



Somerset County SWCD
70 East Madison Road, Skowhegan ME 04976
Phone (207) 474-8324 x 3
info@somersetswcd.org www.somersetswcd.org

District Board - Supervisors

Kerry Hebert, Board Chair
PO Box 582
Starks, ME 04911
(207) 696-3756
Cell (207) 578-0342
Kabear582@gmail.com

Term ends: 12/31/2016
Years of Service: 19 years

Alan Haberstock
Vice Chair & Advisory Council Rep
1392 Hill Road
Canaan, ME 04924
(207) 487-3328 x248
Cell 207 399-0385
Alan.Haberstock@KleinschmidtUSA.com

Term ends: 12/31/2018
Years of Service: 15 years
Reappointed 12/2/2015

John Ackley, Treasurer
50 Elm Street
Skowhegan, ME
(207) 474-0025
Cell (207) 242-1963
Marshall Yard (207) 663-4406
John.Ackley@plumcreek.com
moonpie@beeline-online.net

Term ends: 12/31/2016
Years of Service: 11 years

Gabriel Clark
PO Box 194
New Portland, ME 04954
Cell (207) 628-4272
gclark004@yahoo.com

Term ends: 12/31/2017
Years of Service: 9 years
Re-elected 11/25/2015

Robert Rowbottom
552 River Road
Norridgewock, ME 04957
(207) 474-5334
krowbottom@gmail.com

Term ended: 12/31/2015
Years of Service: 5 years

Ann Mefferd
300 Beckwith Road
Cornville, ME 04976
(207) 858-3033
farmers@onedropfarm.com

Term ends: 12/31/2018
Years of Service: N/A
Newly Elected 11/25/2015



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District Board – Associate Supervisors

Mike Bowman
Solon
(207) 672-6040
mikeybman_3@hotmail.com

Kathy Hopkins
Skowhegan
(207) 474-9622
khopkins@umext.maine.edu

Jeff McCabe
Skowhegan
(207) 474-1292
jeffmccabe4me@gmail.com

Daren Turner* * *Designated Voting Associate*
Skowhegan
(207) 474-7338
kvforestry@roadrunner.com

Jennifer Zweig
Starks
(207) 696-3756
mthunger@gmail.com



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District Employees

Executive Director

Joe Dembeck
1184 East River Road
Skowhegan, ME 04976
C 474-9789

joseph.dembeck@me.nacdnet.net

Date of employment 5/11/2015

Technical Director

Laura Suomi-Lecker
PO Box 45
Liberty, ME 04949
H 589-3018
C 975-4873

laura.lecker@me.nacdnet.net

Date of employment 1/2/2007

Administrative Assistant

Pamela Guerin
PO Box 184
Skowhegan, ME 04976
H 858-4324

pamela.guerin@me.nacdnet.net

Date of employment 7/29/2013



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A brief summary of the programs currently in place, program changes and/or new programs SCSWCD plans to implement.

Future And On Going Projects & Plans 2016

- Continue participation in Envirothon, a natural resource science based competition for high school aged students, at county and state levels. Also participate in regional Field Day, which prepares Envirothon teams for the event. Coordinate with area high schools, groups, and home schoolers plus assist as requested.
- Continue annual fundraiser sales: tree/shrub and trout. Investigate additional options that would promote conservation practices.
- Spotlight and recommend products and Best Management Practices to encourage conservation enhancements and erosion control.
- Participate in continuing education plus applicable certifications and staff development.
- Continue to provide education and technical assistance on issues including buffer planting, camp road maintenance, erosion control, and forestry management issues.
- Provide ongoing assistance and education to county farmers in areas included but not limited to nutrient management, erosion control, conservation enhancements, and water quality.
- Support and expand outreach and education programs to help farmers in such areas as cover crops, marketing, organic transition, and soil quality, to name a few.
- Continue partnership with Maine NRCS, FSA, Somerset County Cooperative Extension, plus private, state and federal agencies and organizations.
- Produce and/or obtain, plus distribute informational materials (i.e.: brochures, booklets, worksheets) focusing on conservation.
- Identify and obtain funding, grants, donations, or partnerships for conservation projects and outreach.
- Expand mailing/contact list to include more participants, and update current list. Develop electronic newsletter in order to replace paper newsletter.
- Contribute press releases and articles to local newspaper highlighting SWCD issues and events, conservation topics, and completed projects.
- Continued reports to County Committee, County Commissioners, and Local Work Group as scheduled.
- Continued attendance and outreach at area fairs, events, and meetings.
- Continue work to update and improve web presence.
- Utilize computer software to improve financial reporting ability.



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- Continue to provide technical assistance in areas of nutrient management and erosion control to farmers, lake associations, road associations, and towns.
- Add to technical assistance capabilities and credentials
- Continued participation in the “Improving Soil Health through Cover Cropping and Reduced Tillage in the Dairy Belt of Maine” state CIG grant.
- Yankee Woodlot Demonstration Forest– Continue collaboration with the Maine Forest Service (MFS) to implement workshops at the forest and start implementation of harvest activities.
- Forestry/Wildlife Education/Workshops – Continue collaborations with MFS, Small Woodland Owners Association of Maine (SWOAM), other Soil and Water Conservation Districts, and NRCS to host outreach events on topics pertinent to private woodland owners.

Conservation Priorities of Somerset County
 Recommended to the NRCS Somerset County Field Office
 By the Local Work Group for FY 2016 and 2017

The Somerset County Local Work Group at their April 2015 meeting, has recommended to allocate the available EQIP funds as follows for the first Application Evaluation and Ranking Period of FY2016. The Local Work Group recently met on December 17, 2015 and retained the EQIP funding allocations for the FY 2017.

Resource Category	% of Local Allocated Funding
Animal Waste	74%
Forestry	8%
Cropland (incl. hayland)	10%
Grazing	8%



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Highlights of Proposed 2016 Activities:

- Reviving and Managing Wild Apple Trees Workshop @ Yankee Woodlot Demonstration Forest (Collaboration with MFS)
- 2016 Natural Resource Assessment Plan (MACD Statewide Project)
- Aquatic Organism Passage (AOP) Workshop (Collaboration with NRCS)
- Timber Harvest Planning Workshop @ Yankee Woodlot Demonstration Forest (Collaboration with MFS, University of Maine Extension)
- Invasive Forest Plant and Pest Workshop - Yankee Woodlot Demonstration Forest (Collaboration with MACD & MFS)
- Regional Envirothon (Collaboration with Somerset County School Districts and other regional Soil and Water Conservation Districts)
- Continuation of CIG Soil Health Project (Collaboration with UMaine Extension, NRCS, Waldo and Kennebec County SWCDs)
- Spring Trout Sale
- Agricultural Allies - Grassland Bird Protection and Management Project
- "Trees in Transition" - Succession Planning for Woodland Owners (Collaboration with Piscataquis County SWCD, SWOAM, MFS, and Forest Society of Maine)
- Maine Farm Days
- Somerset SWCD Annual Meeting & Dinner (Revive this annual event.)
- Redeveloping District Newsletter (Revive and expand the seasonal newsletter. Transition from paper to electronic format.)



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**SOMERSET COUNTY SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT
ANNUAL PLAN OF OPERATION (APO) 2016**

This plan identifies the major objectives, actions, and goals that will be emphasized in fiscal year 2016 to help solve the critical soil and water conservation needs of Somerset County.

District work plan for addressing priorities.

I. WATER QUALITY

To reduce erosion and non-point source pollution on cropland, woodland, construction sites, roadsides and other areas.

A. Work with units of government and community organizations to;

1. Provide technical assistance to lake associations, watershed associations, conservation groups, etc.
2. Partner with NRCS to provide technical assistance for nonpoint source pollution surveys
3. Expand working relationships with municipalities or municipal road crews
4. Create a working relationship with landowners of forestland within the Kennebec River Basin to identify forestland erosion and implement practices to control it.
5. Provide technical assistance on Nutrient Management planning.
6. Provide outreach and educational materials to the public

Who: Executive Director (ED) / Technical Director (TD), Supervisors When: as needed

B. Municipalities

1. Provide assistance/ permit reviews (LUPC and DEP)
2. Provide technical assistance for construction site (erosion control certification) inspections.
3. Provide outreach and educational materials to municipalities and towns

Who: NRCS/ ED

When: As needed

C. Encourage proper management of wastes

1. Agriculture
 - a. Provide technical assistance – nutrient management plans to area producers at the current technical assistance rate
 - b. Encourage proper management of agricultural waste through manure storage, manure testing (with use of manure management program,



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- nutrient management program, etc.) and land spreading to meet crop nutrient needs
- c. Promote integrated crop management through workshops and Nutrient Management
- d. Pursue funding for surveys, assessments, and implementation projects.
- e. Provide outreach and educational materials to the agricultural community.
- f. Work with Maine Department of Agriculture to share information, needs, and record updates.

Who: ED/TD

When: ongoing

II. SOIL EROSION CONTROL / BEST MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

A. Gravel Road Maintenance

- 1. Provide public educational workshops on BMP implementation to road and lake associations
- 2. Road Side Ditch Demonstrations
- 3. Gravel Road training sessions
- 4. General Outreach
- 5. Partner with Department of Environmental Protection to maintain updated information and training.

B. Proper Forest / Woodlot Management

- 1. Continue Forestry Program, and educate the public regarding good forest management practices
- 2. Promote and present developing forestry demonstration areas at the Yankee Woodlot, and work with towns/ local school departments.
- 3. Award for outstanding Woodlot Owner of the Year
- 4. Pursue or expand forestry funding
- 5. Provide outreach and educational materials to the public and forestry community
- 6. Partner with Maine Forest Service/SWOAM to assist with education programs

C. Crop and Grazing Land

- 1. Provide public educational workshops on BMP implementation
- 2. Pasture walks Workshop
- 3. General Outreach of Cover Crop
- 4. Provide technical assistance and cost sharing opportunities for farmers through the “Improving Soil Health through Cover Cropping and Reduced Tillage in the Dairy Belt of Maine” state CIG grant.

Who: ED /TD, Supervisors

When: as needed



III. WILDLIFE HABITAT

- A. Hold wildlife Workshops (pond building and maintenance, pollinator plantings, etc.)
- B. Assess Wildlife Habitat Needs
- C. Provide technical assistance to cooperators
- D. Seek wildlife habitat funding
- E. Promote participation in appropriate current NRCS programs (CSP, EQIP, etc.)
- F. Provide outreach and educational materials to the public

Who: ED/TD/NRCS/IF&W/UMCE/USFWS

When: as needed

IV. CONSERVATION EDUCATION AND OUTREACH

- A. Ongoing Educational Projects
 - 1. Involvement with Regional Envirothon
 - 2. Assist with State Envirothon
 - 3. Pond Workshops
 - 4. Nutrient Management Plan (technical assistance)
 - 6. Award Outstanding Conservation Farmer of the Year
 - 7. Award Outstanding Woodlot Owner of the Year
 - 8. Provide outreach and educational materials to the public

Who: ED/TD/MFS

When: as needed

VII. COORDINATE AND IMPLEMENT DISTRICT OPERATIONS

- A. Assign committees to plan the Annual Report, budget, education and forestry program
 - 1. Budget- Supervisors
 - 2. Annual Report- Supervisors and Executive Director
 - 3. Forestry- Maine Forest Service, Daren Turner, Kerry Hebert, John Ackley and others.
 - 4. Education- Supervisors, Executive Director, Technical Director
 - 5. Personnel Policy- Supervisors and Executive Director

When: as needed

- B. Advise public of district meetings, elections, newsletters, conservation/ education, booths or programs, workshops, and contests (Envirothon, Woodlot Owner of the Year, etc.) through public newspapers, Webpages, quarterly newsletters and annual report

Who: ED/TD

When: as scheduled, or needed



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- C. District Fundraising
 - 1. Tree and Shrub Sale
 - 2. Trout program

Who: ED

When: as scheduled or needed

- D. Arrange meetings with state, county, and township officials to integrate their programs with the services the District offers to their communities.

- 1. Contact towns and legislators by letter, explaining district programs, service available and make personal follow-up
- 2. Hold a legislative dinner
- 3. Provide outreach and educational materials to State, County and township officials.

Who: ED/ Supervisors

When: once/twice a year

VIII. CURRENT GRANT PROJECTS

- A. Grants – Agricultural Allies – Grassland Bird Protection & Management

- 1. Initiate program in 2016
- 2. Conduct farmer and landowner outreach efforts
- 3. Develop demonstration areas for practices
- 4. Secure additional funding for project

Who: ED/ TD/Supervisors/ NRCS

When: throughout the year

- B. Future Grant Projects

- 1. Stay “up-to-date” with upcoming grant projects available through Internet, mailings, and other sources for future grant projects (which will promote beneficial conservation practice) such as:
 - a. EQIP
 - b. AOP – Focus on Eastern brook trout, sea-run Atlantic salmon, and diadromous fish species
 - c. SARE
 - d. Small Foundation and Capacity Grants
 - e. Other applicable opportunities

Who: ED/ TD/Supervisors/ NRCS

When: throughout the year



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Benefits of District Programs

- Solve statewide problems by providing local solutions to many local natural resource problems (one size does not fit all)
- Assistance to agricultural producers in maintaining farming as a viable career and business option
- District provides local leadership as part of a cooperative team to find solutions to problems for residents, businesses, and landowners
- Opportunities which provide education and hands-on training for natural resource issues and concerns
- Technical assistance to landowners that will enhance and improve soil and water quality, plus maintain appropriate certifications and comply with State regulations (i.e.: Nutrient Management Plans)
- Technical assistance and education to reduce non-point source pollution to a target audience of gravel and camp road users. Also work with private road owners to establish a road review and individualized plans for erosion control and road maintenance
- Address the need for agricultural and forestry professionals in Somerset County to maintain necessary certifications, continuing education credits, and training to comply with industry requirements
- Work with schools, groups, and committees to promote soil and water conservation through the awareness and use of Best Management Practices.
- Identify agricultural and forest related priorities and concerns to address issues that could benefit both the landscape and industry needs
- Technical assistance and education to help landowners to better understand and manage their individual woodlots
- Revive the Yankee Woodlot Demonstration Forest in cooperation with MFS, UMCE, and IF&W. Implement recently developed workshop programs.
- Promote programs which generate local cash flow for Somerset County residents and landowners through federally funded contracts. Continue to assist Federal and State agencies in working to ensure programs are efficiently managed



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Soil and Water Conservation Districts have been recognized as strong local community leaders. Because of our unique grass roots structure, Districts are included in the following environmental laws and regulations:

Districts in Federal, State, Local Laws Funding Sources

Federal Level:

- Farm Bill
- EPA 319 Grants
- EQIP Funds
- US Fish and Wildlife
- Public Law 566
- Clean Water Act

Federal Programs:

- Farm Conservation Practices
- Implementing Farm Bill Programs
- Nutrient Management Plans
- Conservation Reserve Program
- Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program
- Wetland Reserve Program

State and Local Level

- Solid Waste Utilization
- Residual Spreading Rules
- Shore land Zoning Ordinances
- Site Location and Development
- Nutrient Management Law
- Farmland Registration Act
- Right to Farm Law
- Natural Resource Protection
- Storm Water Management Law
- Erosion Control Law
 - Town & City Ordinance Environmental Quality Incentive Program
 - Grassland Reserve Program



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Somerset County Soil & Water Conservation District 2015 Actual Budget

2015 Income

INCOME	
Somerset County Funding	\$24,500.00
State of ME - Dept. of Ag.	\$25,000.00
Contribution Agreements - NRCS	\$15,258.93
NRCS CIG – Soil Health Project	\$29,110.65
Sales (trees, trout)	\$3,837.88
Workshops/Education	\$0.00
Grants	\$5,000.00
Interest Income	\$11.07
MEMIC dividend	\$67.84
Tech. Assistance/Evaluations - Billable	\$950.50
Total:	\$103,736.87

2015 Expenses

Payroll + benefits & taxes	\$50,854.09
Workers Comp	\$429.00
Office Supplies	\$702.71
Sales - Item Costs	\$2,568.65
Postage/Printing	\$61.19
Dues	\$1725.00
Payroll Service	\$886.14
Travel/Mileage	\$947.23
Meetings/Events/Workshops	\$647.90
Election Expense	\$110.00
Envirothon	\$212.90
Training	\$150.00
Licenses/Permits	\$235.00
Advertising	\$150.00
Consultants/Contractors	\$14,808.59
Grant Payments to Participants	\$18,466.21
Total:	\$92,954.61



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Somerset County Soil & Water Conservation District 2016 Proposed Budget

2016 Estimated Income

Somerset County Funding	\$24,500.00
State of ME - Dept. of Ag.	\$25,000.00
USDA- NRCS Contribution Agreements –Farm Bill Admin	\$12,000.00
USDA-NRCS CIG Soil Health Project	\$40,000.00
2016 Natural Resource Assessment	\$3,000.00
Sales (trees, trout, etc.)	\$5,000.00
Invasive Forest Pest Grant	\$725.00
Workshops/Education	\$500.00
Interest Income	\$30.00
MEMIC Dividend	\$45.00
Tech. Assistance/Evaluations - Billable	\$1,500.00
Grants and/or Additional Fundraising	\$2,000.00
Total:	\$114,300.00

2016 Estimated Expenses

Payroll + benefits & taxes	\$69,000.00
Workers Comp	\$500.00
Postage, Printing (incl. newsletter)	\$800.00
Office Supplies	\$400.00
Sales - Item Costs	\$4,000.00
Dues	\$2,000.00
Payroll Service	\$1,200.00
Meetings/Events/Workshops	\$1,000.00
Travel/Mileage	\$1,500.00
Election Expense	\$150.00
Training	\$500.00
Licenses/Permits	\$250.00
Grant Payments to Participants	\$33,000.00
Total:	\$114,300.00



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Somerset County Soil and Water Conservation District

2015 Accomplishments

SCSWCD provides technical assistance to landowners, promotion of conservation practices, and educational programs for participants of all ages.

For decades, Somerset County SWCD has been a leading local resource for agricultural producers, the forestry industry, and water resource concerns. With the ability to respond quickly to issues as priorities evolve, SCSWCD helps Somerset County participants stay current and updated with state and federal regulations, emerging technology, and options for project/program funding.

Whether participating in the International Envirothon, a science competition for high school aged students, providing the agricultural community with state required nutrient management plans, or partnering with local, state, and federal agencies to expand conservation opportunities for area land and business owners, we are proud to provide valuable assistance to the citizens in this unique and diverse county.

New Executive Director: 2015 was a transitional year for Somerset County SWCD in regards to staff. Executive Director Carol Weymouth left the District in October 2014. The District Supervisors contracted with Kennebec County SWCD to utilize their staff during the period of November 2014 through April 2015 to fill the role of the vacant Executive Director position. This allowed the Supervisors to review the operations of the District and re-develop the job description for the Executive Director position. Joe Dembeck was selected as the new Executive Director from the pool of qualified applicants. Joe holds a B.S. in Biology and a M.S. in Water Resources Management. He has worked on fisheries and water resource issues throughout the Northeast for 20 years first as an environmental consultant, then as a biologist with the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife. Besides his technical expertise, Joe has extensive program planning, implementation, budgeting, and reporting skills.

Yankee Woodlot Demonstration Forest: Working in collaboration with the Maine Forest Service, the District has led an effort to restart activities at the Yankee Woodlot Demonstration Forest located in Skowhegan. The forest was designed as a location to highlight different forest management practices for woodland owners in Somerset County. In recent years there has been little use of the forest for demonstration projects and workshops. Starting this spring the Skowhegan Conservation Commission has taken over maintenance of the trail system on the property which has seen increased public use throughout the year. The District and MFS have developed a series of workshops that will be conducted over the next two years with topics



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varying from managing "wild" apples, to pre-planning of a timber harvest, to demonstrating different types of harvest techniques for improving residual tree health and value.

2015 Workshops/Education/Outreach:

Forest Soils - A workshop was held in August in collaboration with MFS and SWOAM at the Yankee Woodlot that provided technical review of forest soil types and how they control what will grow in woodland locations and drive management decisions for woodland owners.

Northern Long-eared Bat - A workshop was held in September in collaboration with MFS, SWOAM, IF&W, and NRCS that provided an information session for woodland owners and resource professionals regarding the listing of northern long-eared bats as federally threatened and how this impacts federal cost share programs and other woodland owner activities.

Pollinators - Pollinator were a focus of the education and outreach program this year, given pollinator's essential role in agricultural production and their variety of threats causing populations of many pollinators to be declining at an alarming rate across the board. The District helped to promote and educate about pollinator habitat by publishing articles and hand-outs on this issue for distribution at local fairs and other conservation events such as Maine Farm Days, and the Fiber Frolic event. In addition, the District worked in conjunction with the Somerset Farm Service Agency to promote the pollinator habitat planted the previous year at the local service center office. Signage was created and prominently displayed to showcase the habitat and explain the benefits/reasons for this habitat and to encourage clients and visitors to consider producing their own pollinator areas. This issue was also made a part of many of the conservation presentations about grassland birds, as these species both benefit from less mowing and conservation of native vegetation.

Technical Development of Staff:

The Board of Supervisors realizes that maintaining and expanding knowledge and skills of the District's staff is essential for providing quality consultation and technical services. Over the course of 2015, and continuing in 2016, staff have been participating in numerous workshops and training sessions on soil health and management, erosion control practices, shoreline stabilization techniques, stream assessment analytics for crossings (ex. culverts, bridges), stream/river restoration techniques, and certified crop advisor accreditation. With the education and technical skill sets of Ms. Suomi-Lecker and Mr. Dembeck the District now possesses a broad range of knowledge and abilities that range from soil health, erosion control, farm nutrient management, water quality, and aquatic ecology.



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Aquatic Organism Passage:

Somerset County contains some of the most intact wild Eastern brook trout populations in the United States and the Kennebec River system maintains a small population of federally endangered sea-run Atlantic salmon which is the focus of state and federal restoration efforts. Habitat quality and complexity is the key to maintaining and managing these species and by focusing on providing passage at road crossing structures (culverts and bridges) we can insure that these fish species and others can move throughout waterways to access spawning habitat, rearing habitat, cold water refugia, etc. By working with the NRCS, USFWS, Maine IF&W, and Maine DEP the District can assist municipalities and private landowners with road crossing projects. In 2016 the District anticipates expanding involvement in road crossing projects.

Expanding Partnerships and Collaborations:

By working with other agencies and groups the District is able to diversify and expand education and outreach opportunities for Somerset County residents. In 2015 the District worked with the Maine Forest Service at the Yankee Woodlot in Skowhegan to refocus activities, including development of a multi-year series of forestry focused workshops for woodland owners and planning of harvest activities. The District is working through the Maine Association of Conservation Districts (MACD) with other districts to implement a MFS education and outreach grant on forest pests and leading the development of a statewide survey which will be used in completing a Natural Resource Assessment for the NRCS. Other partnerships are being developed or expanded through the Agricultural Allies Grant, teaming with adjacent districts on events, and membership on statewide technical committees.

Conservation Innovation Grant (CIG) - Soil Health:

In 2014, SCSWCD partnered with the University of Maine Cooperative Extension Service (UMCE) and Kennebec and Waldo County SWCD offices and was awarded funding for a State NRCS Conservation Innovation Grant (CIG) project. The goal of this two year project is to help silage corn based dairy producers in Kennebec, Somerset, and Waldo Counties improve the soil health and quality on their farms through the innovative use of proven soil health conservation practices including cover crops, reduced/no-till farming, and crop rotations. This year brought new producers to the project, for a total of 11 farms with a long-term commitment for the research aspect of the program and several more simply looking for financial and technical assistance to help them take the next step in their own soil health journey. Thus, a variety of innovative practices were cost-shared and tried in spring and fall of 2015. The Districts and UMCE created targeted outreach for the program with a general soil health educational



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component. A CIG soil health display was produced and featured at local fairs and agricultural events this past summer and fall. A presentation was also created, detailing key soil health principles as well as challenges and successes with this program. Both presentation and display will be used at future events.

Soil Health – Non-CIG Activities:

This summer Laura Suomi-Lecker was requested to participate in a University of Maine Cooperative Extension SARE three year Soil Health professional development program. The program is focused on protecting and improving soil health, and the goal is to increase sustainable agriculture educators’ ability to help farmers make informed decisions about issues including cover cropping, reducing tillage, and improving soil health

This summer and fall, the program established three regional local soil health teams comprised of agricultural service providers from Extension, NRCS, Soil and Water Conservation Districts, Dept. of Agriculture, crop consultants, non-profits, and others. Teams include: Potato-grain in northern Maine; Dairy in central Maine; and Mixed vegetable in south-central Maine. Each team is comprised of “core” members and “associate” members. Core members are more actively involved in on-farm demonstrations and educational programming. Laura-Suomi Lecker is serving as a core member for the central Maine Dairy Team. Two work sessions and a soil health conference open to agricultural producers have been held to date.

Davis Grant – Grassland Birds:

The District has provided education and outreach this year on the topic of grassland bird conservation. Unfortunately, the populations of many of these iconic birds are in sharp decline. In Maine, hayfields are cut once and often twice during the grassland bird nesting timeframe, resulting in total nest failure. Articles were published in local newspapers and newsletters, and several presentations were given, beginning at the annual Northeast Region Certified Crop Advisor conference in January and continuing on with school groups and other conservation organizations. This fall, the SCSWCD was pleased to receive grant funding from the Davis Conservation Foundation for our new Agricultural Allies Program, so called because in addition to being a delight to see and hear, bobolinks and other grassland birds are true agricultural allies to the farmers of central Maine. These birds consume large quantities of insects and weed seeds each growing season. The main goals of this conservation project are 1) to make the public aware of the existence and plight of Maine’s breeding grassland birds and encourage people with fields not needed for livestock feed to leave standing grass until after August 1st and 2) to help willing farmers of Somerset and surrounding counties to adopt sustainable haying practices that



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will attempt to mesh farming and grassland bird habitat. This will be accomplished by selecting best-fit sustainable hayland management practices. It is a two year program.

Nutrient Management Plans:

The District continued writing State Nutrient Management Plans (NMPs) for local producers in both Somerset County and as contracted for Franklin County this year.

NMPs written by the District satisfy the requirements for the State of Maine Nutrient Management Law and protect producers under [Maine’s Right to Farm Law](#). Plans help farmers with the proper storage, management and utilization of both on and off farm nutrients. The District’s technical director, Laura Suomi Lecker, certified Crop Advisor (International) and state licensed Nutrient Management Planner, wrote three nutrient management plans for farming operations in both Somerset and Franklin Counties in 2015.

Envirothon:

The Maine Envirothon is an international science competition with a focus on natural resources. SWCDs statewide have held the events since the program came to Maine, and the event has grown annually. Somerset County SWCD, as part of the Mid-Maine region, provides assistance and support to the host District. This year’s Mid-Coast regional Envirothon was held in Unity on May 15th.



Teams prepare for the State Envirothon competition at the University of Maine, Orono



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“Unleaded Loons”:

Somerset County SWCD continued with education and outreach through their on-going project **UNLEADED LOONS: PREVENTING LEAD POISONING IN MAINE’S WATER BIRDS**. Lead ingestion is a death sentence for Maine’s loons, other water birds, and even predatory birds, such as bald eagles, that feed on lead-contaminated prey. Lead sinkers and jigs are accidentally swallowed by loons when they are foraging for gravel they need for their digestion or when feeding on fish attached to lead fishing gear. This year the District continued angler and lake-user targeted education on this important conservation issue, providing a number of presentations for the public in school classes and for lake and conservation organizations, such as the Rangeley Guides Club, Camden Yacht Club, and Merry Spring Conservation Center. The SCSWCD renewed their 9 District Unleaded Loon partnership to provide on-going unleaded tackle exchange opportunities for residents and lake users in towns covered by these Districts. The tackle exchanges provide an opportunity for anglers to turn in their lead tackle in exchange for their choice of un-leaded options to try. Finally, this spring, Technical Director, Laura Suomi-Lecker, was a guest on a local Portland radio show, Animal Sounds, to discuss this critical issue.



CSP/EQIP Activities with NRCS:

Somerset County SWCD maintains a close partnership with **USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)** at the Somerset County Service Center. Through operational agreements, as well as contribution agreements, we often work in tandem to better serve the natural resource needs of Somerset County. In 2015, we worked on a multi-purpose contribution agreement with NRCS to provide both administrative and technical program assistance. These agreements provide additional conservation assistance to Somerset County participants, and provide SCSWCD with supplemental operational funding.



District Contribution Agreement Assistance to NRCS programs this year was with the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP), Agricultural Management Assistance Program (AMA) and the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP). Twenty-eight Somerset County producers in the three programs were assisted through this cooperative agreement in fiscal year 2015.



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In conclusion, since the dust bowl era, Soil and Water Conservation Districts have worked to meet the conservation needs of residents and landowners. In Somerset County, we've seen changes in the needs of our cooperators, as well as the ways those needs are addressed. But what has not changed is that SCSWCD is the local leader for conservation priorities and is often the first stop for information and assistance.