

RUTLAND NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION DISTRICT

170 South Main Street - Rutland, Vermont 05701 - Telephone: (802) 775-8034, Ext. 17



The Rutland Natural Resources Conservation District's *Conservation News*, 170 South Main Street, Rutland, Vermont 05701-4905, is published to provide information to the land user.

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MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the Rutland Natural Resources Conservation District is to enhance the planning, conservation, and proper development of the District's natural resources and to involve landowners and the general public with this process through increased program visibility.

Where Water Flows, Defenders Follow

This article by Sylvia Harris originally appeared in the Rutland Herald/Times Argus newspapers on Sunday October 24, 2010.

The goal of the Vermont Basin Planning Process is to protect the high quality waters of the watershed and restore those that do not meet Vermont Water Quality Standards.

Vermont's surface-water resources consist of 808 significant lakes and ponds, 7,100 miles of rivers and streams and 300,000 acres of wetlands. Protecting and improving the overall quality of these resources involves supporting healthy ecosystems and ensuring appropriate public uses.

A watershed, or basin, is an area of land from which all water eventually flows to a common outlet. Every bit of land on earth is contained within a huge network of interconnecting watersheds of varying size and shape.

The State of Vermont is covered by 17 major river basins — one in the Hudson River Drainage Basin in the southwestern corner of the state, seven in the Lake Champlain Drainage Basin, eight in the Connecticut River Drainage Basin, and one in the Lake Memphremagog Drainage Basin. The term "watershed" refers to any drainage which may be larger, smaller or synonymous with these 17 hydrologic units.

To find the boundaries of your watershed, you'll need a map that shows contour lines. Contour lines trace the rising elevations of land. Mountains appear as a bunch of ever-increasing circles. Valleys are the lowlands that usually contain streams. Find your location and identify the highest points of surrounding land. Connect the dots to outline your local watershed.

Since water flows downhill, you can now trace the path of a drop of water that falls anywhere within your

watershed boundaries. You and your neighbors depend on all the land above for clean water and all the land below depends on you. Does this knowledge challenge you to be more concerned about the quality of your water? Contaminated or clean, it's your choice.

In the 1960's growing awareness of the need to control water pollution led to the passing of the national Clean Water Act of 1972. This law established water quality standards and made it illegal to dump wastes into U.S. waters without a permit. The water quality standards are for specific uses — for example, some water is fit to swim in but not to drink.

Natural processes and human activities both affect water quality. The season, climate, soil type and plants species all have an impact. Some of the human activities that can harm water quality include discharge of wastes from sewage plants, business, and agriculture and stormwater runoff from residential areas. Such activities, however, can be improved to meet water quality standards.

In Vermont, the improvement of water quality is being

In this issue. . .

Where Water Flows, Defenders Follow	1
Stormwater Management Using LID Practices.....	2
What's New in the Watershed	3
Promoting Low Input Grounds Keeping.....	3
Planting for Wildlife Habitat, Conservation and Aesthetics.....	3
Conservation Programs.....	3
Composting Horse Manure.....	4
Aerator Article.....	4
Meet Your New Conservation Planner.....	5
Science at the Hatchery	5
Strongs Avenue Gets Watershed Friendly Facelift.....	5
What Every Forest Landowner Should Know.....	5

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view it by visiting our website at www.vacd.org/~rcd

driven by local participation and conservation efforts within each basin. Each of Vermont's 17 basins will have a separate basin management plan developed by the Department of Environmental Conservation. These basin plans will lay out strategies for improving and protecting water quality.

Getting involved

In the Otter Creek River Basin of Rutland and Addison Counties, the basin planning process has brought together federal, state, and local agencies; towns; nonprofit organizations; businesses and interested residents to develop plans for managing local natural resources.

Historically the Otter Creek was a significant resource for early settlers and served as a means of power, transportation, irrigation, and food. More recently, Otter Creek has been harnessed primarily for hydro-electric power but also for recreational and agricultural purposes. Over time, the use of this shared resource has led to some competition, which has often fostered creative forms of conflict resolution. The Otter Creek Basin Water Quality Management Plan will explore some of these issues and propose goals, objectives, and strategies to address them.

As part of this in-depth planning process, councils and focus groups convene and contribute to the resource plans. Public meetings are held throughout the watershed. Nonprofit groups help educate participants about the basin planning process and water quality issues. Watershed councils form from the public meetings and help prioritize problems and opportunities. The councils also work to foster community understanding and facilitate implementation of the basin management

plan. Focus groups address specific watershed issues and prioritize projects for improving water quality. These groups also make recommendations and review the basin management plan, which is drafted to meet the state basin planning criteria and will be reviewed every five years.

In the Otter Creek Basin, several groups are involved in water quality monitoring, assessment, and planning. Projects range from addressing stormwater runoff in Rutland City, protecting wetlands along the Otter Creek in Brandon, and determining phosphorus loading rates in the Little Otter Creek in Ferrisburgh. Active groups include the Upper Otter Creek Watershed Council in Rutland and the Addison County River Watch Collaborative. For more information or to get involved, check out the links below.

Sylvia Harris is an Agricultural Resource Specialist for the Vermont Association of Conservation Districts, which covers Bennington, Rutland, Windham and Windsor Counties. Her responsibilities include helping farmers protect groundwater resources, assisting in the state's watershed planning efforts, and advising the agricultural community on the Accepted Agricultural Practices. She can be contacted at 802-254-5323 x105 or sylvia.harris@vt.nacdnet.net.

ONLINE

Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation, water quality www.vtwaterquality.org/

Basin Planning in the Upper Otter Creek Watershed www.vacd.org/~rcd/district_maps.html

Addison County Riverwatch Collaborative <http://lewisecreek.org/addison-county-riverwatch-collaborative>

“Stormwater Management Using Low Impact Development (LID) Practices”

Was the topic at this year's Annual Luncheon Meeting of the District. The meeting was held on May 10, 2010 at the Rutland Regional Medical Center, CVPS/ Leahy Conference Center, on Allen Street in Rutland and was open to the public.

A presentation was given by: Kevin Worden P.E., Vice President, at Engineering Ventures, Inc.

Kevin gave an overview of:

- What Low Impact Development is;
- Discussed techniques and practices that have been implemented at homes, public buildings, commercial and industrial properties; and
- Talked about the benefits of Low Impact Development.

An award for Conservation Teacher of the Year was presented to Michelle Cioffredi from Otter Valley Union High School. James Avery, Otter Valley Union High Schools Assistant Principal said “Michelle cares about the students; not only about their progress in class, but also their well-being outside of the classroom”.

An award for Conservation Farm of the Year was also presented to Art and Dave Seward from Seward Farm in Wallingford.

The District has bluebird houses available at \$12.00 each and bat houses at \$17.00 each.
Please contact Nanci at the District office if you are interested in purchasing a house 802-775-8034 ext. 17.

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What's New in the Watershed

The District was awarded laboratory analytical services again this year through a grant for volunteer water quality monitoring from the State of Vermont, Department of Environmental Conservation.



*Rain Garden at
5 Irving Heights, Rutland*

This summer marks the 7th year for members of the Upper Otter Creek Watershed Council (UOCWC) volunteering to collect water quality samples on the Otter Creek and major and minor tributaries in need of further assessment. Again this year rivers and streams were sampled twice a month for phosphorus, nitrogen, turbidity, and E. coli (as an indicator of the possible presence of disease causing bacteria).

Projects completed:

With funding through a VT Watershed Grant the District initiated an education and outreach campaign to residents in the Moon Brook Watershed. Educational materials were developed and mailed and low impact development (LID) projects (rain gardens) were installed to reduce the volume of stormwater. Three rain gardens were installed on private properties and two rain barrel making workshops were held.

A rain garden is a landscaping feature planted with native plants to help manage stormwater runoff from impervious surfaces such as roofs, sidewalks, and parking lots.

Technical support was provided by UVM Lake Champlain Sea Grant Program. Labor was provided by students from the Community College of VT and from the Forestry and Natural Resources Class at Stafford Technical Center. Other labor was provided by individuals and other partner organizations. Some of the plants were donated by individuals and others were donated by Garden Time. Compost was donated by two local farmers.

The District with the help of our many partners will continue to identify immediate projects, prioritize issues and develop strategies to be included in a draft of the Basin Plan for the Upper Otter Creek.

Promoting Low Input Grounds Keeping

With funding provided by a Lake Champlain Sea Grant/University of Vermont Extension the District hired an Intern through the Community College of Vermont to continue working with commercial and institutional property grounds managers in the Moon Brook watershed.

The goal of this project is to encourage property managers to adopt one or more low input grounds care practices and promote use of low input grounds care techniques.

For more information on this project call Nanci at the District Office at 802-775-8034 ext. 17

Planting for Wildlife Habitat, Conservation and Aesthetics

Each year in the Spring the District makes available to the public, non-invasive evergreen and hardwood trees, wildlife/songbird trees and shrubs, apple trees, and berries.

This year over 150 customers participated in the seedling program and purchased over 6,000 plants.

Significant volunteer help in sorting and bundling individual orders was provided by students from the Stafford Technical Center, Forestry program, by a Stewardship of the Urban Landscape (SOUL) volunteer and others.

The District is always looking for volunteers for our annual tree sale in May and for implementing Low Impact Development Practices i.e. rain gardens. If you are interested in volunteering please contact Nanci, at the District Office at 802-775-8034 ext. 17 anytime.

Conservation Programs

Think the USDA Farm Bill is only for farmers who plant crops or milk cows? Think again. The Farm bill of 2008, which was passed in late May 2009, has much to offer the woodland landowner. There is technical and financial assistance available through the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) to improve your forest lands. This includes the development of a forest management plan through our EQIP CAP program. NRCS works to help the landowner meet their management objectives while addressing the resource concerns on their property. There is opportunity for financial assistance through NRCS to implement various conservation practices that will improve your forest's wildlife habitat, water quality, forest health, etc. NRCS will work closely with the Vermont Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation and consulting foresters to implement many of the forest practices. Two of the most applicable conservation programs for woodland owners within the farm bill are the Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (commonly known as WHIP) and the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (or EQIP). While both programs have been around for years, there are some changes that will be of interest to landowners in Vermont. The biggest changes to the EQIP program in the new farm bill are that 'forest management' has been added specifically as a purpose and cost sharing for forest stewardship plans is now authorized. Also new to the EQIP and AMA programs is that electrical, heating and ventilation are now allowed in high tunnels both previously installed and planned for installation through these programs. Although NRCS will not provide financial assistance for these upgrades, they will no longer be viewed as conflicting with our rules. The high tunnel must still be a manufactured kit. For WHIP, one of the big changes is in the land that is eligible for the program. In the past farm bill, municipal and state lands were eligible on a limited basis but now, private agricultural land, non-

industrial private forest land and tribal lands will be the only lands eligible for the program. Also new under WHIP is the forestry initiative. This initiative has the same basic eligibility requirements as regular WHIP, but is offered through a separate funding pool specifically to address natural resource concerns on forest lands.

Eligibility for the two programs is slightly different. For EQIP, you need to be an agricultural producer which simply means you produce an agricultural product on your land.

Agricultural product can be milk, corn, hay, wool, meat, vegetables, maple syrup, timber, firewood, etc. For WHIP, you only need to be a private owner of forest land (nothing need be produced) or agricultural land. Depending upon your needs and situation, the NRCS can assist you in determining which program(s) will work best for you.

Beginning Farmers/Forest Landowners, Socially Disadvantaged Farmers and Limited Resource Farmers can also benefit from the 2008 Farm Bill, which provides elevated payments to folks meeting these definitions. In addition, Beginning Farms and Socially Disadvantaged Farmers can opt to submit their application to a Beginning Farmer funding pool so that they don't compete with other Non Beginning Farmers in the state, giving them a better chance of getting funded. Additional information on these definitions can be found at the following website: http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/SLB_Farmer/

To get additional information you can contact your local NRCS office or visit the Vermont NRCS website. Sign up for conservation programs is on a continuous basis; however, to be considered for the second round of funding for EQIP or WHIP, you'll need to submit an application to NRCS by January 14, 2011. The application process involves an application form but also an eligibility determination and other eligibility forms in the office. You will need to make an appointment to sit down with NRCS staff to be sure you have provided all necessary information to apply.

NRCS website – <http://www.vt.nrcs.usda.gov/>
Contact information for Rutland NRCS
Sally Eugair – 802-775-8034 ext. 16
Carla Fenner – 802-775-8034 ext. 26

Composting Horse Manure

The VT Association of Conservation Districts awarded funds to the District through a Clean & Clear Grant to educate horse owners about composting horse manure. A workshop was held where horse owners learned about such things as:

What is Composting?

Where can I Compost?

Why should I Compost?

As part of this grant the District was to construct (8) compost bins for installation at individual horse farms. These bins were placed throughout Rutland County.

Having these bins in place will significantly decrease mismanagement of manure and contamination of surface waters with E. coli and nitrogen. If you have questions or would like further information on composting horse manure please contact the Districts Ag Resource Specialist, Sylvia Harris, at 802-254-5323 ext. 105.

Genesis Tillage Aerators Available

The Southern Vermont Nutrient Management Program has 2 GenTill aerators available for use in Rutland County. The aerators were purchased with funding secured from the Vermont Legislature in 2009 from Hendy Brothers Middlebury in 2010. The two units available are an 8ft 9" unit and a 15ft folding unit. The units can be used to aerate and reduce compaction in hayfields and pastures, incorporate manure, and as secondary tillage. A good estimate for horsepower needed to operate the units is 10hp per foot; a little less if the tractor is 4WD. You must have a ¾ ton truck to move the 15ft unit and a good ½ ton truck for the 8ft unit. The 8ft unit has a concrete block for additional weight if needed for severe compaction. If you do not have a truck to tow the unit, arrangements can be made for a fee. VT Agency of Agriculture Food and Markets Farm Agronomic Practice program cost share is available in some cases.

There is also potential for NRCS cost share. For more information or to schedule a unit for use, please contact:

Jennifer Alexander 802-558-6470 or via email at jad0403@comcast.net

The District's Spring Trees, Shrubs and More Sale will be held the 1st Saturday in May 2011. If you are interested in being on the mailing list to receive an order form please contact Nanci at the District office 802-775-8034 ext. 17

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Liz is the new Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) Planner.

Liz will work cooperatively with the Vermont Association of Conservation Districts (VACD), local Conservation Districts, the Vermont USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), and the Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets (VAAF&M), the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and the Farm Service Agency (FSA) to identify, organize, and coordinate implementation of riparian habitat restoration projects in the Southern Lake Champlain Watershed. Liz comes from a dairy background and has a masters degree in soil science. If you have questions or are interested in further information regarding CREP please call Liz at 802-775-8034 ext. 22 or e-mail elizabeth.brock@vt.nacdnet.net

Science At The Hatchery

In 2009 the District partnered with the VT Agency of Natural Resources (VT-ANR) to sponsor the second year of *Science at the Hatchery*.



VT-ANR presented a series of focused workshops at the Pittsford National Fish Hatchery. The event was aimed at 4 – 8th grade level.

This location lends itself well as a site for the dedicated professionals at the Agency, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and the VT Dept. of Forests, Parks & Recreation to provide focused workshops on important environmental aspects, including topics in Fisheries Management, Stream Ecology and Water Supply.

Listed below are descriptions of the various topics/workshops that were presented:

- USFWS Fish Hatchery Tour
- Water and the Land - The Flume Model
- Groundwater Hydrogeology Modeling
- Stream Ecology Hike
- Electro Fishing
- A Tour of the Proctor Drinking Water System - Water Source Area & Treatment Fieldtrip
- Stream Ecology - Macro invertebrate ID
- Project WET Activity - The Incredible Journey
- Forestry
- Wetlands
- Soils

Strongs Avenue Gets Watershed-Friendly Facelift

With funding provided by a VT Watershed Grant the District is working to retrofit Strongs Avenue in the City of Rutland with green stormwater management infrastructure and Low Impact Development (LID) practices i.e., rain gardens/bioretention, rain barrels and riparian plantings. We are working with businesses located on Strongs Avenue which is adjacent to the Moon Brook and determining the appropriate practice for each site. With the help from a coalition of volunteers and technical resource advisors, we will install practice(s) at participating business properties. Signs identifying the stormwater problem and the practices will be installed at each location for community education.

A rain garden has already been installed at the Majestic Car Rental property. We will continue to partner with a variety of organizations including but not limited to City of Rutland Department of Public Works, Stafford Technical Center Forestry & Natural Resources Class, Community College of Vermont, UVM Lake Champlain Sea Grant and VTDEC Watershed Planner.

What Every Forest Landowner Should Know

The District is sponsoring a workshop for forest landowners on Tuesday, February 8, 2011 from 6:00 p.m. – 8:30 p.m. at the US Forest Service at 231 North Main St., in Rutland. The topics that will be presented are:

- What is a Forest Management Plan and what should be in it?
- The VT Use Value Appraisal Program
- Vermont's Tree Farm Program
- USDA-NRCS Cost Sharing Programs for environmental quality and wildlife habitat.

The cost is \$10.00 per person and pre-registration is required by February 1.

Please call Nanci at the Conservation District Office 802-775-8034 ext.17 for a registration form.

***The District would like to thank the following towns for supporting our program:
Mendon, Mt. Holly, Pittsford, Proctor, Shrewsbury, Sudbury, Tinmouth, Wallingford and West Rutland.***

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