

# EDUCATION



PISCATAQUIS COUNTY  
**SOIL & WATER**  
CONSERVATION DISTRICT

## Newsletter



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## Connect with us

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# RESILIENT FORESTS. HEALTHY SOIL. CLEAN WATER.

Our mission is to build resilient, sustainable farms and forests through education, technical services, demonstration and stewardship.

Our vision is an environmentally stronger Maine with healthy soils, clean waters, productive forests, and sustainable agriculture, supported by informed, conservation-minded residents who practice stewardship and ensure the responsible use of natural resources for future generations.



PISCATAQUIS COUNTY  
**SOIL & WATER**  
CONSERVATION DISTRICT

# Meet the DEDICATED STAFF

## and BOARD of SUPERVISORS



**Kacey Weber**  
Executive Director  
[katherine.weber@piscataquisswcd.org](mailto:katherine.weber@piscataquisswcd.org)

### Natural Resources Conservation Service Staff:

Carl Bickford, District Conservationist;

Alaina Kresovic, Soil Scientist;

Chris Mann, MLRA Soil Survey Leader, Ecologist

### Farm Service Agency Staff:

Scott Speck, Executive Director;

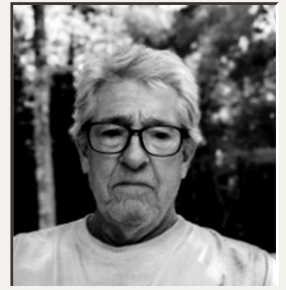
Madison Thew, Program Analyst

### Farm Service Agency County Committee:

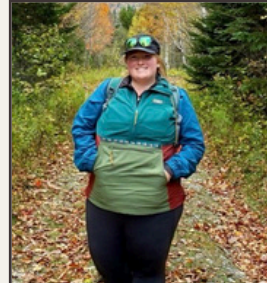
Blake Smith, Owen Brown, Rebecca Treadwell



Jensen Bissell



Kent Black



Gabrielle Jolin



Alani Worden



Arthur Wilkins



Jim Ferrante



Mike Pouch



Molly London



Sam Brown



Carolyn Ziegler



Toby Hall



# PCSWCD NAMED MAINE OUTSTANDING TREE FARMER OF THE YEAR!

WRITTEN BY KAYCI WILLIS, MAINE TREE FARM COORINATOR



In a celebration of leadership, legacy, and landscape-scale stewardship, the Piscataquis County Soil and Water Conservation District (PCSWCD) was recognized as the 2026 Maine Outstanding Tree Farmer of the Year award recipients during the Forestry Forum at the annual Agricultural Trades Show. Since 1954, this prestigious award has recognized landowners who go above and beyond the standard, demonstrating that a working forest can simultaneously protect water quality, bolster wildlife habitat, and support a local economy.

At the center of this achievement is the Williamsburg Forest, a 266-acre woodlot near Brownville. Since acquiring the land in 1980, the PCSWCD has transformed it from abandoned Great Depression-era farmsteads into a vibrant outdoor classroom. "This property is clearly designed to educate landowners and the public on how to enhance forest health, improve wildlife habitat, protect water quality, and manage woodlots for both economic and environmental benefits," noted DACF Commissioner Amanda Beal in her congratulatory speech.

What truly distinguishes Williamsburg is its sophisticated Forest Management Plan. Developed by University of Maine graduate student Elisa Schine, alongside Consulting Forester Molly London, Dr. Jessica Leahy, and other advisors, the plan is a masterclass in modern silviculture, designed as a replicable framework for other landowners. "Amazingly, [Elisa] wrote it with a lot of input from a whole lot of foresters, and you can imagine how well we all agreed on everything," Molly London joked during the award ceremony.

Despite varying perspectives, the team integrated the rigorous requirements of NRCS, Maine Woodswise, and the American Tree Farm System, while prioritizing *Forestry for Maine Birds* lessons.

The PCSWCD stewardship approach is defined by "zooming out" and viewing the 266 acres as a single piece of a larger landscape puzzle. By managing the land as a bird would see it and focusing on canopy complexity and habitat connectivity, the District has deepened its relationships and collaborations with neighboring landowners, including the Penobscot Nation.

The district's success is also rooted in its unique leadership structure. Williamsburg Forest has become a hub for community inclusion and resilience, hosting a variety of workshops and educational programs that engage the public in forest management on their own properties. "I do love to see how [Williamsburg Forest] is being managed by a core of capable and diverse women," remarked Commissioner Amanda Beal during her congratulatory speech. "The governor has proclaimed the year 2026 of women in ag in Maine, and I think we can extend that celebration to also recognizing women in forestry." State Forester Patty Cormier agreed, saying, "It is serendipitous that this year highlights women in agriculture, and PCSWCD receiving this award fits very well with that theme."

This award adds to a growing list of accolades for the PCSWCD, including recognition from Maine Audubon as a birding destination and selection as the 2019 Austin Wilkins Stewardship Award recipients. "Over the 40+ years we have managed the forest, there have been many people involved with the vision and the energy there," said PCSWCD Executive Director Kacey Weber. "And they all contributed to this moment, where I am standing here accepting the honor of the Outstanding Tree Farmer of the Year." State Forester Patty Cormier offered a poetic reflection on the District's collective effort: "As a strong forest isn't necessarily about individual trees, but about how they support each other to create a powerful ecosystem, this team's strength comes from synchronized effort, just as the trees all reach for the light."

PCSWCD is excited to host the public at Williamsburg Forest for Forestry Field Days on September 12th. We will celebrate this honor and all of the incredible work done at Williamsburg Forest. Please save the date and make a plan to join us!



The poster features a green and orange header with the text "Save The Date!" in large green letters, followed by "2026 Forestry Field Day Celebration" in white. Below this, a dark green box contains the event details: "Join us in Williamsburg, Maine, on September 12 from 8:30 am to 4:00 pm to celebrate our 2026 Outstanding Tree Farmers of the Year, The Piscataquis County Soil & Water Conservation District!" and "More info to come" at the bottom. Logos for the American Tree Farm System, Piscataquis County Soil & Water Conservation District, and Certified Family Forest are displayed on the right side. The background shows a stylized forest scene with trees and a path.

**Save The Date!**  
2026 Forestry Field Day Celebration

Join us in **Williamsburg, Maine**, on **September 12** from 8:30 am to 4:00 pm to celebrate our 2026 Outstanding Tree Farmers of the Year,  
**The Piscataquis County Soil & Water Conservation District!**

*More info to come*

AMERICAN TREE FARM SYSTEM  
PISCATAQUIS COUNTY SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT  
CERTIFIED FAMILY FOREST

# PCSWCD EDUCATION SERVICES UPDATE

WRITTEN BY PCSWCD EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, KACEY WEBER

Our last Education Newsletter was published in the spring of 2024. I'm excited to bring this important publication back, as it plays a key role in connecting our community with the education services and opportunities we provide. Since that last issue, I have transitioned out of the Education Coordinator role—after serving in that position for 10 years—and stepped into the role of Executive Director. Because the Piscataquis County Soil and Water Conservation District (PCSWCD) does not currently have an Education Coordinator, I have continued to oversee our education programming. I'm incredibly proud that, even through this transition, I have kept pace with the growing demand for natural resource conservation education across the county.



On average, PCSWCD delivers two days per week of in-school, natural-resource-based educational programming during the school year. We also continue to coordinate and lead our popular Teen Wilderness Expedition—an overnight adventure for youth ages 12–16. Our programs explore a wide range of topics including soil conservation, forestry, wildlife, pollinators, agriculture, aquatics, and more.

This school year, in addition to curriculum-aligned in-class lessons, we've facilitated special programs such as Trout in the Classroom and Read ME Agriculture. I've also coordinated field trips and student volunteer opportunities at PCSWCD's community forests.

To expand and diversify our offerings, I've partnered with colleagues and friends from the Appalachian Mountain Club (AMC), Rural Aspirations, Maine Audubon, Maine TREE, Maine IF&W, the Maine Forest Service, MOFGA, Northern Light HEAL, and others. These collaborations help us meet the strong and growing demand from local schools. Education remains essential to PCSWCD's mission of building resilient, sustainable farms and forests through education, technical services, demonstration, and stewardship.

Although we cannot meet every program request, we make it a priority to connect teachers and community members with high-quality opportunities offered by our partners. PCSWCD is a proud member of the Piscataquis Environmental Education Collaborative (PEEC), working alongside AMC, Maine TREE, Rural Aspirations, and Maine Audubon to collectively support the educational needs of the county. When requests come from outside Piscataquis County, I enjoy connecting those individuals with their local Conservation Districts and seeing the great programs that follow.

None of this vital work would be possible if it wasn't for the support we receive from the Onion Foundation. We are so grateful to the foundation for being such an important partner in this work!

If you are an educator or community member interested in natural resource education programming, please reach out. You can email me (Kacey) at [katherine.weber@piscataquisswcd.org](mailto:katherine.weber@piscataquisswcd.org). I look forward to learning with you!



# A TEACHERS PERSPECTIVE: LEARNING AT THE LAW FARM

WRITTEN BY GABRIELLE JOLIN, SEDOMOCHA MIDDLE SCHOOL

This school year, I have been lucky to extend my teaching from the four walls of my classroom and into the fields, forests, and trails of Law Farm Nature Trails. Through some visits, a small group of 8th grade students have had the opportunity to engage with the land not just as observers, but as learners, writers, and stewards. This has also given me plentiful opportunities to put into practice my current nature-based education graduate work.

One of our most memorable experiences took place in the winter, when students strapped on snowshoes and explored the trails. What might seem like a simple outdoor excursion quickly became something deeper. Students slowed down. They noticed animal tracks, changes in tree patterns, and the way sound travels differently in winter. These observations became the foundation for discussion, inquiry, and writing.

This approach is deeply connected to my work in place-based and nature-based education. Through my graduate work, I have been exploring how outdoor learning environments like Law Farm can serve as powerful “texts” for students—spaces where they can read the land, interpret patterns, and construct meaning through direct experience. Research shows that when students learn in natural settings, they not only deepen their academic understanding but also build stronger connections to their environment and community.

Across other visits, students have participated in nature walks focused on plant and animal identification, practiced nature journaling, and engaged in open-ended exploration. These experiences are intentionally designed to foster curiosity. Rather than providing students with all the answers, I encourage them to ask questions: What do you notice? What patterns do you see? What might be happening here?



Law Farm, in particular, offers an incredible range of learning opportunities. With its diverse ecosystems—forests, meadows, pollinator gardens, orchards, and wetlands—students can engage in interdisciplinary learning that blends science, literacy, and social-emotional growth. In my learning activities, this has looked like combining observation with descriptive writing, using sensory language to capture a moment in nature, and reflecting on how being outdoors impacts focus and well-being.

One of the key ideas guiding my work is that place itself can be the teacher. When students are given the time and space to explore, they begin to take ownership of their learning. They become more attentive, more thoughtful, and more engaged. For many students, these experiences also provide a sense of calm and connection that is difficult to replicate indoors.

Building on these experiences, my graduate work has also focused on how to make outdoor learning more accessible for teachers. While many educators are interested in bringing students outside, they often face barriers such as limited planning time or uncertainty about how to connect outdoor experiences to academic standards. My goal is to help develop some resources and strategies that support teachers in using places like Law Farm as extensions of their classrooms—through inquiry-based lessons, nature journaling, and flexible learning activities that align with curriculum goals.

The partnership between local schools and the Piscataquis Soil and Water Conservation District has the potential to grow even further. By continuing to develop place-based learning opportunities, we can ensure that more students have meaningful, hands-on experiences in the environments that shape their communities.

For my students, time at Law Farm has been more than just field trips. It has been an opportunity to slow down, to notice, and to connect—with the land, with each other, and with their own learning.



# SPOTLIGHT ON OUR PARTNERS

WRITTEN BY HUGH JOHNSTON OF THE SEBEC LAKE ASSOCIATION

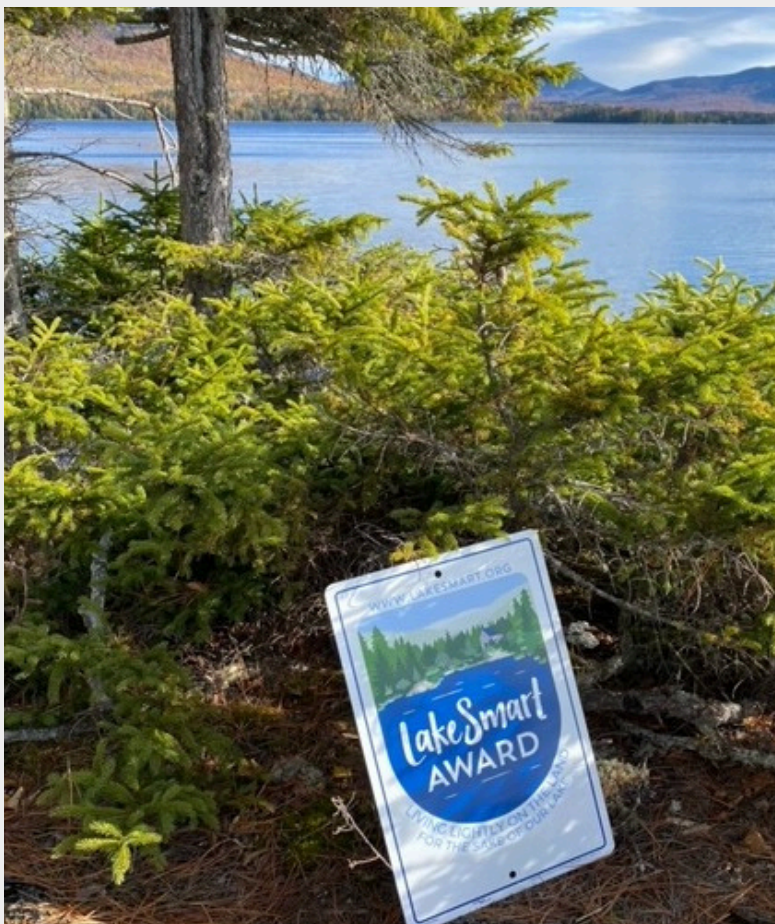


Piscataquis County Soil Conservation District has a growing partnership with the Sebec Lake Association. We have worked together to provide trainings and services geared towards lake stewardship and find ways to help members of the Sebec Lake community work to protect the lake they love.

The Department of Environmental Protection has a new metric to evaluate environmental conditions that contribute to the health of lakes and ponds around the State - the Maine DEP Scorecard. Conditions being scored through this tool include Water Quality Trends, Invasive Plants, Shoreland Habitat, and Lake Vulnerability. All four have supporting conditions. For example, Invasive Plants include Infestation Assessment and Risk Conditions; Shoreland Habitat includes Littoral Habitat and Shoreland Condition, etc. Sebec Lake's "ScoreCard" can be found on the Maine Lakes website - [www.mainelakes.org](http://www.mainelakes.org) -

using the MIDAS number 848 for Sebec Lake. The purpose of the metric answers the question of "How is my lake doing?" It also provides the lake association with a focus on what steps can be taken to preserve the health of the lake.

Over the past two summers, more than 35 lake residents have taken advantage of the Lake Smart program offered by Piscataquis County Soil and Water Conservation District (PCSWCD). This free consultation offers property owners the opportunity to learn about low cost, voluntary steps that can be taken to reduce shoreline erosion and harmful chemical run-off. This run-off can contribute to algal blooms, particularly given our warm summer temperatures. Folks interested in the LakeSmart program should connect with Kacey Weber at PCSWCD - [katherine.weber@piscataquisswcd.org](mailto:katherine.weber@piscataquisswcd.org).



## 2026 SLA Programs:

On Saturday, August 29 (rain date Sunday, 8/30), PCSWCD will host a buffer planting workshop on the lake for property owners to learn how to create an attractive, low-maintenance shoreline buffer zone that filters rainwater before it enters the lake. Plants will be available for sale at the event. Details as to location will be announced later in the summer on the Sebec Lake Association website and on PCSWCD's website - [www.piscataquisswcd.org](http://www.piscataquisswcd.org). Given the development around the lake that has occurred over past decade where more impermeable surfaces (roads, driveways, roofs, etc.) have been created, it is critical for those who love the lake environment to take steps to manage unfiltered run-off and possible sources of chemical run-off that will reduce water transparency and overall water quality.



# PCSWCD'S ANNUAL BIRD WALK WITH MAINE AUDUBON!

WRITTEN BY PCSWCD EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, KACEY WEBER

Register and join us for a morning bird walk on Saturday May 9th as we explore springtime birds at the Law Farm Nature Trails in Dover-Foxcroft! The Piscataquis County Soil & Water Conservation District (PCSWCD) will be hosting Maine Audubon's birder Nick Lund who will lead a bird walk along the trails of Law Farm's community forest and recreational trails starting at 8:00AM.

Nick Lund is a Falmouth native and is Maine Audubon's Advocacy and Outreach Manager. He writes online as [The Birdist](#), and has contributed to publications including Audubon Magazine, the Washington Post, NatGeo, Downeast, and more. He is the author of several books, including the American Birding Association Field Guide to the Birds of Maine, and The Ultimate Biography of Earth. Nick is knowledgeable and really fun to listen to. We always have a great time with Nick! We will also be joined by birding enthusiast Shane Barker. He and Nick make a dynamic duo and offer information, identification and more than a few laughs.

Our hope is to view year-round birds in Maine and some returning springtime birds on the Law Farm Nature Trails. Last year, this walk was held in early May and we found 35 species in just two short hours. Bring your binoculars and cameras, wear your mud boots or other sturdy water-proof footwear, and join us as we hike out on the trails and along the field while we experience the joys of birds and their habitat at the Law Farm Nature Trails. It is also suggested to have mobile applications installed for the day of the event, such as "Ebird" and "Merlin," which are both birding apps that are useful for this type of workshop.

This annual bird walk is a great way for folks to enjoy local, outdoor educational and recreational trails while learning first-hand from these experienced bird watchers. Registration is required and we are limited to 25 people for this popular event. Registration can fill up fast and be made online at [www.piscataquisswcd.org](http://www.piscataquisswcd.org) or by emailing [info@piscataquisswcd.org](mailto:info@piscataquisswcd.org) for more information.



PISCATAQUIS COUNTY  
**SOIL & WATER**  
 CONSERVATION DISTRICT



# BIRD WALK

**PCSWCD'S 10TH ANNUAL WALK**

*Join Nick Lund from Maine Audubon, bird enthusiast Shane Barker, and PCSWCD for this awesome annual offering!*



**SATURDAY MAY 9TH 8AM  
 LAW FARM NATURE TRAILS  
 DOVER-FOXCROFT, ME**

*Register online or FMI  
[www.piscataquisswcd.org](http://www.piscataquisswcd.org)*

**MAINE**   
**AUDUBON**





**PISCATAQUIS COUNTY**  
**SOIL & WATER**  
 CONSERVATION DISTRICT

# 2026 CALENDAR OF EVENTS

JANUARY	FEBRUARY	MARCH
<p>Planning &amp; Promoting            2026 Events &amp;            Programs!</p>	<p>Tree PRE-SALE Feb 3rd-            Feb. 24th</p> <p>Basic &amp; Advanced Erosion            Control, Feb. 12th</p> <p>Snowshoe with AMC, Pam            Pultz &amp; PCSWCD, Feb. 28<sup>th</sup>            r/d March 1st</p>	<p>Tree &amp; Plant Sale</p> <p>Trout Sale</p> <p>Local Working Group            Meeting, March 12th</p> <p>Fruit Tree Pruning with            CJ Walke, March 14th</p>
APRIL	MAY	JUNE
<p>Shrub Pruning with            UMaine Coop.            Extension, April 11th</p> <p>Mushroom Log            Inoculation, Two            Knights Brewery, April            25th</p> <p>Last Day Tree &amp; Plant            Sale April 30th!</p>	<p>Mushroom Log            Inoculation, Rail Yard, May            2nd</p> <p>Bird Walk with Maine            Audubon, May 9th</p> <p>Trout Sale Ends/Pick Up,            Date TBA</p> <p>Tree &amp; Plant Sale Pick-up            May 15<sup>th</sup> 4-6:30PM</p>	<p>Story Map Showcase at            Williamsburg Forest,            Date TBA</p>
JULY	AUGUST	SEPTEMBER
<p>Forest Walk &amp; Talk with            MFS &amp; MIF&amp;W, July 7th</p> <p>Teen Wilderness            Expedition, July 14th-            16th</p> <p>Photo Sessions            Fundraiser, Date TBA</p>	<p>Invasive Plant Management            with MFS, Coop. Extension &amp;            MNAP, August 12th</p> <p>Buffer Planting Workshop            with Bas Rouge Farm &amp;            Forage, August 29th</p> <p>Conservation Easements            Discussion with MRLT &amp; Jerry            Bley, Date TBA</p>	<p>Cider Pressing with ESG,            Date TBA</p> <p>Hazelnut Harvest, Sept.            1st</p> <p>Women's Chainsaw            Safety, Sept. 26<sup>th</sup> &amp; 27<sup>th</sup></p> <p>PCSWCD Volunteer of            the Year</p>
OCTOBER	NOVEMBER	DECEMBER
<p>Cooperator of the Year,            Date TBA</p> <p>Law Farm Photo            Sessions Fundraiser,            Date TBA</p> <p>Tree Trunk or Treat            Fundraiser, Oct. 25th</p>	<p>Tree Farm Stories with            Maine Tree Farm            Program, Nov. 4th</p>	<p>Planning for 2027            Events &amp; Programs!</p>

Our mission is to build resilient, sustainable farms and forests through education, technical services, demonstration and stewardship.

# Thanks

## FOR BEING PART OF OUR LEARNING COMMUNITY!

KEEP LEARNING, STAY CURIOUS, AND WE HOPE TO SEE  
YOU AT AN UPCOMING PROGRAM!



PISCATAQUIS COUNTY  
**SOIL & WATER**  
CONSERVATION DISTRICT

**Interested in participating in an upcoming program or  
training offered by PCSWCD?**

**Check in with us [HERE](#) to stay informed about educational  
opportunities to come!**