

Rhode Island State Office

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Senator Sheldon Whitehouse and his staff speak with Emma Acres owner Scooter LaPrise on the field tour in Exeter, RI..

**Rhode Island Association of Conservation Districts (RIACD) Field Tour for
Senator Whitehouse and Staff
Tuesday, April 25, 2011**

Stop 1: Dick Went property, Foster, RI.

Attendees: Dick Went (RIACD), Kate Konschnik & Anna-Marie Laura (Senator’s Washington Staff), Chris Modisette (NRCS)

Tour: A walk of Dick’s 48-acre woodland property where he is working with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) to improve forest health and upland wildlife habitat through a variety of conservation practices to include: forest stand improvement, upland wildlife habitat management, forest trails & landings, and conservation stewardship practices which include creation of snags, den trees, and coarse woody debris on the woodland floor. Dick is also a participant and leader of the RI Coverts Project (Resource Conservation & Development RC&D Project) that promotes the education of woodland owners on the importance of creating

early successional habitat for the benefit of such species as woodcock, ruffed grouse, New England cottontail, and a variety of birds that use scrub-shrub (young forest) habitat.



Dick Went with Kate Konschnik

Dick provided a general discussion of NRCS programs (Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program-WHIP, Environmental Quality Incentives Program-EQIP) and the value of partnerships with the Conservation Districts and Resource Conservation & Development Councils to assist with program outreach and implementation.

Stop 2: Ballyduff Farm, Glocester, RI

Attendees: Dick Went (RIACD); George Carvahlo, State Director, Kate Konschnik & Anna-Marie Laura (Senator's Washington Staff); Chris Modisette (NRCS); Robin Meek, Owner Ballyduff Farm; Polly Hopkins, President RI Sheep Cooperative

Tour: A tour of a working sheep farm that is part of the Rhody Warm Project (RC&D project). Robin and Polly were some of the original group that approached NRCS and RC&D about helping with the issue of waste wool. Ultimately, this resulted in the Rhody Warm blanket project which was awarded a Best of RI Award in 2007. Robin is also an NRCS client for her farm and woodlands.



From left to right: Robin Meek, George Carvahlo, Polly Hopkins, Kate Konschnik, and Anne Marie Laura pose for a photograph at Ballyduff Farm in Glocester, RI

Stop 3: Rain Garden, North Scituate, Glocester, RI

Attendees: Dick Went (RIACD); George Carvahlo, State Director, Kate Konschnik & Anna-Marie Laura (Senator's Washington Staff); Chris Modisette (NRCS); Gina Demarco (District Manager, NRICD)

Tour: A tour of a rain garden established to demonstrate storm water control as part of the North Scituate Storm Water Project. The project focused on working with local businesses in the North Scituate Village to demonstrate methods that local businesses and homeowners could use to control storm water in the Scituate Reservoir watershed. Demonstration sites include: a rain garden, the use of rain barrels, a pet waste station, and the repair of a site that discharges storm water to the Regulating Reservoir.



NRICD District Manager Gina Demarco (right) discusses a rain garden with George Carvahlo (2nd from right), Kate K Konschnik (3rd from right), and Anna-Marie Laura (far left).

Stop 4: Scituate High School Tree Farm, North Scituate, Gloucester, RI

Attendees: Dick Went (RIACD); George Carvahlo, Kate Konschnik & Anna-Marie Laura (Senator's Washington Staff); Chris Modisette (NRCS); Gina Demarco (District Manager, NRICD); Shannon Donovan (2010 Scituate High School & RI Teacher of the Year); and Students from Scituate High School

Tour: Working with the Scituate High School Environmental Science class, the NRICD, in partnership with RI RC&D, RIDEM, and Providence Water embarked on a semester long project to develop a forest stewardship plan in order to maintain the school's status as a certified tree farm. They began in the classroom learning about relevant topics such as tree identification, tools used in the field, wildlife, silviculture, issues with invasive species, and the importance of the forest's natural ability to provide clean water in the community. Soon the students were out in the field using the tools, delineating and inventorying forest stands, determining property and wetland boundaries, identifying cultural interests and invasive plant species, and planting a tree donated by RIDEM in celebration of Arbor Day. As one of their first projects, students working with local Boy Scouts developed a trail system with interpretive signs through the tree farm. On May 26, 2010, the class hosted a community unveiling of this plan with tours on the property, a public signing of the document by the Town Council President and high school principal and a dedication of their new tree farm sign.



Scituate High School Environmental Education class students at the tree farm dedication ceremony, May 2010



Shannon Donovan (left) with Kate Konschnik & Anna-Marie Laura (Senator Whitehouse's Washington Staff)

Stop 5: Emma Acres, Exeter, RI

Attendees: Dick Went (RIACD); Senator Whitehouse, George Carvahlo, Kate Konschnik & Anna-Marie Laura (Senator's Washington Staff); Kevin Farmer, John Richard, Stew Taffe (NRCS)

Tour: Scooter and Cynthia LaPrise, owners of Emma Acres, have worked with NRCS since 2005 to implement several conservation improvements on the dairy farm which received the 2010 Green Pastures Award as Rhode Island's 2010 Dairy Farm of the Year. The farm started

off as part of their children's 4-H project and flourished into a successful dairy farm which is a member of the RI Dairy Cooperative which sells its milk under the Rhody Fresh Milk label. Scooter informed Senator Whitehouse of the value of working with conservation groups including NRCS to provide financial and technical assistance to the local farming community. He also shed light on the positive economic impact that small farms have on the local community where such farms as Emma Acres play a pivotal role in supporting the 'Buy Local' movement at farmer's markets, retailers, and local institutions throughout Rhode Island.



Emma Acres owner Scooter LaPrise (far right) explains the importance of small farms such as Emma Acres to the local economy to Senator Whitehouse (far left) and Kevin Farmer (center) in the milking parlor.