



2019 PLAN OF OPERATIONS

ANDROSCOGGIN VALLEY SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE (TA)

Androscoggin Valley SWCD will provide technical assistance to land users to promote conservation and address priority natural resource issues and concerns.

TA- Objective 1: To provide direct technical assistance to land owners and users.

TASKS FOR OBJECTIVE 1:

- Identify natural resource concerns that the technical assistance program will target.
- Identify services that will be provided.
Examples:
 - › Contractor site evaluations
 - › Erosion and sediment control plans
 - › Stormwater control plans
 - › Soil surveys for site evaluators and landowners
 - › Assistance with forming road associations
 - › Gravel road design, maintenance, and long-range gravel road maintenance plans
 - › Assist with permit applications (Maine DEP Permit by Rule, U.S Army Corps of Engineers, local Code Enforcement requirements, etc.)
 - › Phase 1 Site Assessments
 - › Surveying: erosion sites, outfalls, illicit discharges
 - › Inspections: stormwater treatment, catch basins, ditches, detention basins
 - › Planning: ordinance reviews and recommendations
 - › Site plan reviews
 - › Permit compliance review
 - › Project reviews
 - › Design: stream and shoreline restoration, culvert sizing, basic stormwater runoff
 - › Nutrient management plans
 - › Revegetation plans
- Provide technical assistance in the form of landowner visits to complete entry interview for NRCS as a part of the Contribution Agreement.
- Identify if these services can be provided in-house. If they cannot, determine if training for staff is available/feasible. If the Board of Supervisors would like to offer specific services that cannot be achieved with current staff, identify and initiate contact with entities that could offer these specific services on a contract basis.
- Expand the technical assistance program by developing strategies to inform the public of the service.
 - › Create and distribute a brochure or flyer that describes the technical assistance program to land users, interested resource groups, and all municipalities in the two counties.
 - › Post quarterly technical assistance program Facebook posts.
 - › Update the website to include a technical assistance program guidance page.
 - › As part of the NRCS Contribution Agreement, include information on free farm and forestry visits for EQIP initial consultation. Use this opportunity to better understand the needs of farmers or woodlot owners and what prohibits them from using federal programs.

TA-Objective 2: To improve the ability of land users to implement conservation practices on the land by using programs and grants to assist with funding.

TASKS FOR OBJECTIVE 2:

- Continue to seek appropriate locations for Stormwater Compensation Fund use in the Taylor Pond, Sabattus Pond, and Thompson Lake watersheds.
- Through an NRCS Contribution Agreement, complete a 500-person mailing that includes USDA Farm Bill and Environmental Quality Incentives Program information.
- Continue to search for funding for culvert improvement opportunities for public and private entities to be able to use Bates College project data from 2016 and 2017.
- Search for funding opportunities to help support land owners in improving their properties and conservation practices; e.g. pollinator habitat, bat boxes, runoff improvement, etc.

TA-Objective 3: To identify the natural resource needs of the community to ensure that the technical assistance delivered is appropriate and beneficial.

TASKS FOR OBJECTIVE 3:

- Use Natural Resource Assessment information to ensure that District goals are in line with the concerns of the local communities.
- Ask participants of District programs what natural resource issues they are facing through an evaluation or short survey form.
- Identify resource needs of urban communities and try to target these as well as the suburban and rural needs that we typically target.
- Use information from the NRCS Local Working Group to understand priority natural resource concerns and potential practices to target for programming.
- Contact municipalities, land trusts, Cooperative Extension to see what sort of questions they have been getting. Ask NRCS what concerns their clients have on the farm.

PUBLIC RELATIONS (PR)

To enhance its tradition of service to the citizens of Androscoggin and Sagadahoc Counties, the District will pursue an effective public relations policy.

PR-Objective 1: To provide opportunities for public input

TASKS FOR OBJECTIVE 1:

- Host the Annual Local Working Group meeting with NRCS. On invitation mailing include a short survey on natural resource concerns to better plan for the meeting. Postcards may be the most effective form.
- Host an annual District event to bring in a variety of interested participants. Offer a short survey to identify local resource issues. The survey can act as the door prize “ticket”. Have a guest speaker to provide an entertaining, yet informative, talk on a natural resource topic.
- At every event provide a comment card or evaluation form for participants to offer suggestions to the District about programming opportunities. Ask questions like; How can the District better serve the public? Have a place on the card/form where participants can sign up for emails or other communications. Add the question, “What other events would you like to see the Conservation District hold?”
- Post click-based response posts on Facebook to get the community to interact with the page. Ask questions about what programs they would attend. Ask what natural resource concerns worry them the most.

PR-Objective 2: To increase the District's visibility by timely and effective communications

TASKS FOR OBJECTIVE 2:

- Keep outreach plan up to date. Continue to improve our media presence by evaluating the outreach plan. Develop a way to evaluate outreach plan.
- Track website and Facebook analytics to gain a better understanding of what our community responds to online. Correlate event posts with the event file to track attendance.
- Update the website as soon as events pass, dates change, minutes are available, etc.
- To help support NRCS EQIP education and outreach initiatives, work with local farmers to promote "success stories" on conservation practices.
- Develop a brochure or fact sheet, with guidance from NRCS, to better communicate the available practices offered through EQIP.

PR-Objective 3: To market ourselves more effectively

TASKS FOR OBJECTIVE 3:

- Always have information on hand when working with the public to enlist new clients, recruit new associate supervisors, inform interested people in programming and services offered.
- Stick with consistent branding on all District release material.
- Increase frequency of press releases to include more than just event dates.
- Increase the range of people viewing and receiving the quarterly newsletter.
- Improve email blasts to reduce being sent to the spam folder and increase viewership.
- Attend at least one farmers' market a month to have a presence in the community.
- Bring NRCS EQIP information, priority resources, and practice information to events to help promote the cost-share program.

EDUCATION AND OUTREACH (E&O)

To educate all land users of Androscoggin and Sagadahoc Counties to encourage conservation of natural resources

E&O-Objective 1: Continue to provide quality educational opportunities and programs with a focus on conservation

TASKS FOR OBJECTIVE 1:

- Host a minimum of 1 workshop or speaker presentation per month. See Appendix 1 for list of potential topics.
- Create a "master" event spreadsheet where titles, topics, attendees, and speakers can be tracked for improved programming.
- Coordinate a stormdrain stenciling event through the Androscoggin Valley Stormwater Group agreement.
- Design a program to get local schools or libraries involved in a fun and interactive way; e.g. conservation calendar/photo contest, trout raising program, volunteer day, spring plant sale activity booth for kids.
- Participate in Maine Ag in the Classroom reading program.
- Through the NRCS Contribution Agreement, host one pollinator workshop and one soil health workshop in Sagadahoc.
- Use the NRCS Conservation Practice Physical Effects list to identify workshop topics in alignment with the practices that EQIP covers.

E&O-Objective 2: Expand educational programs and opportunities

TASKS FOR OBJECTIVE 2:

- Work with Bates College to support a 200-hour internship where the student can develop programming, gather resource information and create outreach material, and perform some office tasks.
- Research the requirements, and funding opportunities, for starting a trout program for elementary school kids where the objectives would be to learn about water quality, invertebrates, the life cycle of trout, and how to protect this, and other, aquatic species.
- Continue to find research opportunities/projects for the Bates College community engaged learning semester course.
- Southwestern Maine Regional Envirothon: assist with planning, coordinating, and promoting Envirothon event with outreach to non-participating schools and groups. Focus on fundraising to provide lunch for students at the event.

E&O-Objective 3: To expand the District's ability to provide information and education by increasing financial support

TASKS FOR OBJECTIVE 3:

- Provide links to financial resources, assist with recruiting skilled professionals, and provide educational/technical training opportunities.
- Attend Auburn Public Works day to promote proper lawncare practices to improve the quality of stormwater runoff and therefor the quality of the Androscoggin. Complete this through the AVSWG agreement.
- Propose hosting two stormwater events or workshops to better meet the MS4 permit requirements through the AVSWG agreement.
- Reapply for the USDA NRCS Contribution Agreement. Focus on practices that have been identified as priorities in local public drinking water watersheds.
- Investigate grant opportunities for environmental education programs.

FUNDING (F)

To strengthen our ability to provide programming and services to the citizens and municipalities of Androscoggin and Sagadahoc Counties, Androscoggin Valley SWCD will diversify our sources of funding

F-Objective 1: To expand our funding from traditional providers

TASKS FOR OBJECTIVE 1:

- Continue to attend County Commissioner meetings with updates about District activities and successes with County specific details.
- Continue to request funding from Androscoggin and Sagadahoc Counties.
- Propose an increase in funding to the counties to sponsor a county specific program.
- Continue to keep open communication with state and federal partners about District programs and services that support both District objectives and the objectives of the resource agencies.
- Continue to submit a thorough annual report to the State of Maine to secure funding.
- Look at Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry goals and initiatives and determine how to align them with the District's.
- Invite Legislature to District events to increase awareness of the on-the-ground nature of the work and to help ensure Districts are supported in the future.

F-Objective 2: To broaden sponsorships

TASKS FOR OBJECTIVE 2:

- Offer an annual raffle or 50/50. This will increase District visibility as well as provide incentive to donate to the District cause. Include with prize information about the District and conservation activities in Androscoggin and Sagadahoc Counties.
- Network at public events to increase District visibility.
- Create a donation account with links on both the website and the Facebook account for visitors to donate.
- Find sponsorship for the Southwestern Envirothon. Send thank you cards. Make sure logos are apparent at the event.

F-Objective 3: To provide income to enable us to increase our level of service

TASKS FOR OBJECTIVE 3:

- Work with MACD to expand state wide grant projects and district capacity building funding.
- Find sponsorships for workshops and public forum meetings.
- Explore grant funding opportunities.
- Cost/benefit analysis of offering District products such as shirts, calendars, bags, etc.
- Develop and hold a pre-order plant sale.
- Investigate MACD/District participation with Green Drinks or other fundraising events.
- Continue to apply for the NRCS Contribution Agreement annually. Work with Lewiston Field Office District Conservationist to identify needs.

PARTNERSHIPS (P)

To improve District effectiveness and capacity, Androscoggin Valley SWCD will strengthen and expand our conservation partnerships.

P-Objective 1: To communicate better and more frequently leading to the better understanding the diverse conservation needs of the District's constituency and improving participation from that community.

TASKS FOR OBJECTIVE 1:

- Increase online presence through website, Facebook, and Instagram updates.
- Increase press release frequency to keep local news readers informed of District activities.
- Create a newsletter that will be available online and through mailings that states the District's purpose, events, volunteer opportunities, successes, and contains at least one educational article.
- Plan and host a meeting for local organization to come together and discuss priorities to find common ground. Invite NRCS to this conversation to talk about focus areas, target practices, and prime/unique farmland.

P-Objective 2: To strengthen partnerships with local people and groups

TASKS FOR OBJECTIVE 2:

- Staffing Ag Trade Show booth.
- Assist with display and staffing booth at District Ag Day with legislators.
- Assist with display and staffing at county fairs.
- Assist with display and staffing at Maine Municipal Association Convention booth
- Research joining the boards of other conservation organization to ensure that we are supporting each other's missions rather than doing the work twice.
- Cultivate relationships with;

- › Watershed groups
- › Interested residents
- › Municipal officials
- › Private road association members
- › Private camping organizations
- › County Commissioners and Budget Committee
- › Farmers
- › Farm service partners
- › Foresters/ loggers/ woodlot owners
- › Marine/ coastal groups
- › Land Trusts
- › Federal/ State government agencies
- › Educators
- › Fish/wildlife groups
- › Recreational clubs
- › Conservation/environmental groups
- › University of Maine Cooperative Extension
- › Maine Audubon
- › The Nature Conservancy
- › Maine Colleges and Universities
- › USFWS
- › Ecological Organizations
- › Local Food Organizations
- › Immigrant Resource Groups
- › Historical Societies
- › Legislature

P-Objective 3: To expand the District's service capacity by implementing the volunteer service program

TASKS FOR OBJECTIVE 3:

- Develop a volunteer recruitment plan.
- Develop a volunteer enrollment form.
- Use the volunteer recruitment plan to enlist volunteers for events.
- Host an annual "big" volunteer day- such as a river cleanup

BOARD AND STAFF DEVELOPMENT (B&S)

To effectively serve the natural resource conservation needs of the Androscoggin and Sagadahoc Counties, the Androscoggin Valley SWCD will seek to maintain a skilled and diverse board and staff.

B&S-Objective 1: To develop and maintained a skill and diverse board

TASKS FOR OBJECTIVE 1:

- Publish a press release describing District activities, inviting the public to the next meeting, and the need for dedicated Associate Supervisors.
- Identify and contact partners who may be interested in participating on the Board in an Associate or Supervisory role.
- Semi-annually offer a training opportunity at a regularly scheduled Board Meeting, use suggestions from Board and staff about what topics should be covered.

B&S-Objective 2: To invest in our management infrastructure

TASKS FOR OBJECTIVE 2:

- Develop board and staff development and training plan.
- Increase awareness of training opportunities to Board members.
- Set aside thirty minutes semi-annually to check the progress of the District staff and Board and identify places that may need improvement.
- Conduct assessment reviews; personnel performance, programs and projects, annual work plan.
- Review personnel and operational policy.

B&S-Objective 3: To expand and support staff to meet customer needs

TASKS FOR OBJECTIVE 3:

- Provide staff training to build strengths of new employees.
- Increase knowledge in legal employment practices and policies as to stay up to date.
- Increase internal and external transparency and accountability.
- Improve on the ability to articulate the District mission, accomplishments, and future programs. Board and staff should be on the same page about the District's identity.
- Expand board and staff awareness about work of other groups/partners.
- Entertain discussions about potential collaboration with other groups/partners and conservation work.