



January
2010

Kennebec & Somerset County Soil & Water Conservation Districts

If you receive more than one newsletter, or the address is wrong, please contact us and we will correct the error. Thanks.

A New Year - a New Decade. So many opportunities....

Conservation Times

This winter may provide plenty of chance to plan for spring

See this issue of the **Conservation Times** for information about our 2010 tree and shrub sale. This year's sale again offers plants from Fedco. Prices seem to have stabilized for most of the plants, quality remains very high and we proudly offer products that come from Maine. Buy local! You will notice a number of new plants this year. We offer a small portion of the vast Fedco listing and by mixing the "old standbys" with new plants, we hope to offer you as many alternatives as possible.

Again, we want to thank all of you who are able and willing to receive this newsletter electronically. Copy and mailing cost are high, however interest and appreciation of the newsletter also remains high. Both Carol and I like hearing your comments and suggestions.

Both districts are going into the 2010 year charged up to try new things and provide the folks living in Somerset and Kennebec more information and support for their conservation efforts. We are all in this together.

In the next issue, I'll will discuss the issue of conservation

practices and the concept of a "Best Management Practice" or BMP. Should we refer to a plan or practice as the "best"? I like the term used by some foresters which is "Better Management Practice". Often, we are called in to address a conservation problem and asked to design a solution. The best solution may be removing 3 or 4 camps along a nasty camp road along a shoreline. The acceptable solution may be some turnouts, reshaping some drainage and the establishment and maintenance of effective plant buffers. It ain't the "best" but it is "better". More in the spring....

Check out the plant order information in the middle section of this issue.

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On the web at www.KCSWCD.org



District staff can provide additional information and assistance. We can usually identify other sources of information too. Give us a call at 622-7847 ext. 3

The following are a few items. . .

Farm Service Agency (FSA) is currently accepting applications for the Biomass Crop Assistance Program (BCAP). This program assists agricultural and forest land owners and operators with matching payments for the amount paid for the collection, harvest, storage and transportation of eligible material by a qualified Biomass Conversion Facility. For more information on BCAP, Qualified Biomass Conversion Facilities in the area, and more, check out the fact sheet online at the FSA website: <http://www.fsa.usda.gov/energy> or contact Somerset County FSA County Executive Director Elaine Moceus at (207) 474-8323 ext 2, or email her at elaine.moceus@me.usda.gov.

We have been told that the Swedish "Bunny Biofuel" practice, described in the last newsletter would **NOT** be eligible. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/8309156.stm>

Gardeners at a National Trust property in Cambridgeshire, England are urging people to relieve themselves outdoors to help gardens grow greener.

A three-meter long "pee bale" has been installed at Wimpole Hall where head gardener Philip Whaites urges his male colleagues to pee on the straw bale to activate the composting process on the estate's compost heap.

He said the "pee bale" is only in use out of visitor hours, since "we don't want to scare the public". He said: "For eight weeks now, male members of our garden and estate teams have been using the outdoor straw bale when nature calls.

"The pee bale is excellent matter to add to our compost heap to stimulate the composting process; and with over 400 acres of gardens and parkland to utilize compost, we need all the help we can get.

By the end of the year, it was calculated that the 10 men from the estates team will make more than 1,000 individual trips to the pee bale, contributing towards the compost for the estate.

The estate said it will have saved up to 30% of its daily water use by not having to flush the loo so many times. Rosemary Hooper, Wimpole estate's in-house master composter, said: "Most people can compost in some way in their own gardens.

"Peeing" on a compost heap activates the composting process, helps to produce a ready supply of lovely organic matter to add back to the garden.

"Adding a little pee just helps get it all going; it's totally safe and a bit of fun too."

http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/england/cambridgeshire/8357134.stm

Maine Forest Service District Forester Patty Cormier reminds folks that they can still send in an application for cost share assistance for the Wood's Wise forest management plan. By sending in that form, applicants are placed on a list to participate in the program. When more funds are available, those on the list will be contacted to see if they are still interested. According to the press release from the Maine Forest Service, they anticipate restoring funding for WoodsWISE plans sometime this year.

Patty also mentioned that funds are currently available for amendments of existing forest management plans at a reimbursement rate of 50% of cost up to a maximum of \$150. All the details for applying for this cost share are at the Maine Forest Service website : <http://www.maine.gov/doc/mfs/fpm/wwi/wwi.htm>

A two-day Soil Quality Conference is scheduled for February 9th and 10th in Bangor. The featured speakers are Joel Salatin, Norman Uphoff and Paul Hepperly. They will give us all an 'edge' on how we farm and simultaneously improve soil health while producing the best quality crops for the appreciation of our communities and markets.

The challenges of increasingly difficult climates, rising fertilizer and fuel costs as well as labels and expectations of the marketplace require that we make unprecedented changes in our farming practices. The Heart of Maine RC&D is committed to promoting the understanding of the healthiest and most profitable agricultural environments, which becomes the renewable health and original wealth generating system that sustains us.

Registration cost includes handouts, refreshments and lunch each day. Meals will consist of delicious, locally grown food from farmers you know!

Early Registration (on or before Feb 1): \$135 per person/\$220 two people from the same farm
Regular Registration: \$145 per person/\$240 two people from the same farm.

We apologize that some of the resources listed here only have internet connections. If alternative contact information is available we include it.

Dale's Energy Use in 2009

For several years, I have been reporting on my household energy usage. For those following the saga of my energy use and efforts to save, you'll be glad to know that I have finally enclosed much of my back porch to protect it from massive heat loss when I use that door. It isn't ideal, but it is better....[See earlier reference to "better instead of best"]. I drove more this year however. Additional skiing and kayaking require more travel. Snowshoeing can be done closer to home. To compare annual energy use, I include the Heating Degree Days for the respective heating seasons.

| | <u>2005</u> | <u>2006</u> | <u>2007</u> | <u>2008</u> | <u>2009</u> |
|-----------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Htg Deg Days | 7470 HDD | 6534 HDD | 7040 HDD | 6873 HDD | 7163 HDD |
| Htg Oil use | 760 gal | 600 gal | 626 gal | 611 gal | 546 gal |
| Propane use | 102 gal | 131 gal | 159 gal | 132 gal | 29 gal |
| Electricity use | 2763 KWH | 2072 KWH | 2054 KWH | 1881 KWH | 1937 KWH |
| Gasoline use | 429 gal | 445 gal | 523 gal | 375 gal | 546 gal |
| | 26.5 mpg | 22.5 mpg | 25.1 mpg | 23.8 gal | 24.0 mpg |

My vehicle gas use for 2008 for the Subaru was lost when I gave it away The '08 miles are only for the pick-up. Given that my total vehicle mileage is very consistent from year to year regardless of whether I use one or two vehicles, I'd guess that the total numbers for 2008 are similar. My drop in propane use is most obvious. While I cook as much or more, the replacement of old stoves with pilot lights to stoves with electronic igniters and new outdoor tanks with better regulators is the only explanation.

In the next issue —

- 2010 trout sale information
- Information about plans for summer 2010 projects
- 2009 Annual report information.

The **Conservation Times** is edited and produced by the Kennebec and Somerset County Soil & Water Conservation District staff with the assistance of various conservation partners and with the guidance of the Board of Supervisors.

Most writing and editing is done by Dale Finseth and Carol Weymouth unless identified otherwise. Frequently information is used from other publications or media sources.

The districts do not necessarily agree with nor endorse all opinions included in the newsletter. We try and offer a variety of viewpoints on conservation issues.

If you take issue with an article or have suggestions and information for a follow-up or future article, please contact Dale at the Kennebec District. Either call at 622-7847 ext. 3 or e-mail him at Dale@kcsxcd.org

Kennebec District Staff:

| | |
|--------------|-------------|
| Dale Finseth | Josh Platt |
| John Blais | Art Grindle |

Kennebec District Supervisors:

| | |
|-----------------------------|---|
| Linda Leotsakos; Chair | took office 12/2008 (elected starting 1/2009) |
| Marianne Hubert; Vice-Chair | took office 1/1999 (appointed starting 1/2005) |
| Clif Buuck | took office 1/2008 (elected starting 1/2008) |
| Dan Tibbetts | took office 1/2000 (appointed starting 1/2003) |
| Tom Doore | took office 1/2010 appointed to fill term until 12/2010 |

Associates currently active:

| | | |
|---------------|-------------|---------------|
| Chad Arms | Ted Sparrow | Melissa Laser |
| Judd Thompson | Rob Mohlar | |

New NRCS Initiative

Amanda Burton

NRCS is currently accepting applications for a new pilot project under the "Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food" initiative to provide farmers with financial assistance to establish

high tunnels (hoop houses). The initiative is meant to increase the availability of healthy, locally grown crops in a conservation-friendly manner. Approximately \$135,000 is available for the 3-year 38-state (including Maine) project, which will give NRCS real-world information to corroborate the use of high tunnels in reducing pesticide use, keeping vital nutrients in the soil, extending the growing season, and increasing yields.

A seasonal high tunnel is a greenhouse-like structure which alters the climate inside to create better growing conditions for vegetables and other specialty crops grown in the natural soil. High tunnels are made of ribs of plastic or metal pipe covered with a layer of polyethylene sheeting, and are easy to maintain and move.

Here are some other requirements of the initiative to consider:

- § To be eligible you must currently produce *or* sell \$1,000 of agricultural products/year
- § Only 1 high tunnel will be funded per farm
- § A flat rate of \$3.75/ft² for a maximum of 2,178 ft² will be paid
- § These are "cold" tunnels - no electrical, heating, and/or mechanical ventilation systems
- § Only applies to existing cultivated crops grown in the soil (no tables, benches, or pots)
- § Does not include greenhouses or low tunnel systems that only cover single crop rows
- § Must be planned, designed, and constructed in accordance with manufacturer's recommendations (no "homemade" versions)
- § Frame must be constructed of metal, wood, or durable plastic, and be at least 6 feet in height
- § Minimum of 6-mil greenhouse-grade, UV resistant polyethylene will be used for the cover
- § Where snow loads may damage it, the cover shall be removed at the end of the growing season
- § Runoff shall be directed away from the tunnel to avoid ponding, or it can be captured and used for irrigation purposes
- § Cannot be used to store equipment or house livestock in the off-season
- § Need to be placed in a sunny location, on flat ground, and oriented east to west
- § Farmer needs to keep production records for NRCS to evaluate the practice
- § Proximity to architectural resources (historic structures more than 50 years old) may be a factor in placement



Anyone who is interested in signing up for the program should contact their local NRCS office (Somerset County: 474-8324 ext. 3, or Kennebec County: 622-7847 ext. 3). Applications are available in the office, and the signup deadline is **February 19, 2010**. All applications will be ranked to determine which applications will be chosen to participate in the initiative.

Somerset County SWCD

Employees—

Carol Weymouth, Executive Director
Laura Suomi-Lecker, Technical Director
Rose Caron, ABLE Trainee
Pam Guerin, ABLE Trainee

Board of Directors—

Kerry Hebert, Chairperson
Alan Haberstock, Vice-Chair
John Ackley, Treasurer
Gabe Clark, Supervisor

Contact Information—

(207) 474-8324 x 3 info@somersetswcd.org www.somersetswcd.org

Somerset SWCD

The Somerset County Local Work Group convened on Tuesday, December 15, 2009, to make recommendations on county conservation priorities. The objective of the Local Work Group is to utilize the NRCS Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) to promote the use of conservation practices to benefit the environment while promoting sustainable agriculture and maintaining open farmland. At this meeting, the LWG identified and prioritized the following resource concerns: High priority - Agriculture and Forestry Medium Priority - Crop and Pasture.

The LWG also adopted specific local resource concerns for Somerset County and recommended additions to the application ranking tool for those concerns. As part of its responsibility, the LWG also made recommendations to NRCS Field Office staff for local allocated funding percentages for EQIP.

Members of the Somerset County Local Work Group include SCSWCD Board Members and Associate Supervisors, Heart of Maine RC&D, representatives from State agencies, landowners, and the general public. If you are interested in learning more about the Somerset County Local Work Group, contact Carol Weymouth, SCSWCD Executive Director, at (207) 474-8324 x 3.

Farmers Under Stress
<http://www.extension.umaine.edu/FarmersUnderStress/>

University of Maine Cooperative Extension has posted a comprehensive list of resources to help farmers cope with the stress of our recent economic challenges. Please share these resources with anyone who needs them.

The class schedule for winter/spring 2010 onsite courses by the Joint Environmental Training Coordinating Committee (JETCC) is available. Courses are targeted toward septic system installers, plumbing inspectors, site evaluators, and code enforcement officers. Somerset County SWCD will host the course Advanced Wastewater Topics on April 8th, 2010, at T&B's Celebration Center in Skowhegan. This course will cover in detail how grades affect setback and separation distances, and treatment processes within an onsite sewage disposal system. For more information about this course, call Carol at 474-8324 x 3.

Maine Ag Trade Show

The 2010 Maine Ag Trade Show was busy this year. From January 12-14th the Augusta Civic Center was packed with folks.

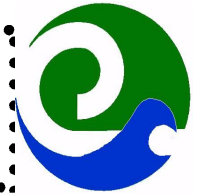
The Maine Assoc. of Conservation Districts sponsored an information booth this year which was staffed by a number of the State district representatives. Both Kennebec and Somerset staff were included. The photo at right, taken by Carol includes District Supervisors from three SWCD's and Dale.

One of the news items from the Trade Show was a new initiative by Hannaford called "The Keep Local Farms" initiative. Hannaford stores see this as another part of their "Close to Home" project intended to source local products and support local businesses in their stores. Donations made at their stores or at www.localfarms.org will be provided directly to dairy farmers in the Northeast.



Some alternative thoughts and ideas.

The following are just a few suggested conservation topics that we have recently heard of. The District does not necessarily endorse or plan to support these. We only provide these ideas as means to help people think "outside the box". . .



In mid-September this year, the USDA announced a new national initiative, 'Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food', an effort to promote and support local agriculture. Here in Maine, Soil and Water Conservation Districts have actively worked on a wide variety of efforts to do just that for years, from awarding producers Outstanding Farmer of the Year to maps of local farms, farmers markets, and businesses. Support of local agriculture and food sources is an everyday occurrence here at Somerset County SWCD.

Representative Jeff McCabe, Skowhegan District 85, notes in a recent editorial, "According to the USDA, farmers markets increased by 13 percent in 2009...In the past 15 years, farmers markets have tripled, with much of the growth occurring in the past few years." McCabe also notes in the editorial that it is no surprise that Maine has been one of the states where 'buying local' has gained momentum.

To further highlight the local support of agricultural producers on a personal level, this year our family sat down for Christmas dinner that consisted of food that was grown, produced, or raised in Maine. I'm on a first name basis with the farmer who raised the turkey we enjoyed. Every day, I drive past the farm where our potatoes were grown. The squash we ate was grown by a couple who sold vegetables at the farmers market last fall.

The list of ingredients for our meal was varied and delicious. Maine cranberries and apples sweetened with maple syrup or honey complemented the meal beautifully. Maine dairy items like butter, milk, and cheese were easy to find in stores. Spice of Life, a natural food store in Skowhegan, carries grains grown and milled in Aroostook County. Water, cider, milk and Oak Pond Brewery beer provided beverages that suited everyone's preference.

Not to say there weren't challenges. The usual flavorings most would associate with the holiday meal were mostly absent from our dishes - Maine sea salt was the only flavoring we used. But with a bit more planning, access to dried herbs that are locally grown would be no problem.

What this holiday meal highlighted was not just the creativity our family displayed in assembling the wide variety of recipes and dishes, but how prevalent local food can be. Electing to mindfully choose our meal as "Maine only", we discovered fantastic local foods, and fantastic local farmers.

By Carol Weymouth, Somerset SWCD

The Kennebec District and the Time & Tide Council are currently making plans to produce the 2010 edition of our Ag Map. We are looking for a few sponsors to support the costs of production. In the past the Kennebec District has paid the printing costs and the Council has done most of the design work.

If you or your business is interested in sponsoring its production, please contact us. We need to look at all our costs and 7-10,000 copies of the Ag Map is a cost that is tough to work into the budget every year. It is another way to support local agriculture.

Maine's Association of Conservation Districts - Winter Meeting

The MACD meeting on December 2 & 3 included a Thursday luncheon Conservation Awards Ceremony which included an award presented to the China Regional Lakes Alliance. Jim Hart and David Landry from the CRLA [pictured at the right] were on hand to accept the award for the fine work they have done in the China Lake watershed. That work has now expanded to include the Webber, Three-Mile, and Three-Cornered Pond watershed chain. CRLA has partnered with the Kennebec District to provide and manage technical assistance for landowners and to complete work funded by both Maine DEP 319 funds and local funding from municipalities and other partners in their area. MACD chose to recognize their accomplishments as a "Conservation Partner". The CRLA in turn provided a brief presentation to further demonstrate the type of conservation work they do give credit to all the volunteers, Conservation Corp staff, municipal officials and others they work with throughout the year.



At the same meeting, MACD acknowledged the work done by Dale Finseth of the Kennebec District and Chris Brewer of the Penobscot SWCD for their work helping the state-wide association improve the public's awareness of Soil & Water District's throughout the State. For people interested in learning more about the work of Maine's SWCD's we suggest you may want to attend "District Day" at the Hall of Flags on January 26th. Most districts in Maine will have staff and displays available that morning. If you have questions about the day, give us a call.

The Kennebec District's Farm Energy Audit program which has just been finished was one of the projects featured in the recent Maine NRCS edition of the Conservation News. The article featured the work done by the Weston Farm in Litchfield. During the late fall the Kennebec District also completed the oversight and grant management for the Long Pond Watershed Based Plan and the Tacoma Lakes 319 project. Both of these were funded by the Maine DEP.

The Kennebec District also wishes to acknowledge all our partners in conservation over the past year. We want to particularly acknowledge a few who have made financial donations which help us take advantage of more conservation opportunities. Thank you to Jennifer McLean, A.E. Hodsdon Engineers and the Maine Dept of Ag. In the case of the Dept of Ag, they helped sponsor Josh Platt's trip to New Orleans and present to the National Association of Conservation Districts. He presented information about our Kennebec River Initiative work.

Paying people to save energy — Recently a California state panel proposed paying residents who use less energy. Also recently a Pennsylvania couple has received a small payment for selling a unique carbon credit for lowering its utility bill. The Pennsylvania family had reduced their carbon footprint by one ton through investments in energy conservation. While the \$21.50/ton of carbon didn't pay for their investment, they did figure out that their \$58,000 of investment [including solar panels] will have been paid off in six to seven years.

Kennebec County Soil & Water Conservation District
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Another issue of the **Conservation Times**
Brought to you by the Kennebec & Somerset County Soil & Water Conservation Districts

All programs and services of the Soil & Water Conservation Districts are offered on a non-discriminatory basis, without regard to race, color, national origin, sex, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation or marital or familial status.

Upcoming Events

Kennebec District Board meetings—The 2nd Tuesday of each month. Contact the District to confirm the time and place.

If special accommodations are needed at the meeting, please call to arrange them two weeks in advance at 622-7847, extension 3.

Somerset District Board Meetings—The 3rd Thursday of each month. Contact the Somerset District to confirm time and place.

Maine Farmers' Market Convention—Friday-Saturday, January 29-30 at the UMaine Hutchinson Center, Belfast
Registration required; \$75 for one day or \$120 for the full conference. Registrants can bring a guest free.

Visit the convention's web page for an event brochure and registration form, or call WHCA at 664-2424 x4460 for more information.

9th Annual Soil Quality Conference -
Bringing Life and New Understandings to Agricul-

Alternate format available.
Call the District office to request enlarged type, cassette or computer disk.



ture February 9 & 10, 2010 (snow dates February 10 & 11) 8:30 am to 5:00pm Bangor Motor Inn, 701 Hogan Road

You may also register and pay online at: www.heartofmaine.org For more information, please contact Heart of Maine Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D) at 207 - 947 - 6622 x 142 or tessa@heartofmaine.org

Maine Grass Farmers Network 2010 Grazing Conference - Saturday February 27, 2010 Kennebec Valley Community College Fairfield ME

Details and Registration on their website at www.umaine.edu/umext/mgfn