Piscataquis County Soil & Water Conservation District 2021 Education Newsletter

Release Date: 4/15/2021



Cover Photo:
Ladies of "Tea
& Trees"
enjoying the
Law Farm!
Read more
about this
event and our
new
partnership
with Outdoor
Women on
page 7.

In This Issue:

- **Streaking Ground on an Outdoor Classroom at the Law Farm**
- ♦ PCSWCD Receives 2021 Award of Recognition from the Maine Chapter of the Wildlife Society
- ♦ PCSWCD Receives Funding to Help Support Conservation Education with Schools
- ♦ Plant & Grow Our Community Event with Thompson Free Library
- ♦ UMaine Forestry Capstone Students Update Law Farm Forest Management Plan
- ♦ FOResT—New Online Registration Module for the Maine Forest Service
- ♦ "It's Our Nature" Series with PCSWCD & Outdoor Women
- ♦ Landowner 101 Course Offered by MFS
- ♦ Conservation Stewardship Program Available for Landowners
- ♦ A Message from our Educational Coordinator
- ♦ PCSWCD Fundraisers: Tree & Plant Sale & Trout Sale—Deadlines Coming Up!

Look inside for educator resources, programs to get involved in, volunteer opportunities and more!

BREAKING GROUND ON AN OUTDOOR CLASSROOM AT THE LAW FARM

Piscataquis County Soil and Water Conservation District (PCSWCD) will be breaking ground in May on the construction of an outdoor education classroom at the Law Farm! The construction of this outdoor classroom has been part of the Law Farm long-range plan and a big goal for the continued development of the property. This project came together in connection with a settlement of an enforcement action taken by the Maine Department of Environmental Protection for violations of *Maine's Protection and Improvement of Waters law*. We are grateful for the opportunity to apply these funds to something positive for our community and natural resources.

The outdoor classroom will be used primarily for educational purposes as it will provide shelter and infrastructure for use at PCSWCD events and programs. Additionally, the classroom will have storage for land maintenance tools. In 2020/21 we have seen a marked increase in visitors to the property and we are confident these visitors will consider the classroom a welcomed addition to the trailhead! This space will be a gathering location for many events and workshops that promote the conservation of natural resources that we depend on and further meet our mission for our organization.

PCSWCD will be working with Corey Hill, director of the Vocational Program at Mountain View Correctional Facility, and his students to build the classroom. We are grateful for this partnership and Corey's expertise.

Once the classroom is finished, the next step will be to have access to water with a well and hand pump. By providing drinking water on site, we will be able to have handwashing stations available to visitors, irrigation for ongoing gardening, tree planting and working animals. Water accessibility will also allow us to increase and diversify our programming options, including provide programming with overnight options! Think, camping at the Law Farm!

We look forward to hosting conservation education programs in our new outdoor classroom, continuing to connect with Piscataquis community members (and beyond!) and offering opportunities to learn about a community forest, permaculture, agriculture, agroforestry and wildlife. Keep your eyes out for progress on this project and the announcement of it being finished!



PCSWCD RECEIVES MAINE CHAPTER OF WILDLIFE SOCIETY'S 2021 AWARD OF RECOGNITION

On March 23rd, Piscataguis County Soil and Water Conservation District (PCSWCD) joined The Maine Chapter's Wildlife Society's annual meeting on Zoom, where they accepted the 2021 Award of Recognition. The Wildlife Society is a strong and effective voice in representing wildlife conservation and management, and ensuring sustainable wildlife populations in healthy ecosystems. Their mission is to inspire, empower, and enable wildlife professionals to sustain wildlife populations and habitats through science-based management and conservation. The Maine Chapter of The Wildlife Society's Award of Recognition acknowledges the efforts of individuals, groups, organizations, businesses, or industries in Maine that have made noteworthy contributions to wildlife management or conservation, or to the education of the public about wildlife. This award is presented to nonprofessionals, or professionals serving in a volunteer role, who contribute their time and talents to enhance or educate about Maine's natural resources. Chapter member and Maine Wildlife Biologist Sarah Spencer nominated PCSWCD and presented the award. Our District has had the pleasure of working with Sarah for a number of years through our Families in the Outdoors Program. She has worked alongside Master Maine Guide Alexandra Conover Bennett to lead PCSWCD program participants through the Law Farm trails, tracking and identifying wildlife signs and learning about wood ducks.

During the presentation, Sarah Spencer shared details of PCSWCD accomplishments, including our successful programming and the continued conservation work being done at our two public lands, the Law Farm and the Demonstration Forest. Sarah said "in appreciation of this organization's commitment to increasing community appreciation and sound management of natural resources, and fostering of important conversations about those resources that are critical to wildlife in Piscataquis County and beyond, they are being recognized with this award."

We are humbled by this award and honor. We take pride in our educational offerings and our role in promoting wildlife conservation in Maine. Additionally, we value our partnerships with Maine Inland Fisheries & Wildlife, the Maine Chapter of the Wildlife Society and specifically, Sarah Spencer. Together, we are able to offer stellar programming to our community members! Thank you to the Maine Chapter of the Wildlife Society for recognizing our hard work and dedication with this award!



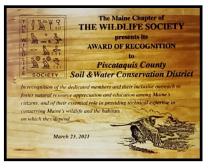


Photo taken at the 2020 PCSWCD's Families in the Outdoors: Snowshoe Adventure! Left to Right: Lynn Lubas PCSWCD (retired) Maine Guide Alexandra Conover Bennett, Sarah Spencer ME IF&W, Kacey Weber PCSWCD.



CONSERVATION EDUCATION WITH LOCAL SCHOOLS THROUGH HELPING HANDS WITH HEART GRANT

Part of our mission is to reach school-aged children and provide hands-on conservation education. COVID-19 prevented us from entering the schools to work in classrooms, but it didn't stop us from working with and reaching students! When we can't learn indoors, we take it outside, where it has been more engaging, interesting and fun!

In 2020, our Educational Coordinator, Kacey Weber, worked with SeDoMoCha preK students and introduced topics such as soil health, Maine wildlife and we even enjoyed some snowshoeing together! PCSWCD reached out to secure funding to continue and expand this work as it was proving to be beneficial for the children. We were fortunate to receive funding from the Maine Highlands Investment Partnership. Maine Highlands Investment Partnership is a collaboration between Helping Hands with Heart and the Piscataquis County Economic Development Council (PCEDC), two organizations that have been working in our communities for more than 20 years. The partnership actively involves a cadre of public and private organizations and entities, municipalities, faith-based groups, healthcare and educational services, and businesses in supporting the PCEDC's efforts to create long-term, sustainable human capital development. Through the Maine Investment Partnership, Helping Hands with Heart works to support community projects aimed at improving the quality of life for residents in Piscataquis, especially our area's youth.

Through this grant and the work being done with the Boston FED grant, PCSWCD will expand our work with school-aged children. The end of April through mid-June will be a busy time for this project as Kacey will be working with SeDoMoCha, Seeds LLC, Milo Schools and Thompson Free Library (to start!) to plant sunflowers for the Law Farm Community Pollinator Garden and other community gardens. This work provides an opportunity for students to get their hands dirty, learn about soil health, the importance of providing food and habitat for native pollinators and wildlife AND enjoy the outdoors. The "Plant & Grow Our Community" event (flyer and details on the next page) at Thompson Free Library is open to the public and provides a chance for local youth to participate in these community projects. Check out the flyer for registration information and join us on May 5th! Parents—keep an eye out for sunflower seedlings coming home with your kids. Plant them at home and make plans to visit your child's seedling at the Law Farm Community Pollinator Garden!



Plant Something With a Child

What could be easier, more inexpensive and yet more impactful then planting something with a child? Teach them hands-on about the life and power our soil provides. Pick up a packet of seeds and a bag of soil and get your hands dirty together. Let them discover for themselves that soil provides us with the food and fiber to sustain us and the beauty that fulfills us.

Looking for seeds? Check out the **Seed**Library at Thompson Free Library!

PLANT & GROW OUR COMMUNITY!

with Thompson Free Library & Piscataquis County Soil and Water Conservation District

PLANT SUNFLOWERS FOR TWO COMMUNITY
GARDENS & HOME!
SEEDS, SOIL & FUN FACTS PROVIDED!
RECYCLED CONTAINERS NEEDED!

Wednesday May 5th at 1PM (RAIN DATE May 6th 3:30PM)

Location: Thompson Free Library Lawn

RSVP Required: 207-564-3350,

mfagan534@gmail.com



UMAINE CAPSTONE STUDENTS UPDATE LAW FARM FOREST MANAGEMENT PLAN

It was that time again—time to update our forest management plan for the Law Farm. We are always looking for opportunities to learn something, provide education and create partnerships. When a need aligns with our mission-driven passion for education, that makes for happy staff and Board members of the PCSWCD! In Fall 2020, PCSWCD began a partnership with UMaine School of Forest Resources to have senior capstone forestry students design an update for the Law Farm forest management plan. District staff met with the team of 4 students—Zach, Jenna, Caleb and Jack—and toured the property, sharing information about the history of the land, current projects and future goals for the Law Farm. The students worked over the winter months, collecting data, inventories and research to incorporate into the updated plan.

On March 31st, District staff, consulting forester Kirby Ellis, professor Jessica Leahy and District Board members toured the Law Farm with the team of students and their peers. As we toured, the students shared their plan recommendations, which were met with questions, suggestions and other considerations from the audience. The entire process was so interesting to be a part of and the dedication and work the students put into the plan shined through.

Our consulting forester will review and sign off on the plan in April and we will have an updated, 10 -year management plan for the property. Additionally, the students completed the work needed for the District to apply and qualify for a Tree Farm status. We are proud to announce that the Law Farm is officially a Maine Tree Farm and we couldn't have accomplished this without the help and expertise of the our UMaine student capstone team!







ATTENTION LANDOWNERS:

Do you own forested woodland? Do you have an upcoming harvest planned or plan to harvest your land in the future? If you do, you will **need to register with the Maine Forest Service and their brand new online registration module FOResT**— https://www.maine.gov/dacf/mfs/rules regs/forest home.html This process is no longer paper-based! All landowners should consider registering with FOResT. If you have questions, contact District forester, Jim Ferrante, 207-441-4308, jim.ferrante@maine.gov—he is happy to help!



"It's My Nature" Series Offered by OFFERED B

V OW OUTDOOR

PCSWCD celebrated the last day of women's history month with a special program called Tea & Trees and presenters Dr. Jessica Leahy from UMaine School of Forest Resources and Terri Coolong from Maine Forest Service. Modeled after Women Owning Woods Network, this program was an offering for women to talk to professionals about forestry and woodlot management. We were thrilled with the turn out and the rich discussion that took place! The event was enjoyed by twelve participants who were interested in managing their own woodlots or to learn more about forestry management in Maine. PCSWCD partnered with Outdoor Women (OW), an organization based out of Sangerville, ME, that connects women who share a common interest in a diverse range of outdoor activities and provide a base of support and encouragement. They focus on empowering women and raise awareness by discovering, documenting and celebrating women's lives and achievements made in the outdoors. Tea & Trees was the second event of the collaborative series called, "It's My Nature Series," that PCSWCD and OW have teamed up to offer this year. The women that attended reported that the event was "overall very helpful, a fun and informative conversation!" It was also shared by participants that it was "important for them to learn who is involved in decision-making at the state level, as well as getting to know a group of women landowners." The participants were interested to know how many programs and available resources there were regarding forestry including our new District Forester Jim Ferrante and PCSWCD's Stream Restoration Project Manager Emily Dickison, who are both essential for landowners and provide a free consultation service to for Piscataguis landowners. Read on page 6 about how Jim can help you register your forested land for current and future harvests. PCSWCD looks forward to future events with Outdoor Women, so stay tuned!

LANDOWNER 101 COURSE OFFERED BY MFS

Information taken from the Maine Forest Service, <u>maine.gov/dacf</u>

If you own a woodlot and are interested in learning about opportunities to actively manage your property for your own personal objectives, this is a course you should attend. Woodlot owners in Maine manage their woodlots for a number of different reasons, among them aesthetics, firewood, recreation, wildlife, maintaining health and value, and forest products. Maine Forest Service personnel will facilitate the course and organize presentations from a variety of experienced professionals with different backgrounds.

Topics we will be covering in these classes will include: defining your goals as a landowner; landowner programs; tree identification; promoting wildlife in your woods; timber trespass and wildfire safety; silviculture; non-timber forest products; what to plant in light of climate change; logging damage; common insects and diseases of trees. The information and contacts you gain from this course will help you make decisions on how to sustainably manage your woodlot for years to come.

maine Agriculture Conservation & Forestry

The class will meet on Monday evenings from May 3—June 7, 2021 from 6:00 to 8:30 pm online. This course is sponsored by the <u>Maine Forest Service</u>. To register for this course, please visit this link: <u>Lanowner 101 Course Registration</u>.

CONSERVATION STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM: COST SHARE PROGRAM FOR LANDOWNERS

PCSWCD will be expanding on our partnership and work with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and actively promoting conservation practices available to landowners in Piscataquis County. NRCS offers cost share programs to landowners who need to address resource concerns on their properties. They work with forested land owners, agricultural producers and more. If you are a landowner, you are encouraged to connect with our local NRCS office to explore conservation programs available to you!

PCSWCD will provide outreach for NRCS through a grant from the National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD), which was granted to all Maine Conservation Districts to carryout this outreach. To kick-off this work, PCSWCD is promoting a NRCS program called the Conservation Stewardship Program, or CSP for short. Language taken directly from NRCS states that "the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) helps landowners build on existing conservation efforts while strengthening your operation. Whether you are looking to improve grazing conditions, increase crop yields, or develop wildlife habitat, we can custom design a CSP plan to help you meet those goals. We can help you schedule timely planting of cover crops, develop a grazing plan that will improve your forage base, implement no-till to reduce erosion or manage forested areas in a way that benefits wildlife habitat."

The CSP program has a wide-range of conservation practices that producers can benefit from! In Piscataquis County, CSP provides great potential for producers who have been actively managing their forested land, maple syrup producers and producers transitioning to organic practices. CSP is a 5-year program designed to reimburse landowners for continued conservation work AND enhancements to their land.

Applications for CSP 2021 are due by April 23rd, 2021!

After that date, we will be accepting applications for the 2022 fiscal year. For an application or more information, please call 207-564-2321 ext. 3 or email seth.jones@usda.gov or katherine.weber@piscataquisswcd.org.

A MESSAGE FROM OUR EDUCATIONAL COORDINATOR

Hello! I am looking forward to a new start after a tough year for all of us. It has been refreshing and wonderful to see so many faces at our Spring events—we see you, masks and all! We also wanted to share that we appreciate your understanding and compliance with the CDC guidelines in place. Please see our full list of 2021 events and programs on page 10 and join us. We are filling fast for many of our programs!



I want to remind you all that in addition to planning events, programs and work with schools, I also am the lead on the LakeSmart program. This program is designed for waterfront property owners and help them address erosion concerns on their properties. Our lakes and ponds are now (mostly) ice-free and "LakeSmart" season is upon us! LakeSmart is FREE, VOLUNTARY and an awesome resource for waterfront property owners. Reach out anytime—

Katherine.weber@piscataquisswcd.org

8

Annual Fundraisers Support the PCSWCD! Stock Your Ponds with Trout & Freshen Up Your Gardens

Did you know that the Piscataquis County Soil and Water Conservation District holds two annual fundraisers—Our Tree & Plant Sale fundraiser and our Trout Sale fundraiser? These sales help to support the educational conservation work our District provides to Piscataquis County communities. If you are just learning about us and our work, please take a moment to view our website, www.piscataquisswed.org. It is a quick and easy way to see just how much we accomplish with our limited, yet dedicated staff and volunteer base. We are so proud of the work we do and are appreciative to you all for supporting and encouraging this work!

A great way to provide support to our District is to place an order for some plants, homesteading products and more in our Tree & Plant Sale! <u>Our order deadline is April 23rd</u>, so don't wait to place your order! We made ordering even easier this year, by creating an online store for our sale! Head on over to https://piscataquisswcd.org/PCSWCD/product-category/treeplantsale/ and browse all the awesome products we have available! All our plants, shrubs and trees are sourced from 4 local farms—Ripley Farm, Checkerberry Farm, North Branch Farm and Sunkhaze Blueberry Farms. Sourcing from these farms ensures we are offering a sustainable, locally-sourced product that is hearty to planting zones in Piscataquis County. Additionally, all plants with the exception of the lowbush blueberry sod is certified organic. We are also offering landscaping materials from Haley's Inc and products such as composting bins, rain barrels and Plantskydd!



In addition to the Tree & Plant Sale, we also are accepting orders for our annual Trout Sale! Do you own property and have a pond on your land? Did you know that you can stock that private pond with brook trout? All it takes is a <u>permit from Inland Fisheries and Wildlife</u> and you can place an order for brookies!

Many of our customers stock their ponds so they can enjoying casting a line right in their backyard. Others add them for wildlife benefits—food for native predators or bait control. Trout provide recreation and sporting opportunity, wildlife enhancement and even provide a healthy protein source! Most spring-fed ponds will support trout and provide an environment for them to grow and grow quickly. Any biology in the pond—bug hatches, bait fish, frog hatches—should mean you also have plenty of food for your trout.

Once you have received your stocking and transporting permit (same permit), you can place an order with us here: https://piscataquisswcd.org/PCSWCD/product-category/2021-trout-sale/. Orders are due to the PCSWCD by May 20th and pick-up for the trout is on May 24th at the PRYMCA at 12PM. You must have a permit to place an order, you must bring your permit with you to pick up and the person pick up the trout MUST be listed on the permit.

Please reach out to us at info@piscataquisswcd.org for more information on either sale!

LEARN WITH US, GET INVOLVED & STAY CONNECTED

Join us for some or all of these GREAT events, programs & workshops: FMI on all PCSWCD Events: www.piscataquisswcd.org



- Bird Walk with Bob Ducshesne, Law Farm, Sunday May 2nd 8am
 - ♦ Tree & Plant Sale! May 8th pick up at Law Farm 9-12PM
 - **♦ Trout Sale Pick Up, Wednesday, May 24th, PRYMCA 12PM**
- ♦ Thompson Free Library 101 Series Woodlot/Woodland Management June 10th 1:30pm



- ♦ Forestry for the Birds, Wicopy Woods, June 19th 9-12pm
- ♦ Foraging with Tom Seymour, Law Farm, June 26th 2 sessions 10-12am, 1-3pm
 - Demonstration Forest Volunteer Workday, July 17th 8-12pm RD July 18th



- Teen Wilderness Expedition, AMC's Medawisla Lodge, July 20th-22nd
 - Notational Grazing Workshop with Widdershins LLC, Law Farm, July 26th 9:30-12pm RD July 27th
- Volunteer and Educator of the Year award, Law Farm, August 6th 1-3pm
 - Families in the Outdoors: Camp Out!, Law Farm, August 13th-14th
 - Invasive Plants Workshop with Nancy Olmstead August 24th 3:30-5
- 5

Cider Pressing with East Sangerville Grange Sept. 26th 11-1PM

Technical Services

LakeSmart: This free program is available to waterfront property owners looking to protect water bodies from damaging soil erosion. Call or email Kacey at the PCSWCD FMI—Katherine.weber@piscataquisswcd.org.

Stream Restoration: PCSWCD has a Stream Restoration Project Manager, Emily Dickison, who can help landowners determine if stream crossings on their properties qualify for restoration cost share programs. Get in touch with Emily at emily.dickison@piscataquisswcd.org

Education & Outreach

Is your school, club or youth organization interested in learning more about natural resources? The PCSWCD has a fantastic hands-on presentations that we want to share with you! For more information or to learn with us in the outdoors contact Kacey at the PCSWCD—Katherine.weber@piscataquisswcd.org







PCSWCD VOLUNTEERING OPPORTUNITIES: Check Out the Events Below and Come Lend a Hand!

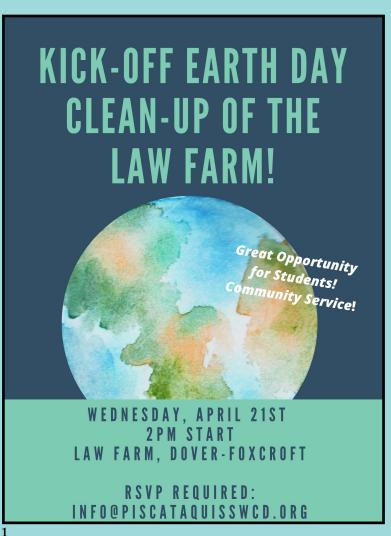
Our District owes a large part of our success and ability to maintain our public lands to our dedicated volunteers. The work we do in Piscataquis County is overseen by a volunteer Board of Supervisors and carried out by 2 full-time and 1 part-time staff and our lovely volunteers. Together, we provide a full-year of programming, aid to landowners, outreach, conservation work AND maintain two parcels of public land. How could we possibly do all that, on a limited budget to boot, without the help and dedication of folks willing to lend a hand, a chainsaw or even offer advice?

We need and appreciate our volunteers SO MUCH! We are always looking to grow our volunteer community. If you reach out to us, we will be able to clearly let you know what we need help with. With the two public lands, there are always trails to clear, gardens to weed, trees to cut up...the list is endless and the need is always there!

Do you have a high schooler needing community service hours? Have them connect with us and we can offer some great opportunities for volunteer work and networking.

Check out our scheduled volunteer workdays below and please make plans to join us and lend a hand. If you are able to join us, please let Sarah know by sending an email to sarah.robinson@piscataquisswcd.org! Thank you!





RESOURCES, FOR YOU!

Below are suggestions from our in-office lending library.

Looking for other types of resources?

We also have digital files, ready-made curriculum and tons of hand-outs to share!

Soil:

Conserving Soil From the Soil Up Soil and Water Conservation Activities for Scouts From the Surface Down



Teacher Lesson Plans and a Special Supplement of Forestry Lessons The Woods in Your Backyard

Forest Discovery Box - from the Irving Corporation Teachers Resource Guide with 16 overhead transparencies, 6 forestry videos, poster, regional map, forestry pamphlets, 4 specimen boxes with magnifiers, pollen sample, 6 seed cone species, 5 samples of cleaned seeds, ranging from 500 - 2000 seeds each, 4 samples tree cookies, 18 species of wood samples, 9 samples of wood products

Project Learning Tree: K - 6 Last Child in the Woods

Forestry Habitat Management Guidelines for Vernal Pool Wildlife

Agriculture:

Field Guide to On-Farm Composting

Grazing - Maine Agricultural Experiment Station

Animal Production Systems for Pasture-Based Livestock Production

New England Agricultural Statistics Maine Wild Blueberries Curriculum

Fisheries & Wildlife:

A Petkeeper's Guide to Reptiles & Amphibians

<u>Predators of the Spruce Budworm</u>

National Audubon Society Pocket Guide (NASPG) - Familiar Birds of North America

NASPG - Familiar Butterflies of North America

NASPG - Insects and Spiders

NASPG- Familiar Flowers of North America

NASPG - Familiar Mammals of North America

NASPG - Familiar Rocks and Minerals of North America

NASPG - Familiar Reptiles and Amphibians of North America

NASPG- Familiar Trees of North America

NASPG - Clouds and Storms

NASPG - Familiar Animal Tracks of North America

The Family Butterfly Book

Audubon Adventures: A Classroom Resource Manual

Watersheds:

A Drop Around the World

Mighty Mini Microbe's Tale: The Underground Adventures of Soil's Superheros

PCSWCD's Watersheds & You Program—Hands-on, available to schools and organizations!

A Website Worth Exploring:

AllTrails.com—https://www.alltrails.com/

Looking for a place to hike, picnic, explore or just enjoy the great outdoors? Check out AllTrails! Search for local trails and see maps and reviews on each trail. The Law Farm and the Demonstration Forest are listed here!









JOIN US FOR A PCSWCD EVENT, PROGRAM OR WORKSHOP!

www.piscataquisswcd.org/eventsprograms





Phone: (207) 564-2321 ext. 3

E-mail: <u>info@piscataquisswcd.org</u> Website: <u>www.piscataquisswcd.org</u>

