

Helping People Help the Land

Volume 1, Number 7

October—November 2007

In This Issue

- Message from the State Conservationist
- Field Staff Happenings/State-wide
- Ecological Sciences - Happenings
- Economics - Happenings
- Cultural Resources - Happenings
- NEPA Environmental Assessment Flow Diagrams
- Engineering Services
- Grazing Land Conservation Initiative
- Operations
- Training, Conferences, and Meetings
- Outreach And Communications
- Soils Program
- Resource Conservation & Development

Contact Us:

USDA NRCS
60 Quaker Lane, Suite 46
Warwick, RI 02886
Ph: 401.828.1300
Fax: 401.828.0433

Message from State Conservationist Roylene Rides at the Door



As we approach the holiday season and the end of another year, Rhode Island NRCS has much to be proud of. Along with our partners, we have obligated and planned almost \$10 million in conservation practices and easements. Our staff and partners are very dedicated and hard working individuals who strive to put conservation on the ground.

Rhode Island NRCS has developed a new plan to accept applications, rank applications, develop and sign contracts early in the fiscal year. It is our hope that this will allow us time to ensure that funds are spent wisely and not returned until all

of RI resource issues are addressed.

We received over 100 applications for FY2008 funding for the EQIP program. At this time, FRPP, WRP, WHIP, CRP and GRP funding authority has expired. We are unable to fund any new contracts in these programs until a new Farm Bill is passed. I will keep you posted.

Happy Holidays!



FY2007

Environmental Quality Incentives Program

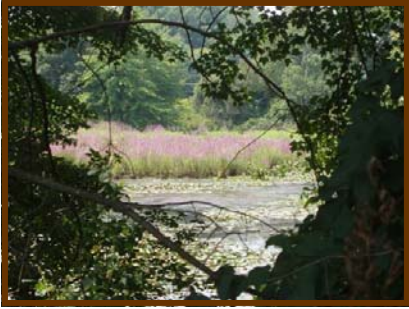
- 84 farmers applied and were ranked, 44 were pre-approved for funding.

Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program

- 42 applications were received and 10 projects were funded.
- Rhode Island was a major contributor to assisting NRCS Nationally to meet a \$5 million requirement for 396 practices (Fish passage projects).
- RI NRCS approved 5 fish passage projects on the Blackstone and Ten Mile rivers.

Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program

- Three properties were funded for a total of almost \$5 million, with 150 acres protected.



Purple loosestrife invasion

Field Staff Happenings/State-wide Upper Narragansett Bay
By Michael Merrill, District Conservationist and Jessie Dyer, Soil Conservationist
Hunt River Watershed-wide inventory of Purple loosestrife Management

An effort to inventory the extent of Purple loosestrife invasion in Rhode Island has begun. Using modified field methods developed by the University of Rhode Island Biological Control Lab. The Hunt River Watershed was chosen for this pilot inventory due to concern about extensive development and sprawl within the watershed. The main stem of the Hunt River, tributaries, and wetland complexes were studied by foot, vehicle, or kayak to determine the presence/absence and abundance of Purple loosestrife as well as presence of *Galerucella* beetles that may have migrated from other release sites. This inventory effort was conducted by staff and partners, including The Audubon Society of Rhode Island and the University of Rhode Island. Jessie Dyer, a Soil Conservation Trainee for the NRCS, has worked on this watershed plan as part of her Coastal Fellow project for URI.



The Hunt River Watershed is located in central Rhode Island on the western side of Narragansett Bay. This watershed includes the Hunt and Pottowomut Rivers. The northern portion of the watershed is located within Kent County and to the south is Washington County. Within this watershed are the Rhode Island towns of North Kingstown, East Greenwich, West Greenwich, Warwick, West Warwick, Exeter, and Coventry. (see map)

The Hunt River watershed is approximately 15,703 acres and is divided into four sub-basins: Sandhill Brook (2,352 acres), Frenchtown Brook (4,487 acres), Scrabbletown Brook (1,653 acres), and Fry Brook (1,986 acres) (Rhode Islands River Council). The focus of the area wide conservation plan will be on the main stem of the Hunt River which is approximately 8 miles long. Refer to the map for the general location of the Hunt River watershed in Rhode Island. Approximately 52 miles of perennial and intermittent streams are within the Hunt River Watershed.

It was determined Purple loosestrife is just beginning to establish itself within the watershed which yields great potential for control through biological methods and small scale mechanical eradication. Restoration sites were chosen based on size and proximity to other loosestrife colonies." Through this watershed planning project on the Hunt River, a potential restoration site on Audubon Society land and an application has been submitted to the Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP). This study serves as a pilot project, which will hopefully be implemented in other RI watersheds.

"The first law of ecology is that everything is related to everything else."

Lower Narragansett Bay
By Peter Bonome, Soil Conservationist
Treaty Rock Farm FRPP/ EQIP

The NRCS RI Field office has been working closely with Treaty Rock Farm, The Nature Conservancy, RI DEM and the Sakonet Land Trust to purchase the development rights to the historic Treaty Rock Farm in Little Compton RI. The purchase took place in November. Treaty Rock Farm is situated on the Sakonet River and raises grass fed beef and native flowers, trees and shrubs for the native landscape market. This farm has a significant historic importance, Treaty Rock which was a meeting point for the Colonists and the native peoples at the time of King Philips war. NRCS and the Nature Conservancy have been working closely with the landowners to plan a 2000 foot vegetative coastal buffer that will permanently establish a valuable maritime shrub ecosystem along Narragansett Bay. The USDA NRCS EQIP program is assisting in the planning and planting of this significant buffer.



Treaty Rock Farm

Economics—Happenings

By Reena Shaw, Economist

The Rhode Island State Office is happy to report that the process to convert from a cost share cost list to an incentive payment schedule is now complete. The incentive payments for our conservation practices are loaded in Protracts and all appears to be fully functional. We extend our thanks and gratitude to all our partners for their input, support, and understanding while we worked to make this transition.

A few changes were made to some practices since the last State Technical Team (STT) meeting. These changes will be presented to the STT at their next meeting in January.



Aerial view of the Watson Farm

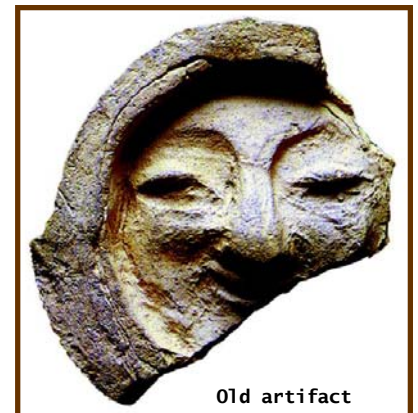
Cultural Resources - Happenings

By Reena Shaw, Economist

The Cultural Resource Coordinator is currently updating several documents that affect the overall review process of proposed projects with regard to their potential impacts on cultural resources.

The state level agreement between the Rhode Island State Office and the Rhode Island State Historic Preservation Office is five years old and is now being updated to better reflect how our two offices work together.

Our review process within the office is also being detailed and a supplement to the National Cultural Resources Handbook is currently in the works. This supplement will provide staff with more clear instructions about the steps involved in the cultural review process as they occur in the state of Rhode Island.



Old artifact

NEPA—Environmental Assessment Flow Diagrams

By Reena Shaw, Economist

The state resource staff is currently working toward summarizing projects that required the filing of an Environmental Impact Statement or and Environmental Assessment. The provision of this summary report to our National Office is an annual requirement that reports on our communication with cooperating agencies during these types of sensitive reviews. The deadline for submitting the report is December 14, 2007.



Peter checking the soil for artifacts

Ecological Sciences—No Update

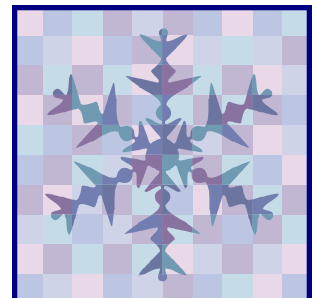
By J. Eric Scherer, State Resource Conservationist

Engineering—Update

By Meghan Walters, Hydraulic Engineer

Engineering Services

This fall, business is booming for Rhode Island's engineering department. Ron Lewis, Engineering Technician, and Jade Nield, Agricultural Engineer, are enjoying the nice weather as they continue to inspect construction on multiple projects. We currently have several roofed heavy use areas, waste storage facilities, and micro irrigation systems under construction.



(continues next page)

Go confidently in the direction of your dreams. Live the life you have imagined.

Henry David Thoreau



Perry Rasso's (on left) Aquaculture site- Potters Pond - Looking at juvenile Oyster.



Activity Report

Construction of a Denil fish ladder at Rising Sun Mill on the Woonasquatucket River in Providence is complete. Fish ladders are becoming very prominent in Rhode Island's Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program (WHIP), as NRCS continues to focus on the Open Rivers Initiative. The Blackstone River will soon be open to anadromous fish as NRCS works in conjunction with EA Engineering Consultants to complete designs for four dams on the Blackstone River. The engineering staff is also working diligently to complete a survey of the Dyerville Dam on the Woonasquatucket River. After the survey is complete, it will be handed over to EA Science and Technology, a private consultant, for hydrologic and hydraulic analysis for the dam removal.

Meghan Walter, Hydraulic Engineer, has been attending weekly training sessions with Dick Quinn, Hydraulic Engineer for U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services, to gain experience on the design of fish ladders. Frank Vogel, Assistant State Conservation Engineer, and Jade Nield have been working with Fuss and O'Neill, a private engineering consultant, to develop Irrigation Water Management plans for 6 clients.

Lastly, the engineering staff recently experienced a change in leadership, as Frank Vogel is the new supervisor for the engineering department. We welcome and congratulate Frank on his new role.

BIOLOGICAL SCIENCES

by Andrew Lipsky, State Biologist

Estuary scientists from through out the world learn how the Farm Bill is having a positive effect on Narragansett Bay habitats

The 20th Biannual International Conference for the Estuary Research Federation was held in Providence, RI November 4-8, 2007. Over 2000 attendees, representing dozens of nations throughout the globe, participated in the scientific meeting in order to integrate science, management, and society to better understand and steward estuaries and coasts. NRCS Rhode Island's State Biologist served as the lead to deliver one of the Conference Field Sessions entitled: "Round the Bay: Habitat Restoration in Narragansett Bay". NRCS and RI CRMC co-hosted this full day bus tour of habitat restoration projects throughout Narragansett Bay. As part of the tour, participants learned about how USDA Farm Bill programs are being used to restore important coastal and estuarine habitats, visited a number of NRCS wetland and fisheries restoration projects, and also learned about the geography and natural history of Narragansett Bay.

Updates to the CPA-52 and Threatened and Endangered Species Consultation Process

NRCS State Biologist has created an outreach document for planners to provide to landowners to explain the process in which we integrate threatened and endangered species conservation as part of the conservation planning process. The fact sheet, entitled: *Threatened and Endangered Species and Habitat of Concern - What They mean for your Conservation Project*, help explains to the landowner NRCS's role to conserve state and federal trust species in the planning process.

Additionally, a new process has been created for planners and the State Biologist to consult with the State of Rhode Island to evaluate and assess the potential affects of conservation practice applications on state and federal trust species. This process now fills the void that had been created with the recent departure of RIDEM Natural Heritage and RIDEM Fish and Wildlife department. A new T&E species worksheet has been created and integrated within the upcoming CPA-52.

Grazing Land Conservation Initiative (GLCI)

By Michael Merrill, GLCI Coordinator

Work was continued on developing the grazing plans for multiple clients through the GLCI agreement with the RC&D council. A standard format for these Grazing Plans was adopted by NRCS and will be used for the planning.

A teleconference with all GLCI coordinators was organized by the East Region Technical Service Center. RI updated the group on its activities. The group announced many conferences relating to grazing and pasture management that are scheduled for the winter and early spring.

The GLCI coordinator for RI has been turned over to Tim Pindell of the State Resource Team.



Earth Team Volunteer Program—No Update

By Jeanne Comerford, State Volunteer Program coordinator

Farm Bill Programs—Update

By Michael Moorman, Assistant State Conservationist for Programs

Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP):

NRCS received 110 applications for the FY 2008 EQIP. Of the 110 applications 83 have been determined to be eligible for the program. Project ranking will begin on December 17, 2007 to determine which applicants will be funded.



Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program:

The Treaty Rock Farm development rights were purchased this November. Two additional properties will soon be purchased in December.

Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP):

Blackstone River Fish Passage:

NRCS is continuing development of the Environmental Assessment of the Blackstone River Fish Passage project. The draft Environmental Assessment should be available for internal review January 2008. Engineering designs continue to be developed for the Main Street, Slater Mill, and Valley Falls dams.

Woonasquatucket River Fish Passage:

NRCS is continuing the development of the designs for Paragon Dam and Dyerville Dams fish passage. Paragon Dam designs are ninety percent complete and the project will be submitted for permitting by January 2008. NRCS is completing the survey for the Dyerville Dam. The information will be forwarded to EA Engineering so they can begin the needed designs for the dam removal and bank stabilization. Atlantic Mills has been sent to permitting and we are waiting for the final approval from the permitting agencies.

An agricultural adage says the tiny animals that live below the surface of a healthy pasture weigh more than the cows grazing above it.

In catalogue selling composting equipment I read that two handfuls of healthy soil contain more living organisms than there are people on the earth. What these beings are and what they can be doing is difficult to even begin to comprehend, but it helps to realize that even though they are many, they work as one.

Carol Williams



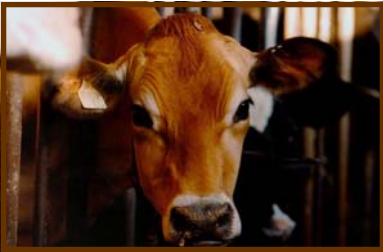
Staff working in the soil pit.

Operations

By Jackie Pashnik, Management Analyst

Personnel Actions:

- Michelle Moore was promoted to Secretary, GS-6, effective November 25th.
- Diane Riessen has accepted the position of Office Automation Assistant, GS-5, effective December 10th.
- The Engineering staff is now under the supervision of Frank Vogel III, effective November 11, 2007.
- The Soils staff is now under the supervision of J. Eric Scherer, effective November 11, 2007.



Performance Update

By Jackie Pashnik, Management Analyst

2008 Performance Goals are under development and are scheduled to be in place by January 11, 2008.

Training, Conferences, and Meetings—Update

By Jackie Pashnik, Management Analyst



- Pindell attended advanced RUSLE2 training (Revised Universal Soil Loss Equation), in Lancaster, PA.
- The East National Technology Support Center provided three remote training sessions to the planning and engineering staff through "Computer NetMeeting" on Composting, Precision Agriculture, and Micro-irrigation. Monthly sessions are planned on a variety of topics. Invited guests from URI also attended.
- Pindell attended the URI - "Twilight Meeting" on the topic of Soil Quality, and presented several RUSLE2 examples of different tillage systems and the resulting effects on soil quality and rates of soil erosion and provided fact sheets and cd's to about 25 producers. Other presenters from Cornell Univ. demonstrated zone-tillage equipment and the soil quality test - similar to a soil test for nutrients, but the results provide insights into the quality of the soil.
- Pindell is working closely with Holly Burdette of URI, and Heather Darby of UVM, to develop a nutrient management curriculum for RI turf and livestock producers. This comprehensive course will be delivered over four weeks in January to a small group of interested producers and NRCS staff who have signed-up.



Soils Program—Happenings

By Jim Turenne, Assistant State Soil Scientist

The Rhode Island Sea Grant / URI Coastal Institute 41° N magazine features a 6 page special section on the Mapping Partnership for Coastal Soils and Sediment (www.mapcoast.org). The special section provides information about the Partnership which was initiated in 2004 when the RI NRCS contacted the Coastal Institute to begin focusing our soil mapping efforts into shallow water and coastal landscapes, how the mapping is performed and why the mapping is needed. To receive a copy of this edition contact Jim Turenne at 401-822-8830, an electronic version is posted on the Sea Grant web shortly (<http://seagrant.gso.uri.edu/41N/index.html>).

A short news feature of the subaqueous soil mapping effort on Point Judith Pond was shown on WJAR 10's

Watershed Watch. During the segment Assistant State Soil Scientist Jim Turenne is interviewed describing a soil core collected in the pond. (see photos) To view the video visit: <http://nesoil.com/Video.htm>.

A presentation and field tour of the subaqueous soils mapping was presented at the RC&D annual meeting. Jim Turenne and Maggie Payne made a presentation about MapCoast and then took the tour to Potters Pond to show the mapping and soil cores along with a talk on Aquaculture provided by Perry Rasso. Rasso has an EQIP contract for his aquaculture farm. Another presentation about the terrestrial soil survey of Rhode Island was made for 60 people attending a Cooperative Extension workshop on site specific soil

mapping.

The soil section of the RI Envirothon was taught to over 60 high school students at the George Washington State Park in Gloucester. The class consisted on a combination lecture and a field tour of several soil profiles and landscape settings.

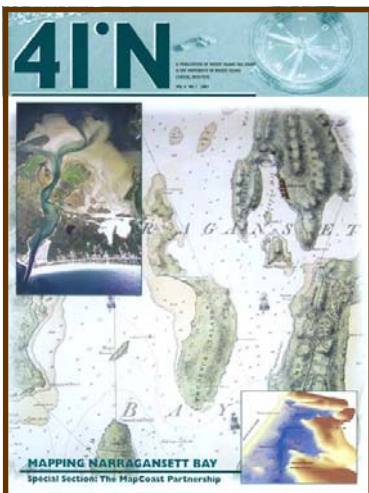
Four On-site soil investigations were conducted to assist the NRCS staff with Farm Bill programs.

ENVIROTHON - Update

There is a new web site for the Rhode Island Envirothon the URL is <http://www.rienvirothon.org/>



Subaqueous soils



41° N magazine feature





NRCS display

Outreach and Communications—Happenings

By Jeanne Comerford, State Public Affairs Specialist

Date	Outreach Events	People Reached
Nov. 8, 2007	Soil Quality Twilight Meeting	29
Nov. 13, 2007	Soil training to Envirothon students and teachers	70
Nov. 15, 2007	Provided a talk on the RI soils program	65



Tour to show-off our projects.

Resource Conservation & Development (RC&D)

By Chris Modisette, RC&D Coordinator

The following report on the activities of the Rhode Island Resource Conservation and Development Area (RI RC&D) is submitted for your consideration.

Event

Date

- Rhody Warm meeting October 3
- RI Blueways Alliance Teleconference October 3
- Slater Mill National Celebration of Spinning & Weaving – Rhody Warm display October 6
- Meeting with Anne Archey, USFS re: forest management issues October 9
- Forest Legacy Committee meeting October 10
- Volunteer Fire Assistance Chainsaw Training Course October 13
- Way of the Woods Field Day, North Scituate October 13
- 2nd Annual Forestry & Wood Expo and Energy Expo October 14
- NRCS Conservation Partners Mtg, South Kingstown Land Trust October 16
- New England Assoc. of RC&D Areas Fall Conference, Narragansett, RI October 18-20
- RI Blueways Alliance Teleconference October 24
- Rhody Warm display at South County Museum with SRICD “Art and the Natural World” October 28-30
- Woonasquatucket Watershed Council re: river access project October 29
- NRICD Annual Mtg. presentation – RI Farms Initiative November 2
- We Mean Business Expo, Lincoln, RI November 5
- USFS, Durham, NH re: forestry issues November 6



Christmas tree farm



(continues next page)

Rhody Warm Committee meeting	November 7
RI Sheep Coop Fall Meeting presentation on Rhody Warm	November 10
RC&D Council meeting	November 14
RIDEM/Channel 10 EarthWatch segment on Rhody Warm	November 17
Northern RI Coop.Ext. mtg – Presentation on Rhody Warm	November 28
22 events	2,442 People reached

Rhode Island Rural Fire Protection

Working with Paul Dolan from RIDFE, we held two (2) chainsaw training session for rural fire department on September 22 and October 13, 2007. Fifty-five firefighters from 19 fire departments attended the training. Each participating department will be supplied with a hardhat and a pair of chainsaw safety chaps.

A survey to help provide updated information to RIDFE on the state of Rhode Island’s rural fire service and will assist us to better serve the wild land firefighting needs of the Rhode Island’s rural fire departments was completed and sent out to 78 fire department in early November Responses are due back December 3, 2007.

RI River and Stream Continuity Project Meeting

Presentation to the Burrillville Conservation Commission on September 11, 2007 about the expansion of program into the Clear River Watershed in northern RI;

Approximately 100 of these sites have been inventoried to date.

“Rhody Warm” - Surplus Wool Project

Project Status

- Project Committee meeting
- Participated in the Big E – Eastern States Exposition
- Updated Sheep Cooperative Membership List
- Updated and expanded mail list to potential participants to include new Sheep Coop members, RI 4H, etc
- Developing some ideas for marketing packages;
- **Blankets auctioned at:**
 - NE Association of Conservation Commission Fall Conference,
 - National Association of State Foresters Meeting, San Antonio, TX
- Updated Blanket Insert;
- Slater Mill National Weaving & Spinning Week Celebration
- Presentation on Rhody Warm to the Northern RI Conservation District Annual
- Presentation to the 2007 New England Association of RC&D Areas Fall Conference
- Rhody Warm display at SRICD “Art in the Natural World” event to be held at the South County Museum



Rhody Warm blanket yarns and sample

2007 Forestry & Wood Expo

The 2nd ANNUAL Forestry & Wood Expo was held on Sunday, October 14, 2007. The Forestry & Wood EXPO is an educational and business-to-business event with a goal of promoting the use of locally-grown forest products in the building and manufacturing industries, along with the promotion of small enterprises that utilize local forest products. This year's event was held in conjunction with the [RI Office of Energy Resources Energy Expo](#). Both events will focus on the theme of Energy Efficiency Products, Alternative Energy Products, and Forest & Wood Products. The event ran from 10:00 AM to 5:00 PM and was open to the general public. The Expo offered educational sessions on forest stewardship and forest-business topics, as well as vendors, exhibitors, and demonstrations on a variety of subjects. Approximately 1,100 people attended the event.

In conjunction with this event RIFCO and several sponsors arranged for the Northern Forest *Way of the Woods* traveling exhibit to participate in the expo.

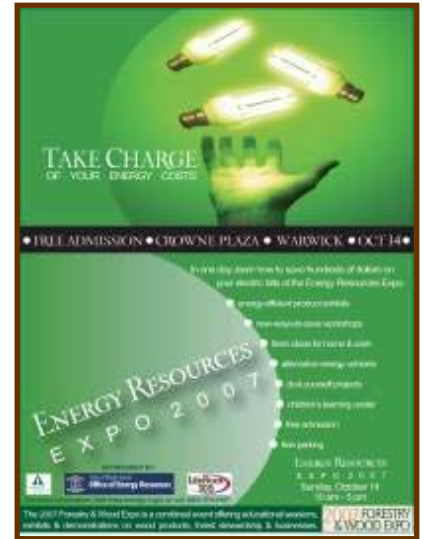
Ways of the Woods: People and the Land in the Northern Forest is a mobile museum about the changing relationships among people and the land. This traveling exhibition combines interactive displays with live performance and demonstration to showcase the history, culture and heritage of the Northern Forest. Housed in a 53-foot tractor-trailer that is decorated with images of the Northern Forest, the exhibit visits communities, schools, fairs, festivals and local events across the Northern Forest and beyond.

The *Way of the Woods* exhibit was open to the public on Saturday, October 13 in conjunction with the Scituate Farmers market in North Scituate and all day at the expo on Sunday.

This event was organized by the RI Forest Conservators Organization, Inc., the RI Office of Energy Resources, RIDEM - Division of Forest Environment, The University of Rhode Island, the RI Rural Development Council, the RI Resource Conservation & Development Area, the RI Tree Farm Committee, Scituate Conservation Commission, Foster Conservation Commission, Scituate Lions Club, and the Society of American Foresters - RI Chapter.

NEARC&D Fall Conference

The 2007 NEARC&D Fall Conference was held at the Village Inn in Narragansett, RI from October 18-20, 2007. Approximately 105 people attended the two day event that featured workshops, exhibitors, and field workshops and tours.



Ways of the Woods mobile museum



Christmas tree farm

Helping People Help the Land