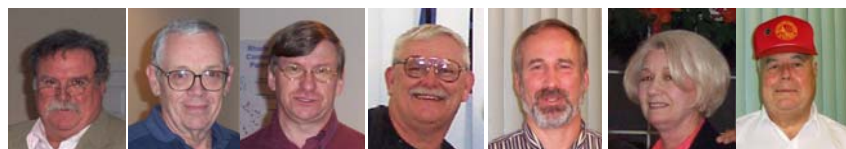


# Northern Rhode Island Conservation District Annual Report 2007--2008



NRICD Board of Directors 2008: Paul Dolan, Chair; Norman Hammond, Treasurer; Eugene Pepper, Director; Dick Went, Director; Marc Tremblay, Associate Director; Jean Lynch, Associate Director; Edward Baker, Associate Director.

## A Letter from the Chair, Paul Dolan

As it has been for many organizations in Rhode Island, the past year has been a difficult one for Northern RI Conservation District. But, despite financial setbacks and crisis, the NRICD has been able to stay afloat. As the saying goes, when life deals you lemons, you make margaritas.

There is so much work to be done concerning the environment. It is ironic that when the nation is looking to rethink or re-green itself, we, who have been out there for years preaching this, have been handicapped by budget cuts.

Our approach to these difficulties has been to return to the basics. We have been able to go back and review our mission statement and work on a priority basis. We have been able to utilize our staff to their greatest potential. And because of this we have been able to reach out and work on some great projects.

Our work continues on the Scituate Reservoir Watershed Education program and provides us the opportunity to bring the ideas of stewardship and conservation to a huge audience with a variety of programs. This year we revitalized our rain garden initiative by planting a demonstration rain garden in North Scituate. We hope that it will inspire many more. And rain barrels: who would have thought a common practice hundreds of years ago would reinvent itself today? Our rain barrel sale tied in beautifully with our rain gardens and other stormwater programs.

I think the thing that I am most proud of is that, when we were faced with budget cuts, we were able to find new partners and new sources of income. As a result we have developed some great new programs.

Our Wetlands program, funded by RI DEM, brings important information on wetlands and invasive species to residents of two towns. And in the new fiscal year, another program sponsored by RI DEM and NRCS will allow NRICD to inform livestock owners about opportunities available to them for free testing of their poultry and possible federal funding to enact conservation plans on their farms. Poultry owners will be informed about the importance of practicing biosecurity on their farms in order to prevent bird diseases such as Avian Influenza, better known as Bird Flu. Both of these programs keep NRICD involved with very current and visible issues.

So, although there is concern and caution because of economic conditions, Northern RI Conservation District looks back on a busy, productive year and I am confident that we will continue to find new ways to promote conservation of our natural resources.



## Our Partnership with the USDA, NRCS

The Conservation Districts have a unique relationship with the US Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). While the programs offered in cooperation with our partner are established by Congress through the Farm Bill, local land owners meet monthly to identify the needs for each local County in the United States. Here in Providence County, our board of directors represent the community through elected and appointed positions. Michael Merrill, District Conservationist from the NRCS attends our monthly meetings and together with the Board of Directors, determine priorities that will best serve this County.

The number of projects the partnership is providing is too vast to fully explain in this report, however, the map on the back page is an attempt to summarize the location and types of projects we are currently involved with. You can see from the legend on the map that we assist in the area of: Outreach and Education; Conservation Technical Assistance; Fish and Wildlife Habitat; Wetland Restoration; Grassland and Forest Ecosystems; Soil Quality; Water Management; Water Quality; Energy Conservation; and Forest/Farmland Protection.

There is a summary table below listing the towns we currently have contracts in, financial value of the projects, the number of acres being addressed in a particular project and the number of contracts in a particular town.

BURRILLVILLE	30	\$ 129,290
CRANSTON	20	\$ 339,271
CUMBERLAND	4	\$ 22
EAST PROVIDENCE	2	\$ -
FOSTER	26	\$ 96,385
GLOCESTER	40	\$ 71,905
JOHNSTON	12	\$ 55,219
LINCOLN	1	\$ -
NORTH PROVIDENCE	1	\$ -
NORTH SMITHFIELD	4	\$ 26,072
PAWTUCKET	4	\$ 3,100
PROVIDENCE	13	\$ 379,330
SCITUATE	21	\$ 65,073
SMITHFIELD	12	\$ 66,202
<b>Total</b>	<b>190</b>	<b>\$ 1,231,870</b>



### **FAREWELL**

Mike Merrill, District Conservationist from NRCS for the past several years and a familiar face to many District land-owners, has been transferred to a new position in Portland, Oregon. He was a valued partner and friend and his dedication and enthusiasm will be missed. Good luck Mike!

### 2007-2008 Financial Statement

#### **EXPENSES:**

Salaries - District Personnel \$86,404.48  
Office Expenses:

Administrative expenses 131.52  
Rent 4,800.00  
Oil 1,228.18  
Utilities 2,190.67  
Insurance (bonding/liability) 733.89  
Workers Compensation 521.00  
Postage 558.46  
Stationary and supplies 571.85  
Flyers/outreach/advertising 843.34  
Mileage 889.05  
Computer Expenses 1,145.00  
Meetings & workshops held 386.18  
Grant expenses (above salaries): 27,982.63  
Other office expenses 424.25

Annual Dinner 267.47

#### Memberships and Contributions:

NACD Dues 775.00  
Envirothon support 500.00  
Ancillary expenditures 161.95  
Big E-USDA team booth 41.75

Meeting and conferences attended 765.00  
Directors 1,300.00

**TOTAL EXPENSES \$132,621.67**

#### **INCOME:**

Town Contributions 5,500.00  
State Contribution 38,125.00  
NRCS emergency/rent agreement 2,820.00

#### **OTHER INCOME:**

Interest 264.25  
Seedling, bulb, topo sales, membership 3,451.63  
Grant income 81,900.22  
State Committee Income 3,617.73

**TOTAL INCOME \$135,678.83**

### **Northern Rhode Island Conservation District Board of Directors**

Paul Dolan, Scituate, Chair  
Norman Hammond, Foster, Treasurer  
Eugene Pepper, Glocester  
Richard Went, Foster

#### **Associate Directors**

Marc Tremblay, Burrillville  
Jean Lynch, Johnston  
Edward Baker, Glocester

#### **Staff**

Gina DeMarco, District Manager  
Ramona LeBlanc, Administrative Assistant  
Kathryn Bousquet, Education & Outreach Consultant  
Elizabeth Berg, Education & Outreach Assistant

### **USDA, Natural Resources Conservation Service District Conservationist**

Michael Merrill

The Northern Rhode Island Conservation District serves the cities and towns of Providence County. If your community is not represented on our board of directors, please consider joining our team. We meet the first Wednesday of every month, at the District Office, 17 Smith Avenue, Greenville. To receive a copy of our agenda and minutes, please call the district office at 949-1480.

#### **Mission Statement of NRICD**

The Northern Rhode Island Conservation District fosters a community-based approach to the stewardship of northern Rhode Island's natural resources through education and outreach into the communities, technical assistance and partnerships with other agencies.

## NRICD's Teacher of the Year

### Are Wetlands in Your Back Yard?

The NRICD has received **\$20,000** in funding from the RI Department of Environmental Management and the US EPA to implement an outreach and education program on the topic of wetlands in the towns of Burrillville and Smithfield. The purpose of this project is to educate the residents about the value of wetlands in an effort to reduce encroachment.

Residents will learn about the importance of protecting streams which are part of the wetland network, and will be educated on methods of protecting wetlands through non-point source pollution reduction, including sediment run-off issues. Residents will learn the value of riparian buffers and native plant species while learning the damaging effects of encroachment and invasive or nuisance species.

As part of the project, a brochure entitled "*Are Wetlands in Your Backyard?*" and another brochure addressing invasive and native species of plants will be developed and distributed.

Both towns have signed agreements with the NRICD and will participate in a poster contest geared toward students in grades 3 – 8. Twelve posters will be featured in a 2009 calendar that will be distributed throughout the Burrillville and Smithfield communities.

### WELCOME



Elizabeth Berg joined the NRICD staff in January as Education & Outreach Assistant.

**Ross "Mad Dog" McCurdy** received NRICD's Teacher of the Year Award for his Fuel Cell Initiative Program at Ponaganset High School. The Fuel Cell Initiative promotes the development and use of alternate fuel sources. For the past several years, Mr. McCurdy has worked with students to convert a Model-T to run on a fuel cell and he recently completed a cross country trip with three students in a bio-diesel pick-up truck fueled by recycled cooking oil.



Ponaganset High School teacher Ross McCurdy (center) is joined by Zane Lewis, one of the students who drove cross country, Alicia Bailey, Head of the Science Department and Principal Dennis Kafalas in front of the biodeisel pick-up.

## Partner Appreciation Awards

The Providence Water Supply Board joined Northern RI Conservation District in recognizing four business owners for their cooperation with the Scituate Reservoir Watershed Education Program. The cooperation of these individuals helps to boost awareness about important water quality issues. **Ed Dlugosz**, owner of Northland Seamless Gutters in North Scituate, has worked to promote the use of rain barrels and to educate the public about the benefits of rain gardens. Dr. **Sharon O'Neil, DVM**, of Scituate Animal Hospital and **Richard Lang**, owner of Famous Pizza and Bentley's Tavern in North Scituate, provide NRICD the opportunity to demonstrate the use of pet waste stations and to disseminate literature to educate the public about non-point source pollution issues including pet waste at their locations. In addition, Bentley's Tavern is the site of a demonstration rain garden. **Tysh McGrail**, owner of Woodscapes, Inc. in Glocester, worked with NRICD to develop a series of newsletters and workshops dealing with eco-friendly landscaping practices.



## Outstanding Conservation Farmers of the Year

Two farms were recognized with NRICD Conservation Farmer of the Year awards. Both farms have implemented a wide variety of conservation practices but were recognized for specific projects.

**Confreda Greenhouses and Farms**, a large commercial farm with over 400 acres in Cranston, Warwick and Scituate is owned by the Confreda family and continues a family farming tradition that goes back four generations. Under the direction of Vinny Confreda, the Scituate Avenue location has installed diversions, a stone lined waterway and subsurface drainage to reduce erosion with dramatic results. Sheet and rill erosion has gone from 20.3 tons per year to 13.2 tons per year. Even more impressive, the stone lined waterway has reduced gully erosion from 128 tons per year to zero. The Confreda's are also practicing irrigation water management. They were recognized for soil and water conservation.



Above left, Joseph and Fran Roukous with some of their livestock, and a view of the retail side of Confreda Greenhouses and Farms, above right.

Joseph and Fran Roukous, owners of **Lily Rose Farm** in Foster, have been working on their conservation plan for several years. They have implemented a comprehensive nutrient management program that includes a roof run off system which channels clean water away from areas utilized by livestock, a waste storage facility and other practices. They have already completed an upland wildlife habitat management and management program on 93 acres, an early successional habitat development and management program on 5 acres with and additional 5 acres planned. The Roukous' were recognized for their work in nutrient management and wildlife habitat restoration.

## Conservation Innovation Grants Program

The three RI Conservation Districts have entered into an agreement with NRCS to implement the Conservation Innovation Grants program (CIG). CIG accelerates development, transfer and adoption of promising new technologies and approaches to some of the nation's most pressing natural resource concerns and benefits agricultural producers and consumers by providing more options and possibilities for environmental enhancement.

As part of the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service administers CIG, which provides competitive grants to state and local governments, tribes, non-governmental organizations and individuals to promote the development and adoption of innovative conservation approaches and technologies. Projects must involve EQIP-eligible producers.

State Conservationist for NRCS, Roylene Rides at the Door, announced the award of nearly **\$178,000** in Conservation Innovation Grants (CIG) to four proposals designed to develop and refine cutting-edge technologies and approaches that can help producers maintain viable agricultural operations.

This fiscal year's grantees include:

- Steven Adler was awarded for a project entitled "Anaerobic Methane Gas Digester for Alternative Energy in Agriculture."
- Brown University was awarded for a project entitled, "Implementing Water Conservation in Agricultural Practices through State-Wide Comprehensive Soil Moisture Monitoring."
- The University of Rhode Island was awarded for a project entitled, "Demonstration and Evaluation of Innovative Technologies for Composting in RI."
- Entech Engineering, Inc. was awarded for a project entitled, "Solar Electric and Wind Powered Hybrid Mollusk Incubation Up Weller."

Additional information about CIG, including summaries of approved projects, is available at <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/cig>. A chart for a listing of FY 2007 CIG projects (PDF) can be found at: <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/cig/2007awards.html>.

## Rhode Island Envirothon

The NRICD is a sponsor and supporter of the Rhode Island Envirothon.

The Rhode Island Envirothon holds a one-day, outdoor competition each May as the culmination of its year-long program of environmental study. Each competition is divided into five different segments: Aquatics, Forestry, Soils & Land Use, and Wildlife, plus a special Environmental Issue which changes annually. Working in teams of five, students take written tests for each of the first four segments, and prepare an oral presentation for the Environmental Issue. There is frequently a written test for the Environmental Issue as well.



For more information about the RI Envirothon, go to <http://rienvirothon.org/>.

## Our Seedling Sale is Going Greener Next Year!

The NRICD Annual Seedling Program resulted in over **8000** plantings this year as part of our regular distribution.

Keith and Liz Rogers of Pots and Petals Natives again sold locally grown, native plants. Each year, as their business grows, they are able to offer a wider selection of plants making it easy for the District to promote gardening with native species.

Having plants available for purchase on the pick up dates has been so popular, we hope to expand the selection of plants from local growers next year.

A big change for next year is a smaller distribution of seedling brochures



through the mail. If you have not ordered in the last 3 years, you will not automatically receive an order form in the mail. If you wish to remain on our mailing list, call the office at (401) 949-1480 and let us know. Or even better, please join us in an effort to conserve and let us know you would like to receive our seedling brochure via email; for this option send an email to [nricd@nricd.org](mailto:nricd@nricd.org). A smaller

mailing list will help us save trees and money!

## Bill Board Campaign:

The theme of this year's program, focused on raising awareness for the need of proper operation and maintenance of individual septic systems. Systems that are not working properly or have not been pumped regularly can contaminate ground and surface water resources.



This poster was displayed for one month in June/ July of 2008. It was designed by Kara Mitola, a sixth grade Scituate Middle School Student. She submitted the poster to the Scituate Reservoir Watershed Education Program Poster Contest.

## Help the District Go Cyber!

The NRICD staff would like to cut down on the resources—both environmental and financial—used to keep you informed about District events and activities. In the future, we will be sending fewer mailed copies of flyers and announcements, etc. This is necessitated by budget constraints but it also makes sense from a conservation perspective. If we can add you to our email list and keep you informed that way, it would be extremely helpful. Contact us at [nricd@nricd.org](mailto:nricd@nricd.org) and let us know you want to help us save resources.

## Poster Contest

This year's poster contest theme was "Exploring the Wonders of Septic Systems." Septic systems help to protect our drinking water by efficiently cleansing the wastewater that we produce in the home. However, homeowners can compromise the effectiveness of their septic system by pouring household chemicals such as bleach down the drain, by using too much water, or by not maintaining their septic tank and leach field. The poster contest aimed to inform students in the Scituate Reservoir Watershed and their families about how to maintain their own septic tanks and, in turn, protect the quality of our drinking water.

Teachers throughout the watershed were provided information about the topic to better assist their students in creating their posters. The posters not only illustrated how septic systems work, but the connection between septic system maintenance and groundwater quality.

Judges were: Paul Dolan and Janet Hammond, Northern RI Conservation District, Ruth Strach, Scituate Conservation Commission, Beth Paquin, Providence Water Supply Board, Rebecca Schult, Gloucester Wastewater Board, and Elizabeth Dake, RI Department of Environmental Management.



Above left: Pam Marchand, Chief Engineer and General Manager of Providence Water, presents Kyle Flanagan with a plaque and prizes; above, right: Nicolas Pezzullo and Holly Swanson pose with their teachers Amanda O'Grady and Paula DiLuglio.

Nicolas Pezzullo, who created the winning entry for the elementary schools, and Kyle Flanagan, whose entry was the winner for the middle schools, received engraved plaques which were presented to them at the Water Festival Celebration on May 6<sup>th</sup> at the Providence Water Facility in Scituate. In addition, the grand prize winners received a t-shirt with their poster on it, a small watershed model, and a pizza party for their classroom.

Thirteen posters, representing students from each participating school in the watershed, will be featured in a 2009 calendar that will be distributed to **750** schools, businesses, municipalities and individuals throughout the community.



**During the 2007 – 2008 fiscal year, the Scituate Reservoir Watershed Education Program entered its fifteenth year of serving the community with funding provided by Providence Water. Elements of the program, shown on pages 7-11, included:**

### *Stormwater Project:*

The Northern RI Conservation District (NRICD) has received a grant from the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management Water Quality Protection and Restoration Grants Program. The grant is for **\$12,000** and will result in the implementation of a Best Management Practice on the South East corner of Hartford and Greenville Pikes. The project is a collaboration between Providence Water, NRICD, the Town of Scituate and the USDA, Natural Resources Conservation Service. The project will be installed in the fall of 2008.

A demonstration rain garden has been installed at the site of Famous Pizza and Bentley's Tavern. Rain gardens are bowl shaped depressions on the surface of the ground that catch parking lot and other types of stormwater runoff. In this case the garden treats roof runoff. The garden displays a wide selection of native plants that should provide visual interest throughout the year. An informational sign and brochure distribution box containing information on how to plant a rain garden has been placed on the site.

Copies of the brochure are available upon request at the District office.



Ed Dlugosz, owner of Northland Seamless Gutters, continued to demonstrate how to hook up and use rain barrels. At our tree seedling distribution held at the NRICD office in April, Ed instructed interested customers and **81** rain barrels were sold by New England Rain Barrel through the NRICD.



### *Public Workshops:*

#### *Woodscaping- A Resource for Working with Private Landowners*

The 2007-2008 project included three different programs. Each of the programs was a collaboration with other environmental and conservation organizations within the watershed community.



In October 2007 our first program presented a mobile museum at the Scituate Farmers market. The title of the museum is "Way of the Woods: People and the Land." The mobile museum is about forest heritage and the changing relationships between people and the land. Approximately **250** people visited.

In March 2008, a seminar entitled "Preservation of the Homestead: Passing The Land On To The Next Generation" was held. James Aukerman and Jane G. Gurzenda presented an educational seminar discussing the laws of RI as they relate to property owners, the transfer of owners, and conservation easements. **30** land owners from the communities surrounding the watershed attended.

In May 2008, an interpretive walk on the Trott/Perry Forest Preserve in Hope was conducted. Foresters Hans Bergey, Marc Tremblay and Paul Dolan discussed the stewardship practices that the Hope Associates have been employing in the forest preserve. **35** land owners from the area attended and enjoyed a walk through the open meadows and pine forest.

#### *Adult Water Quality and Educational Workshops*

The Water Quality Workshops are designed to help watershed residents learn how to protect their private drinking water wells. By protecting the ground water on their own property, residents are also protecting the ground water resources that feed into the Scituate Reservoir.



Using a demonstration model, residents are instructed on the connection between ground and surface water and they are visually able to see how contaminants can travel through the ground to their well water supply and to surface water supplies. URI Home\*a\*Syst presented a Water Quality Workshop at Ponaganset High School that was attended by **20** property owners.

### *Business Outreach:*

A series of three Clean Business in a Watershed Bulletins were distributed this year to **300** businesses, legislators and municipal officials in the watershed. The focus of this year's series was lawn care and landscape issues and how improper use of pesticides and fertilizers can impact water quality. They also addressed native and invasive plant issues.

The first bulletin, sent out in March, focused on the cost of green lawns and healthy landscapes. It provided eight basic strategies for creating a healthy landscape, based on the URI Healthy Landscapes Program.

The second bulletin, sent in June, dealt with the difference between chemically feeding grass versus naturally nourishing the soil. It explained the benefits of organic lawn care and gave tips on developing a lawn maintenance schedule.

The third bulletin, sent in September, addressed the benefit of using native plants. It also listed the landscapers that have chosen to partner with the Scituate Reservoir Watershed Education Program to provide eco-friendly landscape options to their customers.

These landscapers participated in a series of three training sessions that will assist them in converting landscape methods to more eco-friendly, organic methods. Frank Crandall, owner of Wood River Evergreens, Inc. and a NOFA and RINLA member taught the three sessions.

### *Neighbor to Neighbor:*

The Neighbor to Neighbor portion of the Scituate Reservoir Watershed Education Program is a distribution of important fact sheets, maps and information to all new residents of the watershed. Many new residents are not familiar with ground water issues associated with septic systems and drinking water wells, or with the impact their choices can make on the water quality of the Scituate Reservoir.

The information in these packets is designed to educate landowners and assist them in making wise decisions in relation to water quality protection.

This fiscal year, approximately **300** packets were distributed throughout the watershed towns of Scituate, Foster and Gloucester.