North Central Conservation District

Annual Report

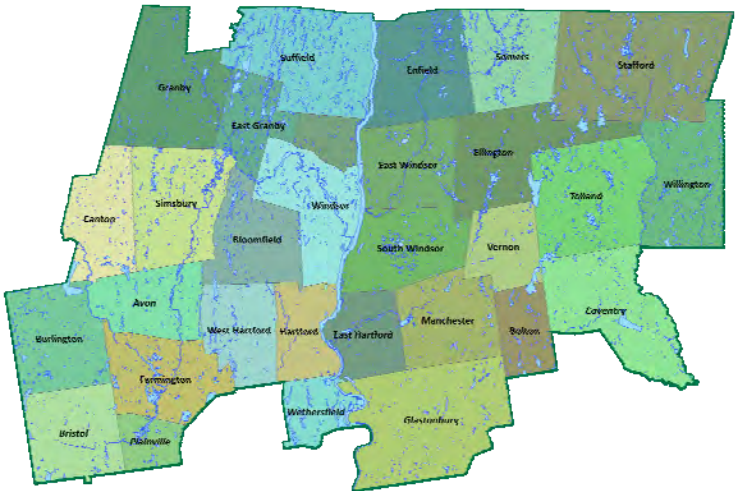
Fiscal Year 2014-2015

North Central Conservation District

Introduction

This Annual Report summarizes work performed by the North Central Conservation District (NCCD, or the District) during the 2014-2015 fiscal year. The District is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, financed through municipal contributions, Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (CT DEEP) funding, US EPA Clean Water Act Section 319 non-point source grants, an annual Plant and Seedling Sale fundraiser, and private grants and contributions.

The District is governed by a volunteer board of directors made up of local landowners with expertise and interest in the management and protection of our natural resources. The District is also an active member of the CT Envirothon Steering Committee, the Council on Soil and Water Conservation, and the CT Association of Conservation Districts. Meetings are open to the public and are typically held at the Tolland County Agricultural Center, 24 Hyde Avenue (Rt. 30) in Vernon, at 7:00pm on the fourth Thursday of each month. Please call (860) 875-3881 or visit www.conservect.org/northcentral to learn more.



NCCD's service area includes 30 municipalities within north central CT, essentially comprising the northern Connecticut River watershed. NCCD's office is located in Vernon.

NCCD has experienced staff changes this year. After nearly 20 years with the District, David Askew embarked on a new career trajectory. The District has appreciated his experience, presence, and knowledge. Joanna Shapiro has taken the reins as Executive Director after nearly seven years as Natural Resource Specialist. With involvement from the Board of Directors and long hours from staff, the District has faced the challenge of fulfilling contractual obligations while serving our municipalities and residents. We look forward to hiring a new staff member.

Board of Directors

Jack Collins, *Chairman*	Enfield
Jeff Folger, *Vice Chairman*	Ellington
Lin Marino, *Secretary/Treasurer*	Tolland
Dan Camerota	West Hartford
Pamm Cooper	Manchester
Bob DePietro	Bolton
Harold Eastwood	Somers
Michael Mocko	Stafford Springs
Jane Seymour	Tolland
John S. Weedon	Manchester

Staff

Joanna Shapiro	Executive Director *Promoted from Natural Resource Specialist June 2015*
David Askew	*Executive Director through May 2015*
Barbara Kelly	Program Coordinator
Ruth Miller	Landscape Specialist
Kathy Desmarais	Bookkeeper *since January 2015*
Heidi Cerrigone	*Bookkeeper through December 2014*

Chairman's Year in Review

The District provided services to municipalities by *reviewing development plans and wetland boundaries*, as well as serving as *wetland agent* to inland wetland and conservation agencies in Somers, Bolton, and Granby. The District also assisted landowners with natural resource issues, providing technical support regarding soil erosion solutions, invasive plant control, planting guidance, pond maintenance, and more.

The District provided *nutrient management* services to *local farmers*, collecting soil samples from cornfields in early summer. The UCONN soils lab provided the results and fertilizer recommendations. The program has helped local producers to reduce fertilizer usage.

The *Plant and Seedling Sale* and *Fish Fingerling Sale* were successful programs, promoting ecological landscaping and open space enjoyment. Volunteer Master Gardeners assisted plant sale customers, answering many planting questions. A *workshop* was held, entitled "Landscaping for Wildlife: Using Native Plants to Attract Wildlife and Desirable Insects to your Backyard."

Plants lined up in preparation for sale

Customers picking up pre-ordered plants and shopping for more

Butterfly Milkweed plugs were very popular

The District coordinated the *Connecticut Envirothon* program. Educational workshops were held throughout the year for high school students to learn about aquatics, forestry, soil, wildlife, and the 2015 current issue, Urban Forestry. The annual field day competition was held at the very fitting and picturesque Connecticut College Arboretum in New London.

Winning team from Coginchaug HS by the arboretum's pond

Students studying the soil pit for exam answers

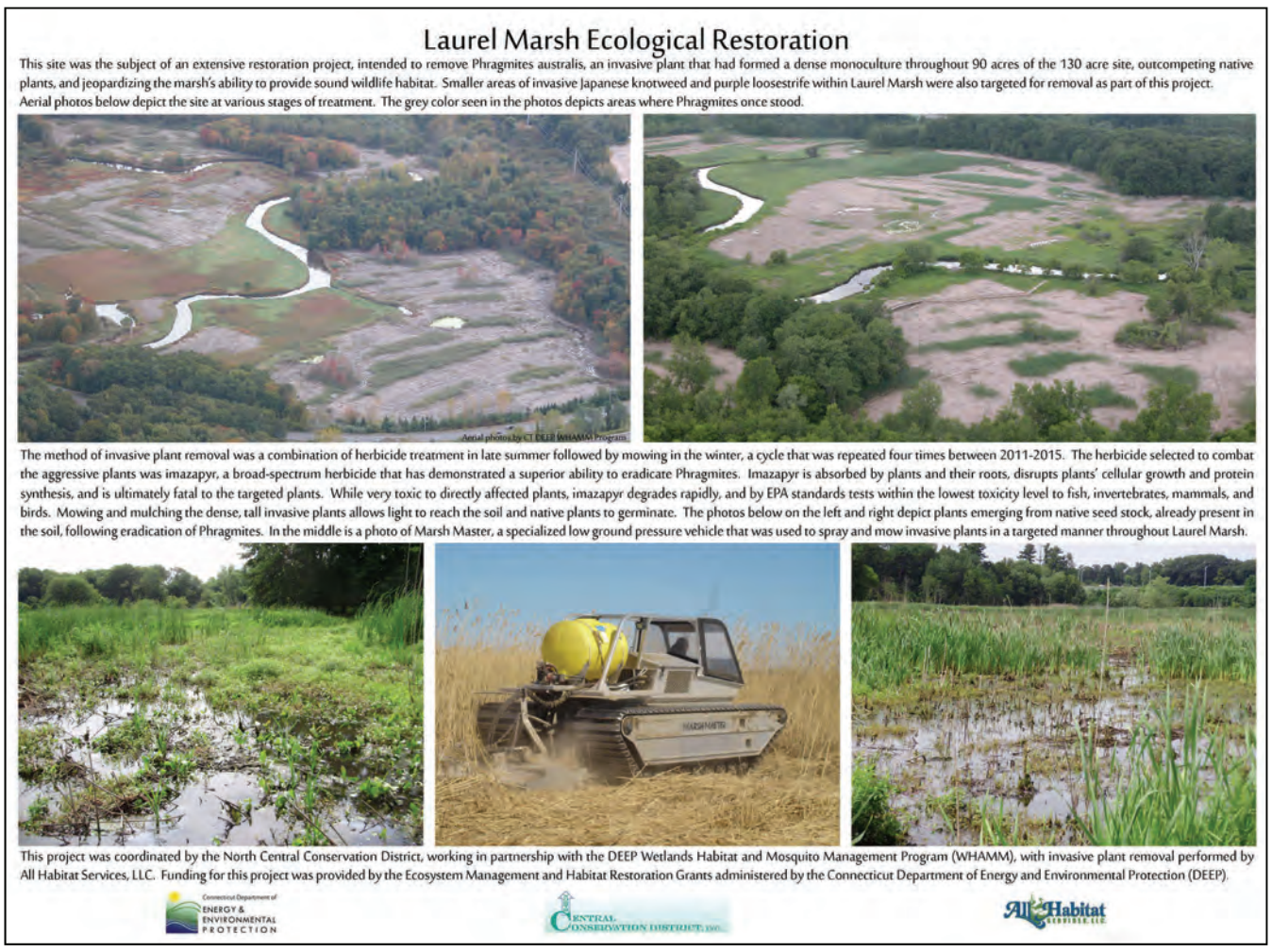
Tremendous environmental benefits resulted from *projects and grant work*, further described and depicted on the inside section of this document.

See inside for grants/project information

Grant/Project Work

Laurel Marsh Ecological Restoration

The District has completed a four-year contract to remove invasive plants from Laurel Marsh in Manchester, funded by a *Long Island Sound Ecosystem Management and Habitat Restoration Grant,* administered by the CT Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP). The primary target was *Phragmites australis*, an invasive aquatic plant that had formed a monoculture throughout 90 acres of the marsh. The District completed a four year treatment regimen of targeted aquatic herbicide spraying and mowing. The treatment has allowed native plants to re-inhabit the area and to better support wildlife. Results have been impressive, as many native plants are now growing where Phragmites once dominated. The image to the right depicts the permanent interpretive sign that was installed on-site.



North Branch Park River Implementation

With funding through the EPA Clean Water Act Section 319 nonpoint source program, locally administered by the CT DEEP, the District worked toward completion of a multi-phase stormwater quality project within the North Branch Park River Watershed. Together with the North Branch Park River Watershed Coordinator, the District completed two bioretention areas at the beginning of the fiscal year, and has made great strides toward completing the third and final basin. The three bioretention areas are designed to treat polluted stormwater before it discharges to the North Branch Park River, adjacent to parking areas serving UConn School of Law and Hartford Seminary.

Farmland Restoration Grant

The Connecticut Department of Agriculture (DoAG) has contracted with the District to assist with implementation of the Farmland Restoration Program. The Farmland Restoration Program is a grant available to farmers and land-owners who are working to reclaim former production farmland or to expand existing farmland. The grant can be used for various activities, including tree removal, well development, stump removal, and fence installation. The District's role in the program is to provide technical assistance, complete initial site inspections, and prepare *Restoration Plans*. This work has provided District staff with an opportunity to assist many diverse farms throughout the state.

Newly cleared woodland can be used to produce organic crops

An overgrown Christmas Tree farm will be restored to silage corn and specialty hay

An overgrown former field will be restored for row crops

All on one farm, access roads will be improved; riparian areas will be protected; invasive plants will be removed; and overgrown meadows will be restored .

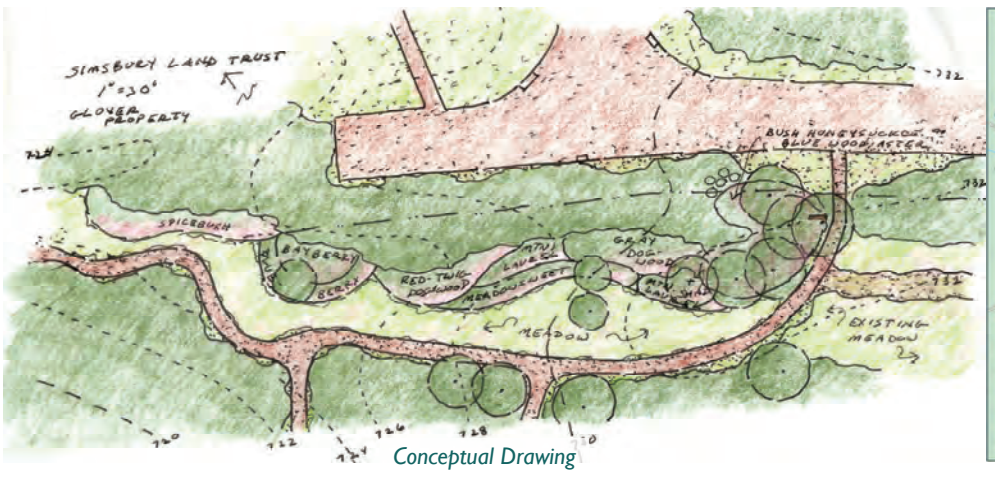
Agriculture Viability Grant

The District completed its work related to the CT DoAG Agriculture Viability Grants Program to construct both a *greenhouse* and a *seasonal high-tunnel* at Osborn Correctional Institute in Somers. The greenhouse has already been used to grow crops throughout an extended growing season, many of which are donated to local charitable organizations. The more recently constructed seasonal high tunnel will add even more capacity. The funding provided through this grant also allowed the District to purchase lumber for construction of planting benches within the greenhouse, as well as a supply of vegetable and herb seeds.

New Greenhouse (left) and Seasonal High Tunnel (right) at the Osborn Correctional Institute

Landscape Design Projects—FRWA

Throughout the year, the District provided *planting instructions*, as well as formalized *concept designs* created by our in-house *landscape designer*, to individuals and organizations. The images to the right depict an example of a project in which the District is assisting the Farmington River Watershed Association to redesign the landscape to improve conditions in the Farmington River watershed. This project is located on the Glover Property, owned by the Simsbury Land Trust, who has been removing invasive plants. District staff designed a shrub and meadow vegetative garden, consisting of many native plants with tremendous value to area wildlife. One phase was planted in October, with another installation to follow next spring.



Conceptual Drawing

NORTH CENTRAL CONSERVATION DISTRICT, INC.

FINANCIAL STATEMENT*

July 2014—June 2015

Income

DEEP 319 Grant Projects	67,500
Municipal Fee for Service	51,464
State of CT	47,500
Seedling/Fish Sales	46,406
Town Donations	30,829
CT DoAG Farmland Restoration	21,933
NRCS/RC&D Soil Health Grant	5,625
Soil Testing Services	2,682
CT DoAG Agviability Grant	1,037
Interest/Investments	720
Misc.	40
Total	**275,736**

Expenses

Salaries & Benefits	190,704
CT DoAG Agviability Grant	3,699
Seedling/Fish	31,620
Taxes and Insurance	14,796
DEEP Grant Projects	55,984
Rent	7,296
Office Expenses/Postage/Equipment	3,417
Auto Expenses and Mileage	2,931
Audit	2,500
Misc.	1,282
Dues	195
Total	**314,424**

*Detailed financial statement available upon request