Program contracts were awarded.

Implementation on existing contracts this quarter included completion of a total of 34 practices. These include installation of 1,800 feet of pipeline, 17 watering facilities, 9,100 feet of fencing, 5.8 acres of pollinator habitat, and 10,550 square feet of grassed waterway, among others. Four Conservation Activity Plan contracts were also completed including a Forest Management Plan, an Agricultural Energy Management Plan, and two Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plans.

The final outreach event for FY 2012 was held on July 18 at Watson Farm in Jamestown where 12 attendees participated despite the uncertain weather conditions. The event highlighted several NRCS conservation practices implemented on the farm and provided an overview of the rotational grazing system at Watson Farm.

Conservation District - Northern District (Providence County)

by Justin Tuthill, Northern District Conservationist

July – September Quarter Report

- Pawtuxet Fish Passage Project Complete
 - Low water plantings of exposed banks completed in August.
- General
 - Jeehye Lee, soil conservationist recently came to RI NRCS from Wisconsin and will be working in NRICD.
- Programs
 - 4 Approved Applications were obligated for \$29,000
 - 15 Applications are pre-approved for \$326,357 and will be deferred to FY 2013
 - 11 Apps for Forestry (\$101,000)
 - 1 Forest CAP
- Year End summary:

2012 Contracts Summary –

For FY 2012, there was a total of 64 contracts approved under the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) funding worth \$583,820 on over 2,691 acres of land.

State	Initiative	Status	Contracts Obligated	Contracted Acres	Obligation Amount	Payment Amount	Payment Percent
CSP 2008	NIPF - Beginning Farmer	Active	3	110.00	\$3,000.00	\$0.00	0.00 %
EQIP 2008	Planning	Active	25	1,220.20	\$37,383.10	\$3,156.75	8.44 %
		Completed	4	315.10	\$11,079.75	\$11,079.75	100.00 %
	Beginning Farmer/Rancher	Active	4	103.40	\$77,213.20	\$49,770.00	64.46 %
		Completed	1	30.00	\$8,700.00	\$8,700.00	100.00 %
	Limited Resource	Active	2	57.30	\$89,368.40	\$0.00	0.00 %
	NE-NY Forestry Initiative	Active	5	338.90	\$59,449.60	\$0.00	0.00 %
	Seasonal High Tunnels	Active	7	108.00	\$42,646.60	\$0.00	0.00 %
	CAPS Energy	Active	1	9.30	\$1,506.00	\$0.00	0.00 %
	Locally Led	Active	11	352.70	\$250,104.90	\$1,085.00	0.43 %
Completed		1	47.00	\$3,368.00	\$3,368.00	100.00 %	
Providence Co. FY2012 Total:			64	2,691.90	\$583,819.55	\$77,159.50	13.22%

2012 Practice Summary -

Practice	Applied Amount		Sum of Payments	Practice	Applied Amount		Sum of Payments
Access Control	33.1	ac	\$15,935.83	Heavy Use Area Protection	0.1	ac	\$72,000.00
Access Road	1250	ft	\$38,150.00	Hedgerow Planting	1150	ft	\$3,450.00
Animal trails & walkways (Ft)	1317	ft.	\$15,759.16	Herbaceous Weed Control	20.8	ac	\$8,320.00
Brush Management	49.8	ac	\$47,775.16	High Tunnel	4338	sq ft	\$20,165.40
Composting Facility	1	no	\$112,000.00	Irrigation System, Micro irrigation	1.1	ac	\$2,447.28
Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plan	6	no	\$41,990.00	Irrigation Water Management	4	ac	\$126.00
Conservation Cover	1.7	ac	\$1,118.54	Mulching	1.5	ac	\$898.89
Cover Crop	7	ac	\$1,495.60	Nutrient Management	79.3	ac	\$2,848.74
Critical Area Planting	3.1	ac	\$27,476.44	Pasture and Hay Planting	12.8	ac	\$9,984.00
Diversion	5.5	ft	\$4,300.00	Pest Management	39.5	ac	\$2,370.66
Early Successional Habitat	2.3	ac	\$3,600.00	Pipeline (Ft.)	1691	ft	\$14,528.80
Fence	3095	ft	\$27,284.05	Restoration and Management of Declining Habitats	75	ac	\$11,489.41
Fish Passage	110	no	\$75,000.00	Seasonal High Tunnel	4410	sq ft	\$17,915.94
Forage and Biomass Planting	5.3	ac	\$2,332.00	Upland Wildlife Habitat Management	376.2	ac	\$1,597.20
Forage Harvest Management	29.2	ac	\$300.08	Upland Wildlife Management	464.1	ac	\$3,648.07
Forest Management Plan	10	no	\$12,868.80	Water Well	4	no	\$18,045.84
Forest Stand Improvement	221.9	ac	\$145,287.52	Watering Facility	10	no	\$6,545.00
Forest Trails and Landings	154.4	ac	\$75,830.44	Wetland Enhancement	2.2	ac	\$269,765.85
Forestry Management Plan	9	no	\$18,975.00	Wetland Wildlife Habitat Management	195	ac	\$2,731.66
Grazing Management Plan-Written	2	no	\$4,240.00				

Total Payment Made for Practice implementation in FY2013: \$1,140,597.36

Conservation District - Southern District (Kent and Washington Counties)

by John Richard, Southern District Conservationist

In FY 2012, NRCS Southern District obligated \$1,163,872 in funding on over 8,115 acres for 63 contracts under the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) with 17 in Kent County worth \$336,965 and 46 contracts in Washington County worth \$826,907. There were 2 CSP contracts obligated in the Southern District. In the last quarter, there were 54 practices implemented totaling \$163,000 in contract payments. These completed practices include conservation activity plans written (Forestry, Grazing, and CNMPs), Watering Pipelines, Irrigation Pipelines, Fencing, Early Successional Habitat Development, Timber Stand Improvement, and Aquaculture Management Practices.

The Southern District worked diligently to build relationships and partnerships to implement the new Working Lands for Wildlife Initiative which targets conservation of the candidate species New England cottontail under the Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP). The Southern District developed 5 contracts that resulted in obligation of \$139,515 on over 65 acres of forest land. We are looking forward to FY 2013 where we have also been in contact with more groups and individual landowners who are enthused about participating in this program to help create habitat for this species in hopes that the New England cottontail recovers to a self-sustaining population.

Programs-Easements

by Michael Kenyon, Easement Program Manager

Farm and Ranchlands Protection Program (FRPP) (obligated \$6,312,718 of FRPP FA funds on 200 acres in FY2012)

- Received 9 applications.
- Funding for FY2012 was \$4,127,000 with a regional equity amount of \$1,363,718 totaling \$5,490,718 available for Rhode Island.
- Agreements obligated in the amount of approximately \$6.3 million on 8 parcels following approved request for additional funds.

Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP) (obligated \$536,530 of WRP FA funds on 102 acres in FY2012)

General Info:

(20.0 acres Slocum)

- Restoration Agreement costs finalized and obligation of \$355,000 completed.
- Supplement to Agreement to Purchase drafted to have survey work done in coordination with client and the survey company that has worked on the parcel.

(65 acres West Greenwich)

- Easement obligation for \$140,000 finalized.
- Supplement to Agreement to Purchase signed and in process of being obligated to have survey work done in coordination with client and the survey company that has worked on the parcel at a cost of \$9,530 WRP FA funds.

(17.5 acres West Greenwich)

- Easement obligation for \$32,000 finalized.
-
- Program Authorization ended on 9/30/12.
 - NRCS will continue to accept applications.
 - NRCS must limit TA investment in processing applications (do not review application packages for completeness, do not conduct eligibility determination, and do not rank)

 - NRCS is to manage applicant expectations and frustrations.
 - Inform applicant that WRP is not currently authorized or funded.
 - Inform applicant that application processing will begin once authorization and funding occurs.
 - Inform applicant that when WRP is funded additional eligibility paperwork will be required.
 - Partners should not be conducting agreement activities related to outreach or processing applications.

Currently we have 5 WRP applications on the shelf for FY2013 (not in any order).

Grasslands Reserve Program (GRP) (obligated \$119,100 of GRP FA funds on 24 acres in FY2012)

General Info:

(\$82,600 for 16.52 acres)

- Other due diligence activities will follow (survey, title work, etc.)

(\$36,500 for 7.5 acres)

- Other due diligence activities will follow (survey, title work, etc.)

- Program Authorization ended on 9/30/12.
- NRCS is to continue to accept applications.
- NRCS must limit TA investment in processing applications (do not review application packages for completeness, do not conduct eligibility determination, and do not rank)
- NRCS is to manage applicant expectations and frustrations.
- Inform applicant that GRP is not currently authorized or funded.
- Inform applicant that application processing will begin once authorization and funding occurs.
- Inform applicant that when GRP is funded additional eligibility paperwork will be required.
- Partners should not be conducting agreement activities related to outreach or processing applications.
- FSA is NOT accepting FY2013 GRP applications at this time.

Outreach, Communications, and Recruitment

by Walter Marshall, Public Affairs Specialist



U.S. Congressman James Langevin speaks to event organizers at the Green Market Festival.

NRCS participated in the Green Market Festival held at The Farmer's Daughter in South Kingstown, RI on August 12, 2012 where the event celebrated Rhode Island's green economy and the environment. The inaugural event was sponsored by the Rhode Island Nursery and Landscape Association where attendees could observe demonstrations on forestry and sod production. NRCS provided general information on the importance of conservation in Rhode Island including its technical and financial services for farmers and forest landowners.

In September, Rhode Island NRCS was the host for the Extending Outreach to All Customers training class which was conducted by the National Employee Development Center at the Crowne Plaza in Warwick, RI. The class included NRCS employees from nine states who learned skills to effectively serve and meet diverse client needs in addition to complying with policies and laws such as OMB and OIG requirements to educate field employees about extending outreach to all NRCS customers. The students participated in field exercises which included an aquaculture tour, forestry tour, and urban farm tour. The aquaculture tour consisted of a field visit to a local aquaculture farm



Extending Outreach to All Customers class attendees learn about forestry practices implemented on forest land in Rhode Island.

and demonstration at Roger Williams University's hatchery where academics and state regulatory officials highlighted the importance of partnerships to make the project a conservation success story. The forestry tour included two forestry site visits and two presentations from forestry professionals where attendees learned how forestry producers have successfully partnered with NRCS to implement forestry practices. The urban

farm tour consisted of field visits to three different urban farm sites where attendees learned about the challenges of urban farming and ways to successfully apply NRCS program funding to the needs of urban farmers. To complete the class, attendees were required to develop outreach plans based on their field visit and then present the plan to the other classroom attendees.



Matt Richardson presents the forestry outreach plan to class attendees at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in Warwick, RI.

Resources

by Eric Boettger, Resource Conservationist; Gary Casabona, State Biologist; Chris Modisette, State Forester; and Reena Shaw, Agriculture Economist

Resources

Agronomy

Eric Boettger participated in the Sustainable Agriculture Research & Education (SARE) - Grass-fed all year long workshop on July 13th at Watson Farm in Jamestown. During the workshop, participants learned first-hand how a management of intensive grazing can improve the fertility of the soil and increase forage production which will benefit year long grazing.

Eric Boettger participated in the Sustainable Agriculture Research & Education (SARE) – Soil Quality workshop in Massachusetts. During the workshop, participants learned the soil health test soil sampling protocol and interpretation in order to plan conservation practices to improve soil quality.

Eric Boettger participated in a series of workshops in cooperation with the University of Rhode Island. The purpose of the workshops is to increase the understanding of Conservation Activity Plans (CAPs) and conservation practices for landowners. The workshops included; Comprehensive Nutrient Management (CNMP), Nutrient Management, Integrated Pesticide Management and Grazing Management.

Wildlife

Gary Casabona attended the Northeast Partners in Amphibian and Reptile Conservation conference in New Hampshire in late July. The conference presentations covered a number of herptile species of greatest conservation need in New England, and emphasized the importance of vernal pool conservation. Gary plans to work with partners to identify priority geographic areas to benefit species in Rhode Island such as wood turtle, eastern box turtle, eastern spadefoot toad, and northern leopard frog. Habitat management in these wetlands and riparian corridors can be funded under the EQIP program.

Gary continues to work with staff from the Xerces Society for invertebrate conservation to develop job sheets for pollinator conservation under NRCS practices such as Conservation Cover or Tree and Shrub Establishment. Species of greatest benefit to pollinators include Black willow, Pussy willow, Black chokeberry, and Elderberry. Wood nesting native bees will nest in Elderberry. Pollinator habitat creation and enhancement can be funded under the EQIP program. For more information on pollinators, see the Xerces Society webpage: <http://www.xerces.org/>

Forestry

New England/New York Forestry Initiative

NRCS is working with the RI RC&D Council to assist with the implementation of an agreement signed on July 5, 2012 with the University of Rhode Island (URI) to collaborate implementation of the NE/NY Forestry Initiative Contribution Agreement with NRCS. URI agreed to provide the services of a URI staff forester, Bill Buffum, starting July 15, to work half time based in the NRCS office in Warwick.

- **NE/NY SWAT Forestry** - NRCS is working with the RI RC&D Council and the University of Rhode Island (URI) to collaborate implementing the NE/NY Forestry Initiative Contribution forestry projects. Through this agreement, RI RC&D hired URI staff forester, Bill Buffum to promote USDA Farm Bill programs and accelerate technical support for forestry, wildlife habitat, and water quality practices in existing NRCS contracts.
- **Southern New England Heritage Forest Pilot Project** - An outgrowth of the NE/NY Forestry Initiative is a US Forest Service pilot project for the Southern New England Heritage Forest, an area that includes western RI, eastern CT, and central MA. The purpose of this project is to test how to most effectively engage family forest landowners in contributing to three main goals: 1) strengthen markets for forest products, 2) strengthen forest stewardship, and 3) conserve the many values of the region's forest landscape for future generations. The long-term goal of the project is to encourage better forest management and permanent protection for the region's forest lands. The geographic focus of the initial landowner outreach efforts will focus on 16 towns in 3 states. These include:
 - 1) Thompson, Putnam, and Killingly CT, Douglas MA, Burrillville, Glocester, Foster and Scituate RI
 - 2) Stafford and Union CT, Holland, Wales and Monson MA
 - 3) W. Brookfield, Brookfield, and Warren, MA

This effort is a collaboration of the offices of the State Foresters, State Conservationists, USFS staff, local officials, and regional conservation partnerships of conservation groups and agencies.

NRCS will be working with the Northern RI Conservation District, RIRC&D, and Providence Water to investigate issues and opportunities surrounding **Small Scale Forestry**.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) developed an *Agroforestry Strategic Framework (June 2011)* to increase awareness and support of agroforestry. This strategic framework creates a roadmap for advancing the science, practice, and application of agroforestry as a means of enhancing America's agricultural landscapes, watersheds, and rural communities. *The Rhode Island Agroforestry Project* is designed to improve the delivery of USDA Farm Bill Programs to advancing the science, practice, and application of agroforestry as a means of enhancing America's agricultural landscapes, watersheds, and rural communities

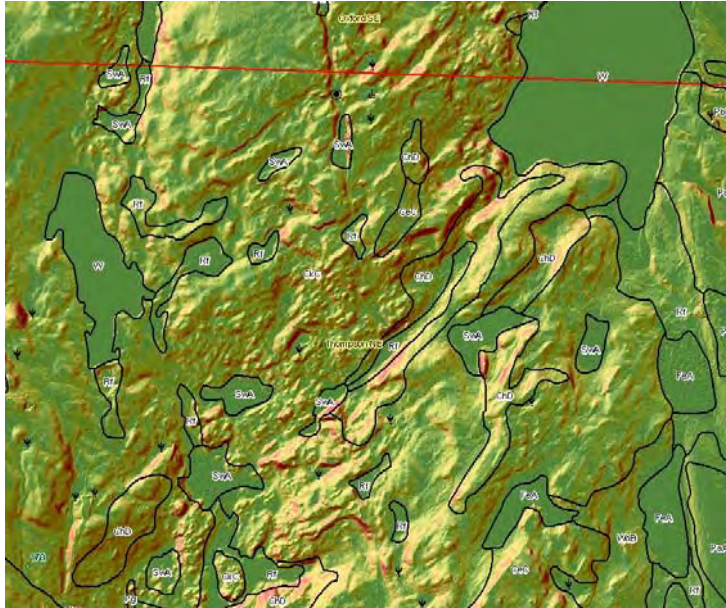
Through *The Rhode Island Agroforestry Project*, RI NRCS in cooperation with the RIRC&D and its partners is investigating agroforestry practices which will aim to help sustain small farms and private woodland productivity.

Examples of agroforestry practices being considered include forest farming, silvopasture, riparian zone restoration, alley cropping, and windbreak/shelterbelts.

Chris Modisette was asked to lead a forestry walk and discussions at: the *RI Tree Farm Annual* meeting held on September 22, 2012 at the Brightman Family Tree Farm, the Scituate and the *Scituate Land Trust* "Land Trust Days" walk on September 8, 2012, and the NRCS Extending Outreach to All Customers training held in September.

Soils Program

by Jim Turenne, Assistant State Soil Scientist



The map depicts slope classes derived from Lidar for the NW Hills mapping.

Phase I of the Northwest Hills soil survey mapping is now complete: A new version of the RI soils mapping is now available for download. This new version contains update mapping for the Northwest Hills (towns of Foster and Glocester). The mapping was completed by the Soil Survey Office located in Tolland, CT which utilized Lidar elevation data, ground-penetrating radar, and traditional soil survey techniques to refine the old soil delineations. Several new soil map units were added to the current soils legend. The new version is available on the Web Soil Survey at:

<http://websoilsurvey.nrcs.usda.gov/> and available for download from the Soil Data Mart at: <http://soildatamart.nrcs.usda.gov/>

The new data have not yet been incorporated in the RIGIS download site or Google maps.

Summary of the RI Soil Survey Work Planning Conference: A summary report of the user input from the 2012 RI Soil Survey Work Planning conference is now available at:

http://www.ri.nrcs.usda.gov/technical/2012_RI_Soil_Survey_Work_Planning_Conference.html The conference was held in June with over 60 attendees where the purpose was to provide information about the soil survey in RI and obtain feedback from soil data users to determine the type of information they would like in further updates. Copies of the presentations made at the conference are also posted on the site. Folks who want to provide feedback may do so anytime by contacting: jim.turenne@ri.usda.gov



An amoozometer is utilized to measure saturated hydraulic conductivity in soils.

Notice to Hispanic and/or Women Farmers or Ranchers

Compensation for Claims of Discrimination

If you believe that the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) improperly denied farm loan benefits to you between 1981 and 2000 because you are Hispanic, or because you are female, you may be eligible to apply for compensation.

This means you may be eligible if:

1. you sought a farm loan or farm-loan servicing during that period; and
2. the loan was denied, provided late, approved for a lesser amount than requested, or approved with restrictive conditions, or USDA failed to provide an appropriate loan service; and
3. you believe these actions were based on your being Hispanic, or your being female.

If you want to register your name to receive a claims packet, you can call the Farmer and Rancher Call Center at 1-888-508-4429 or access the following website:
www.farmerclaims.gov

In 2011, a claims administrator will begin mailing claims packages to those who have requested one through the Call Center or website. The claims package will have detailed information about the eligibility and claims process.

For guidance, you may contact a lawyer or other legal services provider in your community.

If you are currently represented by counsel regarding allegations of discrimination or in a lawsuit claiming discrimination, you should contact your counsel regarding this claims process.

USDA Cannot Provide Legal Advice to You.

"The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination in all of its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, and where applicable, sex (including gender identity and expression), marital status, familial status, parental status, religion, sexual orientation, political beliefs, genetic information, reprisal, or because all or part of an individual's income is derived from any public assistance program. (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs.) Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communication of program information (Braille, large print, audiotape, etc.) should contact USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TDD)."