

Piscataquis County Soil and Water Conservation District 2021 Cooperator Newsletter

Release Date: November 4, 2021



A Meeting of the Minds
Work is underway to update the forest management plan at our Demonstration Forest in Williamsburg, Maine. This plan will incorporate management strategies for producing productive and profitable forests, recreation and exploring examples specific to women owning and managing woodlots. **FMI on land management plans see page 11.** *More information and updates to come in 2022!*

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Our mission is to be a leader in agriculture and forestry, by providing education and technical assistance to promote conservation of the natural resources upon which we depend.

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Email: info@piscataquisswcd.org
Web: www.piscataquisswcd.org

GET INVOLVED!

Please consider participating in a
Piscataquis County Soil Water
Conservation District Board
Meeting.

Learn more about
environmental concerns and
natural resource management
in Piscataquis County
and how you can provide volunteer help.

The meetings are published on our
Facebook page and are via Mi-
crosoft Teams Please call 564-2321
ext. 3 or
email info@piscataquisswcd.org
with any questions you might have.

***Sarah or Kacey will be happy to
speak with you!***

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FARM SERVICE AGENCY STAFF:

Scott Speck, Executive Director
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*The USDA and the Piscataquis County
Soil and Water Conservation District are
equal opportunity providers and employers.*



PCSWCD SUPERVISOR ELECTION

NOVEMBER 18TH, 2021



**Registered voters of Piscataquis
County may REQUEST A BALLOT:
207-564-2321 ext. 3
info@piscataquisswcd.org**

MESSAGE FROM OUR BOARD OF SUPERVISORS CHAIR, TOBY HALL

I am filled with excitement and have much to say about this past year, but little space to write about it all. I encourage everyone to catch up on all of the accomplishments, ideas and plans for the future of PCSWCD included in this newsletter.

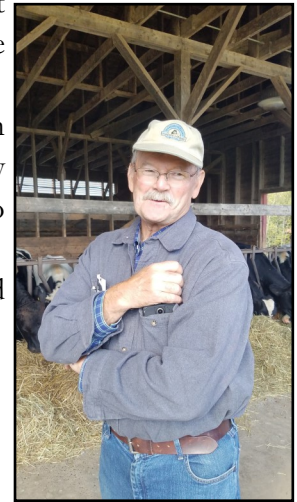
It is my hope that you will feel it is everyone's responsibility to recognize and respect the value of our water and soil along with our other natural resources and the importance of conserving them now and for future generations.

The PCSWCD mission focuses on education and we use our properties in Williamsburg and Dover-Foxcroft as places where you can go to learn, relax, enjoy and even volunteer. There are all season trails at both locations and many things to observe for free.

So, pack up your binoculars, field guides, camera, notebook, pencil, family and friends! Put on your walking shoes and check it all out.

Looking forward to seeing you on the trail,

Toby Hall 



LOCAL WORKING GROUP MEETING NOTICE

The 2022 Local Working Group (LWG) is scheduled for Thursday, December 2, 2021 starting at 10AM and ending at 12PM. This meeting will be held only as a Teams meeting in accordance with NRCS office in-person gatherings. A key component in NRCS program delivery, the LWG is made up of farmers, foresters, landowners, personnel from agencies involved in natural resource management, and the general public working in Piscataquis County. The purpose of this group is to provide guidance to NRCS concerning the implementation of conservation programs in Piscataquis County. The LWG advises NRCS on the environmental concerns in the area and determining local natural resource priorities. NRCS advises the LWG of the 2018 Farm Bill updates, the local application process, including ranking criteria and application periods, and eligible conservation practices. For more information and to register to attend this meeting, please contact the Piscataquis County SWCD at 207-564-2321 ext. 3 or by email at info@piscataquisswcd.org.

WHAT AND WHO IS A COOPERATOR?

Cooperators are individuals (or entities) who have an agreement with PCSWCD, NRCS or FSA. The individual or organization “cooperates” with the USDA offices by developing and managing their lands in ways that reflect land and water suitably with good management practices.

The PCSWCD, NRCS and FSA assist cooperators to meet their land use goals by providing them with technical guidance related to the land uses with which they participate. The USDA offices also may provide cost-share assistance for some land use activities.

In providing cooperators with technical assistance, the District acts independently or coordinates with the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service. District staff can help cooperators learn about NRCS programs available to them, such as the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) that provides financial assistance to land managers to help them install conservation practices addressing resource concerns.

THE AMERICAN CHESTNUT GERmplasm CONSERVATION ORCHARD IS ENTERING ITS 5TH YEAR!

Through a collaboration with the University of Maine's Cooperative Forestry Research unit, Professor Brian Roth, Foxcroft Academy's science teachers Robert Weber and Brian Krause and The American Chestnut Foundation's Maine chapter leader, Thomas Klak, 104 American Chestnut seedlings were planted at the Law Farm in July of 2017. This planting established a Chestnut Germplasm Conservation Orchard, which is now overseen by Piscataquis County Soil & Water Conservation District (PCSWCD) and can be visited at the Law Farm Nature Trails, located in Dover-Foxcroft.

In 2018, the Commons at Central Hall partnered with the PCSWCD and provided funding through a Quimby Family Foundation grant. These funds allowed for updates to the Law Farm, located on Lee Cemetery Rd in Dover-Foxcroft, and helped to purchase a new sign so visitors can view the orchard and learn about the Chestnut Germplasm Conservation Orchard.

Replacement trees were planted in 2018 and 2019 by Thomas Klak and his research assistant with the help from Executive Director Sarah Robinson and volunteers from the community including PCSWCD Board members. In 2019, Rob Weber from Foxcroft Academy and his students weeded and placed tree shelters on existing trees.

In 2020, the American Chestnut Foundation's Maine Chapter's intern took inventory of the surviving trees. In the spring of 2021 FA students continued their support and partnership with science teacher Rob Weber by weeding and fertilizing. Students were featured for the photo of the month in The American Chestnut Foundation's July eSprout newsletter (*left photo below*). In September 2021, Boy Scout Troop 61 had Eagle Scouts mulch and weed the 83 surviving trees (*right photo below*).

Continued assessment of the electric fence, mowing, weeding, fertilizing and occasional watering are all part of the future maintenance for the success of this orchard. If you would like to learn more about the effort of this Germplasm Orchard or volunteer to help maintain the orchard, please be in touch with Sarah Robinson, sarah.robinson@piscataquisswcd.org.



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SPOTLIGHT ON PCSWCD'S CONSERVATION PARTNERS: *Maine TREE Foundation*

Piscataquis County Soil and Water Conservation District (PCSWCD) chooses to highlight a conservation partner each year in the Cooperator Newsletter. This year we're excited to share that Maine TREE has been selected to be featured. Our partnership with Maine TREE has grown and strengthened in recent years.

Maine TREE plays an important role in forestry in Maine, offering a variety of programs, outreach and research to educate and advocate for the sustainable use of the forest and the ecological, economic, and social health of Maine's forest community. Considering Piscataquis County being the most forested county in the state, and our District owning and managing 3 woodlots that equal up to almost 400 acres, PCSWCD has easily been able to utilize Maine TREE's programs. The Maine TREE programs we have most recently participated in include the Maine Tree Farm Program, hosting the 2021 Teacher's Tour, the 2019 Austin Wilkins Stewardship award and Maine Tree Farm and Piscataquis County Stewardship Hub.



American Tree Farm System (ATFS) Maine Tree Farm Program

The American Tree Farm System (ATFS) was founded in 1941 and is now the oldest and largest forest conservation, certification, and advocacy program in the United States. Maine joined the ATFS in 1952 and today there are approximately 1,400 Tree Farms in the state, encompassing more than 400,000 acres. In 2020, PCSWCD submitted the ATFS Management Plan Addendum for our woodlot in Williamsburg known as the Demonstration Forest. This document was designed as a complement to the current management plan that was written in 2010. A new forest management plan is underway for the coming year and will have many exciting updates, but in the meantime, the Demonstration Forest remains part of the Maine Tree Farm Program. The Law Farm Nature Trails was recently put into the certified Maine Tree Farm family in March of 2021 with the help and expertise of the UMaine School of Forest Resource student capstone team and consulting forester Kirby Ellis.

The Mission of the Maine Tree Farm Committee is to help Maine's family woodland owners realize the full potential of their woods, while providing forest products and other woodland benefits in a recognizably sustainable manner. Benefits of the program are: recognition to display on your woodlot, certification to potentially improve access to forest products markets, professional forestry advice, educational resources and advocacy.

To qualify for Maine Tree Farm Certification, your woodland must be:

- At least 10 acres in size
- Managed under a qualified written management plan
- Managed for the sustainable production of timber and other forest products, while recognizing the importance of water, wildlife, and recreational opportunities

For more information on becoming part of the Maine Tree Farm Program visit MaineTreeFarm.org

Continued on pg. 7...

CONSERVATION STEWARDSHIP COST SHARE PROGRAM

Written by District Conservationist Seth Jones

Leadership and management change all the time. When that happens, the result is often that there are changes in vision, scope, priorities and often opportunities. The Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) is not alone in that regard, and the last couple of years have shown that to be the case in Maine and in the Dover NRCS Field Office.

The Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) has been a program that has been available for producers in some form since the 2002 Farm Bill. The structure of the program has been revamped or rebuilt several times in the last couple of decades and several Farm Bills, but the *overall premise remains: Reward landowners and managers for providing good stewardship of our natural resources.*

Previous versions of the program had very limited applicability in Maine overall. There were criteria that made it difficult for our producers to meet eligibility requirements and there was limited funding available to implement the program here. The consequence is it has never been a high priority for Maine NRCS even though nationally it has been the largest NRCS program. I started working in the Dover field office in March 2020, and my coworker and I started discussing making CSP a higher priority for NRCS in Piscataquis. During 2021 NRCS Maine top leadership completely changed and with that change came a priority change for the entire state; Make CSP a priority in Maine.

The Conservation Stewardship Program is designed to provide financial assistance to landowners and managers who have demonstrated a strong commitment to protecting and preserving natural resources through conservation projects to further enhance and maintain the conservation work that has been done.

The program offers a three-prong approach to for committing financial assistance:

- 1) Provide a payment per acre for every acre enrolled in the program
- 2) Provide a payment for eligible natural resources already addressed by the participant
- 3) Provide a payment for implementing new or enhancing existing conservation practices

If the property meets the eligibility requirements and a contract is offered, the contract will be for 5 years, and the minimum yearly payment regardless of the calculated payment based on 1,2,3 above is 1500 dollars per year.

With any contract with NRCS there are details and standards and specifications that must be followed, eligibility requirements that need documentation for the property and the landowner. Some landowners have been involved with NRCS for many years and have the participant and some property eligibility completed already, some folks are just thinking about working with us for the first time. Anybody is encouraged to contact us and ask for help with protecting our natural resources.

The CSP is not the only program offered through NRCS, but it's a program that is available and is one more tool for us to utilize to help landowners maximize their protection and enhancement of our natural world.

NRCS staff are evaluating applicability and land eligibility for potential 2022 applications currently. If you have questions about your potential enrollment in CSP or FMI please contact Carl Bickford at 207-468-4607 or carl.bickford@usda.gov.



“GET BY WITH A LITTLE HELP FROM MY FRIENDS”

In August, PCSWCD hosted our very first camping trip at the Law Farm. In true District style, we designed this experience to have educational components, showcase the Law Farm in all its glory and connect families in the outdoors. The camp out was part of our popular *Families in the Outdoors* series and a big program undertaking.

After designing the program, PCSWCD reached out to University of Maine Bound and together, we gathered all the supplies needed for a family to enjoy an overnight tent camping trip. We wanted to make sure there were no barriers for families to participate, so everything from tents to food was included in the affordable registration cost. We had healthy, hearty meals planned, activities, adventures and all the supplies needed to participate.

It was understood that creating this “all-inclusive” event and the positive experience for families was an expensive, but extremely worthwhile endeavor, so we reached out to a number of area businesses for donations and sponsorship dollars to help meet our goals. We were overwhelmed with the response! Helping Hands with Heart and Dover-Foxcroft Kiwanis provided sponsorship dollars. Thompson Free Library helped spread the word as our co-sponsor. Additionally, area grocery stores Shaw’s, Will’s Shop n’ Save, Tradewinds Markets and Indian Hill Trading post provided much of the food for participants. Dover True Value provided necessary supplies. We received local and fresh vegetable donations from Marr Pond Farm, Shaw Road Farm, Helios Horsepower Farm and Living the Dream Farm. If that wasn’t enough, Maple Lane Farms LLC and Emery’s Meat Market in Brewer donated meat for all our meals. Our trusty volunteers dedicated countless hours to get everything set up.

Pulling together the supplies, food and programming for this Family outdoor experience was humbling. The program was a huge success and we owe it in large part to our generous sponsors and donors. Thank you all for your contributions to help us be able to offer this program to the Piscataquis County Community!



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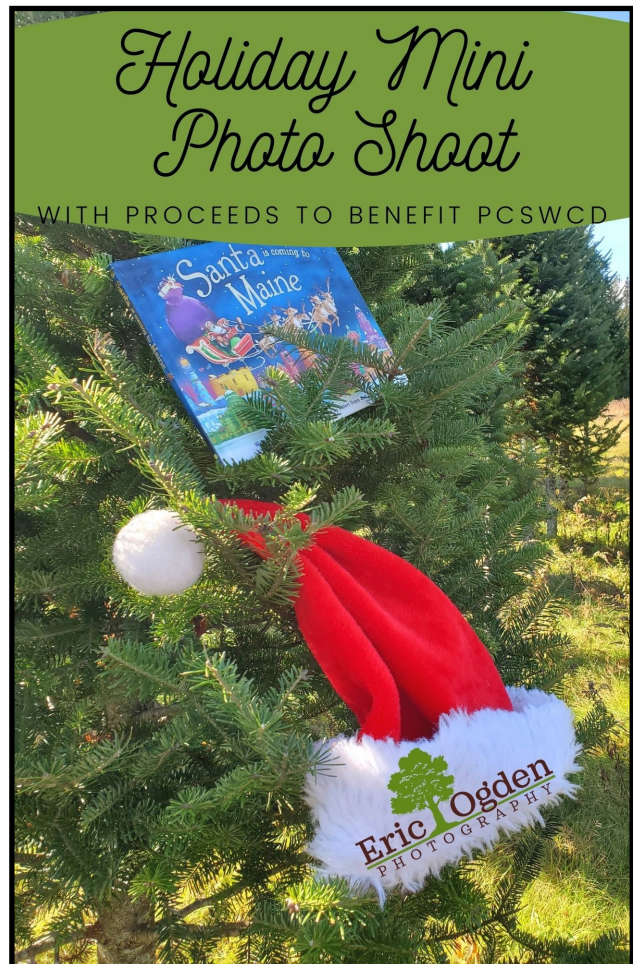
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LEGACY PLANNING: RESOURCES, SERVICES AND ORGANIZATIONS THAT CAN HELP

In recent years, we have seen a demand for information on succession planning. Estate planning, succession planning, legacy planning...it's all the same basic idea and starts with the question, "what do I do with my land once I am done caring for/maintaining/working it?" Starting in 2014, the Piscataquis County Soil and Water Conservation District (PCSWCD) has offered the workshops *Farm and Estate Succession Planning*, *Trees in Transition: Planning a Future for Your Woodlands* and *Legacy Planning: Taking the First Step*. All of these workshops offered a deep dive into specific situations, such as farmers or woodlot owners planning for futures for their land, the many options they have for what the future looks like and introductions to the organizations that work with people like them to construct these future plans. PCSWCD has compiled a list of contacts and resources for folks needing to take the first step, make decisions and put together plans, so that their legacy will continue for generations to come.

Before or perhaps in conjunction with contacting some of the organizations below, a great first step in planning for the future of your land, estate, farm, etc. is to sit down and talk with the people who you would like to have involved in its future. Perhaps these people are your children, family members, neighbors or friends. Gather them together, discuss your goals and visions and gauge how they could potentially fit into that plan. Remember, distribution of property and land does not have to be equal, succession planning is about putting plans together that make sense, meet your goals and are feasibly carried out by the organization or person(s) that will take over. These initial conversations can be challenging for some, so [Maine Woodland Owners](#) has incorporated guides for having these conversations - questions to ask, planning documents, etc. in their *Creating a Legacy* resource. Additionally, UMaine Cooperative Extension offers the [Maine Agriculture Mediation Program](#), providing mediation services that folks can utilize during transition planning.

There are infinite ways a succession plan can look - land, farms, woodlots, etc. can be transferred directly to children for them to do what they want with them, they can be transferred with conditions, put into easements with very specific restrictions, divided and sold...we could go on and on. The organizations below can help you sort out and finalize a plan that meets your needs and goals, continuing your legacy!

Maine Woodland Owners - <https://www.mainewoodlandowners.org/legacy-planning> MWO has put together a thorough planning guide for folks looking for transition planning for their woodlot. Resources include worksheets, overview of options, transition stories and more.

Forest Society of Maine - <https://www.fsmaine.org/> FSM works to conserve Maine forested land and can offer information and guidance on conservation easements and land conservation.

Land for Good - <https://landforgood.org/resources/toolbox/toolbox-farm-families/> LFG offers a great toolbox for farmers looking to transition their farm. They have an entire page of resources and information and a great guide for drafting a plan.

Maine Association of Mediators - <https://mainemediators.org/> This is a place for folks looking for professionals to help draft transition plans. Several mediators on the Board specialize in farm and land transfer and succession planning.

Maine Farmland Trust - <https://www.maineFarmlandtrust.org/> MFT can help farmers keep their farm a farm. They run the Forever Farm program, among several other excellent programs.

University of Maine Cooperative Extension - <https://extension.umaine.edu/> Local extension offices provide a wealth of resources and information. Specific to succession planning, they can help connect folks with [mediation services](#), record keeping information and more.

In addition to these resources above, your local District Forester, land trusts, Conservation Districts, the state and neighbors who have been through the process can also provide information and guidance as you plan the future of your land. Have those initial conversations, read through the guiding documents produced by the organizations above and reach out to them to explore the options that meet your goals.

LAND MANAGEMENT PLANS AND TREE GROWTH TAX LAW

It can be challenging to sort through plan options required for qualifying for your land to be in Tree Growth. First things first, we encourage landowners to review this helpful PowerPoint from the Maine Forest Service, titled *Maine's Tree Growth Tax Law: the Basics*: https://www.maine.gov/dacf/mfs/policy_management/tgtl/tgtl_basics_presentation.pdf This is a great overview of the tax law and a good start to choosing which qualifying plan is right for you.

There are three plans to consider for Tree Growth qualification: a Tree Growth Plan, a WRAP Plan or a Land Management Plan through the USDA NRCS.

Tree Growth Plan: This plan is the most basic of the plan options. The plan is written for landowners by licensed foresters and the intention of the plan is to qualify you for Tree Growth status.

WRAP Plan: The Woodland Resource Action Plan or WRAP Plan differs from the Tree Growth plan as it offers more education to the landowner as it addresses things like water quality, wildlife habitat, and provides stand descriptions and management prescriptions for the land. Licensed stewardship foresters are able to write WRAP plans for landowners. The Maine Forest Service provides 50% cost share on WRAP plans. This page from the Maine Forest Service website gives a great overview of WRAP plans, what's involved, who qualifies, lists of stewardship forester to work with, cost share funding, etc.: https://www.maine.gov/dacf/mfs/policy_management/wwi.html

Land Management Plans through NRCS: Landowners can apply for cost share funding for a comprehensive land management plan through NRCS. These plans are detailed and extremely comprehensive and create a guiding document for land management. These plans can help landowners understand what they have and how to improve it. These plans are written by Technical Service Providers. Additionally, you can apply for cost share funding for prescribed management practices written in the plan. If this is the plan that is right for you, contact your local NRCS office to apply. Piscataquis resident contact: Carl Bickford, 207-468-4607, carl.bickford@usda.gov.

The Maine Forest Service and specifically your local District Forester, are great resources for folks looking to understand and qualify for Tree Growth and who are trying to determine what plan is best for them and their land. Piscataquis County District Forester: Jim Ferrante, 207-441-4308, jim.ferrante@maine.gov. Again, for more information on NRCS cost share programs for land management plans, be sure to contact your local NRCS office.

FSA PROGRAMS FOR FARMERS & LANDOWNERS

The Farm Service Agency (FSA) is offering disaster relief payments through the Livestock Forage Disaster Program to:

- Eligible livestock owners and contract growers who have covered livestock and
 - Who are also producers of grazed forage crop acreage (native and improved pasture land with permanent vegetative cover)
 - ◆ Or certain crops planted specifically for grazing) that have suffered a loss of grazed forage due to a qualifying drought during the normal grazing period for the county.
- All areas within Piscataquis County qualify for this program. Producers can learn more about these payments here: https://www.fsa.usda.gov/Assets/USDA-FSA-Public/usdafiles/FactSheets/livestock_forage_program_lfp-fact_sheet.pdf

You can reach out to the Farm Service Agency at 207-474-8323 for more information about the Livestock Forage Disaster Program.



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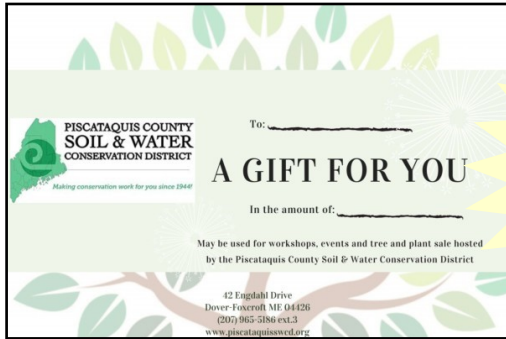
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Piscataquis Chamber of Commerce

Why BECOME A CHAMBER MEMBER?

Chamber Benefits

- 1. Promotion for your business:** Membership to our Chamber means that your business will be promoted within our community, throughout the county, region, state, and even internationally. Each member has a different need - it's our job to implement what types of promotion would bring in the most return for you.
- 2. Networking:** As a business owner, making connections and building relationships is imperative! As a chamber member, you will have wonderful opportunities to 'rub elbows' with the other business leaders in the county you wouldn't otherwise meet. These essential conversations are key to your growth as a business owner. Through them, you'll learn what's working and what's not; you'll build a more successful business, a stronger community and thriving economy for our region!
- 3. Real, tailored support:** Do you need a business plan? Need help creating a Facebook account? Perhaps you want to learn how to better market and promote your business; whatever the need, as a member you will have access to individualized support.
- 4. Credibility & Revenue:** The Chamber of Commerce receives multiple calls; daily, inquiring about our area. "What are the best restaurants?" "Where are the best salons?" "Can you recommend a chiropractor in the area?" "We're new residents, we need an electrician..", and on and on. A referral from the Chamber goes a long way. We have seen visitors choose to shop at a business simply because it was a chamber business. Credibility equals revenue.
- 5. Advocacy:** We are committed to being the 'voice of business' in the greater Piscataquis area, seeking to influence legislation and regulation by local, state, and federal governments in a proactive manner, by keeping our members well informed of upcoming bills that could have a major impact on your future as a business owner, and showing you how to easily get involved with live-links to local reps, state, and federal leaders. We take this portion of our mission to serve you VERY seriously!

Take your business to the next level. Call today!

207-564-7533

MEET THE PISCATAQUIS COUNTY SOIL AND WATER STAFF AND BOARD MEMBERS:

OUR HARD-WORKING STAFF



From left to right: Sarah Robinson, Executive Director; Kacey Weber, Educational Coordinator; Emily Dickison, Stream Restoration Project Manager

OUR DEDICATED BOARD MEMBERS



From left to right, top row **Supervisors:** Toby Hall, Chairman, Janet Sawyer, Gordon Moore, Mike Pouch, Sue Mackey Andrews

From left to right bottom row **Associate Supervisors:** Sam Brown, Donna Coffin, Jensen Bissell, Jim Ferrante, Steve Tatko, Amber Hines, and Kylie Dow, Junior Representative.

WE WORK TOGETHER TO CARRY OUT OUR MISSION, PROVIDE EXCELLENT PROGRAMMING AND BE LEADERS IN OUR COMMUNITY FOR NATURAL RESOURCE CONSERVATION.

**Stay Tuned for 2022 Events,
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