



Jan-Feb
2007

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.

Mid-Winter Edition with the 2007 Tree & Shrub Sale

Conservation Times

An unusually un winter-like season

Included in this issue of the **Conservation Times** is the information for the 2007 tree & shrub sale. The sale continues to be a combined effort of both the Somerset and Kennebec SWCD's.

Here at the Kennebec District we want to welcome our newly elected Supervisor, Peter Hanley. Peter and his family live in Randolph. He was able to join us for our December Supervisor meeting in order to meet people and get a better sense of how our Board of Supervisors works. Officially he starts in January. Welcome aboard Peter.

We have also started to plan for our Kennebec Annual Meeting and Banquet. At this point we plan to do it as part of an Open House when we move into new work space. Unfortunately, we don't know when that will be just yet.

At this point it sounds like we won't be moving into new space until at least March or April. So... we will let you know our plans for the Ken-

nebec Annual Banquet in our next newsletter.

You probably want to check inside to learn about the staff changes at the Somerset District (see page 5). We want to welcome Carol Weymouth as a new partner in conservation. During the winter and spring we will figure out how to work together on some of our common conservation projects.

At the Kennebec District we are largely focused on the Kennebec River Initiative. See inside for some further explanation. Or check our website for up- dated KRI in-

See the center pull out for the 2007 tree and shrub sale. Early orders are appreciated....

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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. . .

Maine's Envirothon Program is coordinated through the Soil & Water Conservation Districts throughout the State. It is a conservation focused high school program organized as part of an international competition. Maine's Envirothon Program is in need of adult advisors to inspire high school age students in your area to participate in the State Envirothon Program. If you are interested in becoming involved, contact tish carr at 495-2392 for all the details.

2007 Project Canopy grants are available again this year. The \$200,000 expected to be available here in Maine is available for implementing community forestry projects and programs. The program is a cooperative partnership between the Dept. of Conservation Forest Service and the Pine Tree State Arboretum. The grant applications are due on March 16th. We suggest to call with questions given that they use a fairly specific process. These are good opportunities for towns, schools or local groups to receive funding in order to address community forestry issues ranging from planting trees to completing an inventory of trees already in the ground. Contact Becky Tavani at 287-4987 or e-mail here at becky.tavani@maine.gov with questions. Check their website at www.projectcanopy.org

Ester Lacognata is the new coordinator of the Maine FarmLink program. It is a program that works to protect farmland from development by helping to link farmers who are preparing to retire or leave farming with people who want to

farm but do not have the land or other resources to get them started.

Maine FarmLink is a program of the Maine Farmland Trust, connecting the next generation of farmers to the land and resources they need to keep Maine's farms viable now and into the future. For more information call Esther at 338-6575 in Belfast or check out their website at www.mainefarmlink.org

Changes in the Hardiness Zones that people use for planting are in the works. The current hardiness zones are based on temperature data from 30 years ago. The National Arbor Day foundation has tracked changes in minimum temperatures and tracked changes in the boundaries between the hardiness zones. In Maine, it looks like Aroostook County is the only part of Maine effected much. But out in the middle of the country large swaths of territory have shifted to warmer hardiness zones. There are a couple areas in the southwest that have shifted into cooler hardiness zones.

Take a look at their website <http://www.arborday.org/media/mapchanges.cfm>

Oil from wood pulp efforts were recently reported on the news. The brief news story reported that the Fractionation Development Center in Rumford, Maine is working on a process to generate oil from wood pulp products. The oil could then be used to power existing power plants. Sounds like another interesting possibility....

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

Big news at the Kennebec District is the work we are doing over this winter and next summer to develop the Kennebec River Initiative.

The Kennebec River Initiative (KRI) is a collaborative effort aimed at securing the future of the Kennebec Corridor as one of the State's most valuable natural, economic and cultural resources. The work accomplished through this initiative will lay the groundwork for the character and "sense of place" of the Kennebec River during the coming years. The KRI stakeholders aim to preserve the river's role as an economic asset for tourism and economic revitalization and to make sure that those parts of the river that make it special to anglers, boaters or communities along its shore are retained. The District is currently coordinating three "River Reach Committees" that will help determine the values and priorities that make their reach segment unique and important to the people of their region. Committees will be made up of people with diverse backgrounds and interests but will hopefully share a common goal of protecting and enhancing this valuable resource. There is a "Tidal", "Central" and "Northern" reach committee. They will start their meetings in late January.

The partners in the Kennebec River Initiative include Maine Department of Conservation (DOC), Sportsman's Alliance of Maine (SAM), Natural Resources Council of Maine (NRCM) and the Kennebec Valley Council of Governments (KVCOG). In the short time this project has been active, this list of partners has grown considerably. The Kennebec County Soil & Water Conservation District in Augusta will serve as Project Director and report to a management team made up of representatives from the partner organizations. Check out the Kennebec website for additional information. www.kcswcd.org and go to the KRI page.

In the next issue —

- Events coming up this spring
- Information about this year's trout sale
- More information about conservation projects in Kennebec and Somerset Counties. .

The **Conservation Times** is edited and produced by the Kennebec and Somerset County Soil & Water Conservation District's 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 at the Kennebec District unless identified otherwise. Frequently information is used from other publications or media sources.

The District does 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@kcswcd.org

Kennebec District Staff:

Dale Finseth	Josh Platt
Jeff Fredenburg	Jennifer McLean

Kennebec District Supervisors:

Rob Mohlar; Chair	took office 4/2001 (re-elected starting 1/2006)
Marianne Hubert; Vice-Chair	took office 1/1999 (appointed starting 1/2005)
Ted Sparrow; Treasurer	took office 1/2002 (elected starting 1/2005)
Dan Tibbetts	took office 1/2000 (appointed starting 1/2003)
Peter Hanley	took office 1/2007 (elected starting 1/2007)

Associates currently active:

Joseph Suga	Chad Arms	Linda Leotsakos
Judd Thompson	Melissa Laser	

Resolve to Be Green, In Our Back Yard

Some of these resolutions are ones you can keep!

*From a column written by Andrea Lani,
an Environmental Specialist with the Maine DEP's Bureau of Air Quality.*

Tired of making half-hearted New Year's resolutions that fizzle out faster than a glass of holiday bubbly? This year, make a resolution that will last all year long, and make an impact on the Earth that can last forever. Pledge to take one action each month that will help you live a little greener.

January—Start the year on the right foot (er, tire?) and get your car tuned up. Driving a tuned car with properly inflated tires will improve your gas mileage and reduce your emissions of harmful air pollutants. For service schedules and maintenance tips, go to www.carcare.org.

March—Clean out your garage, and set unwanted chemicals aside for your local household hazardous waste day. To find out where hazardous wastes may be lurking in your home and when your town will collect them, go to: www.maine.gov/spo/recycle/hhw/.

May—Plant a tree. The Pine Tree State celebrates Arbor Week during the third full week in May. For ideas of how to celebrate, go to www.arborday.org.

July—Make your yard a habitat. Reduce your lawn size (and mowing time) and instead incorporate wildlife-friendly shrubs, trees and perennials. Learn more at: <http://www.nwf.org/gardenforwildlife/>

August—Go to the farmer's market. When you buy fresh, delicious produce from your local farmer, you not only support Maine's economy, but you also reduce the pollution caused by the long-distance travel most grocery store food endures. Find a farmer's market near you at: www.getrealmaine.com.

October—Take the Energy Star Change a Light Pledge, and replace your most-used incandescent bulbs with energy-efficient compact fluorescents. To take the pledge, go to www.energystar.gov.



November—Recycle. To celebrate Maine Recycles Week, November 8-15, contact your town office to find out what and when you can recycle and then assess your household waste stream to see what materials you can recycle instead of throwing away. Go to: www.maine.gov/spo/recycle/mrw/

Here's a good example of recycling. Peter is reusing an old barn which means he is minimizing his use of new building materials. It's more work, but he will end up with a fine new barn on his homestead.

Somerset Specific News

2007 has already seen some changes for the Somerset County SWCD. Carol Weymouth was hired to take over as director following Jeff McCabe's move to The Lake George Association. Carol isn't a stranger to the Skowhegan office. In 2004-2005, she worked for NRCS and the District for several months helping with projects, fund raisers, and outreach.

Laura Suomi-Lecker is also a familiar face in the Skowhegan office, and we're thrilled to welcome her to the Soil and Water Conservation District as our new technical project manager with a focus on comprehensive nutrient management plans.

In addition, Jeff McCabe has agreed to continue his work here with Somerset County SWCD on a part time basis. Jeff's expertise with development, fund raisers, and operations will certainly ease transition, as well as provide continuity to ongoing projects.



Jeanie Davis

Although not a brand new addition to the office, Jeanie Davis is an integral member of our team. She comes to us through an agreement with the National Able Network. Jeanie continues to assist with administrative concerns, projects, and coordination.

Join the Earth Team!

The Earth Team is the volunteer branch of the United States Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service. We help people conserve, improve, and sustain our natural resources and environment. You can be an Earth Team volunteer and help protect soil, water, air, plants, and wildlife in your community.



Contact - Elaine Tremble, NRCS Public Affairs Specialist **990-9569**
or Carol Weymouth, Somerset SWCD Director **474-8324**

Somerset County SWCD Supervisors

Kerry Hebert
John Ackley
Alan Haberstock
Rob Rowbottom
Gabe Clark

Chair
Treasurer

Starks
Skowhegan
Canaan
Norridgewock
New Portland

Cooperative Conservation Partnership Initiative- Rapid Watershed Assessment Grant

By Sarah Flaks; Project Coordinator

Did you know that there are a number of federal programs that will provide technical assistance and money to install or expand conservation measures on your farm or woodlot? These voluntary programs are designed to help farm and woodland owners reduce erosion, protect streams and rivers, establish or restore wildlife habitat and improve air and water quality. The types of practices include establishing conservation buffers and riparian corridors, wetlands restoration, nutrient management, and creating wildlife habitat to name a few.

This fall Time and Tide Resource and Conservation District began work on a grant to assess conservation needs in the Sheepscot, Medomak and St. George Watersheds. The grant, titled the Cooperative Conservation Partnership Initiative –Rapid Watershed Assessment (CCPI-RWA) is intended to identify, assess and prioritize conservation needs and actions in the targeted region. Once the assessment phase is completed (by December 2007), an implementation phase will direct funds to help address conservation needs. These three watersheds cover most of Lincoln County and large portions of Kennebec, Knox, Sagadahoc and Waldo Counties. We are interested in learning about what conservation needs farmers and woodlot owners have in this region. The information gathered will be used by USDA to determine the conservation priorities for the area, and where federal funds should be directed.

For more information contact Sarah Flaks, Project Coordinator at 622-6356 (sflaks@gwi.net), or Susan Watson, RC& D Program Coordinator at 622-7847 x4 (susan.watson@me.usda.gov)

What about the 2007 tree and shrub sale???

It's important to know that the spring tree sale dates back to the 50's. It was a means to get people to plant trees for buffers, wind breaks and to re-introduce wooded areas into landscapes that had been turned into fields or otherwise cleared. The Kennebec District also came to rely on the tree sale to provide a large portion of its annual budget. The trees were relatively inexpensive and the district marshaled all kinds of volunteers to pack orders and distribute them. There was a good profit margin. I understand the Kennebec District sold more than \$30,000 of trees one year.

But times change... we now use the tree sale as a means to introduce people to the soil & water districts and get people to think about conservation. We've chosen to sell some of the best quality-bare-root tree stock available and use local producers as part of our effort to support local agriculture. Our profit margin is now rather slim. More importantly, the sale gives us an opportunity to introduce people to conservation and have people appreciate the importance of tree cover and wooded areas.



Katsuratree— One I hope to add to my personal arboretum collection.
DF

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” . . .



Given all the press about “global warming” and the bizarre weather we are experiencing this year, it seems only fair that I should weigh in with a perspective. First of all... it has certainly been warm. Anyone who has looked at their garden and trees is fully aware that the local flora is behaving as though it is March rather than January. I’m a little worried about my peach trees which produced so heavily last year, being tricked into budding too early and having a normal freeze “zap” them. Lilac bushes have bud swells that look like they might leaf out. The ground remains soft. Animals are also behaving oddly. Those critters who are normally bed down for the winter are still active. Deer are still grazing on green grass and other vegetation. With the ground still open there is all kinds of food.

I’ve talked to a number of people this winter about plans for next spring’s trees. There are a few of us who plan to add some trees that wouldn’t normally survive in our Hardiness Zone. The only problem with the increased temperatures is that there will be increased variability too. We could get that reeeeeal cold winter that kills all kinds of stuff.
DF

But what about the prospect that this winter is just an example of things to come? Wasn’t climate change supposed to take a long time to get here? First, “global warming” essentially means that the atmosphere and weather patterns will have more energy in them, not necessarily that our area will get hotter. Weather patterns will shift and possibly become less dependable. Perhaps there will be more variation year to year. Certainly here in northern New England it seems likely that things will change.

I’ve been looking at my garden journal and noted that the coldest temperature of each winter has tended to warm up considerably in my area. I live in a Hardiness Zone 4b with the average lowest temperature of -20° to -25° F. That estimate is based on ten years’ worth of data (1975– 1985). In looking at the past five or six years, we haven’t gotten very close to that. In 2006 the lowest temperature was 1° . In 2005 it was -3° . In 2004 it was -13° . In the last eight years my average low has never gotten to -20° . When I first moved to Gardiner over 20 years ago there was the occasional winter temperature of -30° or -25° .

Perhaps its time to re-draw the Hardiness Zone maps. It may be time to start planting trees and shrubs that only need a Zone 6. [-5° to -10°]

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Brought to you by the Kennebec & Somerset County Soil & Water Conservation Districts

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Upcoming Events

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

Maine Ag Show - January 9-11 at the Augusta Civic Center.

Kennebec River Initiative Reach Committees - Tidal Reach Committee meeting on January 23rd @ Richmond Town Hall; Central Reach Committee on the 24th in Fairfield; and the Northern Reach Committee the 31st in Bingham. Contact Josh at the Kennebec SWCD for more information.

Kennebec District Annual Meeting/Banquet and Open house. To be announced in next newsletter.

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

