

Androscoggin Valley Soil and Water Conservation District



Annual Plan of Operations 2017

70th Anniversary of
Making Conservation Work for You

WHO WE ARE

Androscoggin Valley Soil and Water Conservation District is a non-profit organization cooperating with individuals, property owners, federal and state government agencies, municipal and county government, business and industry sector, non-profit organizations, federal and state government agencies, and many more, to help manage and protect natural resources on private and public lands.

In May of 1947, Leroy M. Bingham, from the United States Department of Agriculture Soil Conservation Service (now Natural Resources Conservation Service), was assigned as a farm planner to get Androscoggin Valley Soil and Water Conservation District started. A petition circulated around Androscoggin and Sagadahoc Counties and expressed an interest and a need from the people for a conservation district. After a certificate of organization was issued by Harold Goss, then Secretary of State, an election was held for the Board of Supervisors. C.F. Hobart (Bowdoinham), Frank Millay (Richmond), and Rockwood Berry (Livermore Falls) were elected as the first Supervisors for Androscoggin Valley Soil and Water Conservation District.

The final step in forming the conservation district was the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between the United States Department of Agriculture and the Soil Conservation Service and a supplementary Memorandum of Understanding between the Soil Conservation Service and the Androscoggin Valley Soil and Water Conservation District.

The Conservation District's main aim is to teach the proper methods of land use, how to obtain the most from its natural resources, and yet maintain its fertility, and prevent such disasters as flooding, erosion, mineral losses, and the loss of the wildlife and freshwater habitat.

MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of Androscoggin Valley Soil and Water Conservation District is to promote the conservation and stewardship of soil, water, and related natural resources, by providing leadership, technical assistance, and educational programming to the citizens of Androscoggin and Sagadahoc Counties.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

We value and respect the diverse members of our team; board members, district employees, contracted services providers, NRCS employees, and volunteers. We value and respect our conservation partners, agencies, groups, and individuals who collaborate with us to affect change. We value and respect our cooperators and clients who request our technical assistance.

We strive to use and further develop our technical expertise and human resource skills to provide quality products and services tailored to our customers' needs. We value a flexible work environment and hold standards that contribute to a productive team and satisfied customers. These

standards include; reliability, common sense, cooperation, flexibility, accountability, honesty, comradery, trust, honor, diplomacy, and humor.

We value the results of our efforts; soil and water quality improvement, contributions to food availability, viable natural resource based businesses, quality of life in our environment, enhanced natural environments, and an informed public.

BOARD MEMBERS

Board Members as of January 1, 2017

Supervisors

Paul Roseberry- Chairman
Mark Emmons- Vice Chairman
Katie Carville- Treasurer
Kathy Shaw- Assistant Treasurer
Benjamin Dearnley

Associates

Art Dunlap
Anne Emmons
Shirley Hatch
Sonny Chipman
Bill Hatch

2017 ACTION PLAN

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

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

Strategy: Work with NRCS and other partners to provide conservation planning for cooperators. Work with watershed groups to provide site-specific on the land technical assistance. Work with stream teams to expand assistance and utilize District expertise. Focus on priority natural resource issues. Ensure that technical assistance provided by the District reflects citizens' needs in response to changing landscapes. Foster local information exchange on conservation issues using work/study groups. Facilitate the implementation of conservation practices by providing easily accessible materials and/or lists of distributors. Follow up with individuals and municipalities to evaluate practices. Continue to provide assistance on traditional conservation practices for agriculture. Pursue research opportunities or provide information on non-traditional agriculture conservation practices. Continue to address road erosion problems with technical assistance, demonstrations, and workshops. Encourage and assist watershed groups to develop and implement watershed management plans. Provide local workshops and demonstrations in cooperation with other agencies, e.g., Maine Department of Environmental Protections, Maine Department of Transportation, and Maine Forestry Service. Hold annual forestry workshop to address current forestry needs and priority natural resource issues.

TASKS FOR OBJECTIVE 1:

- Continue offering technical assistance through the contract agreement with Androscoggin River Watershed Council, Jeff Stern, and the District
- Train District staff to take over this role

- Create and distribute a brochure or flyer that describes the technical assistance program and distribute this to land users and interested resource groups.

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.

Strategy: Seek outside funding sources to provide for technical staff for projects with a high level of need and interest. Use the USDA Farm Bill programs to assist cooperators in applying conservation practices on their land.

TASKS FOR OBJECTIVE 2:

- Continue to implement the Lake Auburn 319 grant
- Continue to implement the Eastern Brook Trout Joint Venture/Martin Stream grant
- Using information obtained in a USGS Water Use Survey and a Contribution Agreement with NRCS, reach out to potentially interested land users about improving their irrigation practices through the USDA Farm Bill and Environmental Quality Incentives Program

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

Strategy: Use locally led process to continue seeking information on conservation needs from the public. Identify conservation needs in under-served communities. Continue to visit different regions and groups in both Androscoggin and Sagadahoc Counties in order to remain informed of local needs and issues.

TASKS FOR OBJECTIVE 3:

- Contractor Certification Continuing Education
- Landowner and municipality or organization land use or conservation practice assistance requests
- Grant writing participation
- Research needs of urban communities and offer programming to develop their understanding of natural resource issues in their area as well as opportunities for improvement

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

Objective 1: To provide opportunities for public input

Strategy: Utilize locally led conservation meetings, roundtable discussions, and group meetings to identify local resource issues. Facilitate the exchange of ideas and information among local and regional grassroots conservation groups, and state and federal agency staff. Together with citizens and municipalities, work to identify and strengthen the mechanisms that support community stewardship of our natural resources.

TASKS FOR OBJECTIVE 1:

- Host the Annual Local Working Group meeting with NRCS
- Host an annual District event to bring in a variety of interested participants. Offer a short survey to identify local resources issues. Have a guest speaker to provide an entertaining, yet informative, talk on a natural resource topic.
- At every event provide a comment card for participants to offer suggestions to the District about programming opportunities, how the District can better serve the public, and a place for the participant to sign-up for emails about District events

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

Strategy: Develop a media plan by learning of appropriate contacts and procedures for local and regional daily and weekly publications. Adhere to an established schedule of press releases and public notices to promote District activities. Publish a quarterly newsletter and an annual report on a timely basis. Maintain a clear, concise, and useful website.

TASKS FOR OBJECTIVE 2:

- Develop an outreach plan
- Develop newsletter format and publication plan
- Develop a social media and website plan
- Continue to improve our media presence by evaluating the three mentioned plans

Objective 3: To market ourselves more effectively

Strategy: Strive for professionalism in District publications and news releases. Participate in regional events in order to promote awareness of the District's mission and expertise. Increase awareness among municipal officers and citizen boards by providing information on the District's services and activities. Increase participation of planning board and conservation commission members, and code enforcement officers, in relevant workshops and stewardship activities. Provide current information on District services and activities to our funding agencies and foundations. Enlarge and update our mailing lists for newsletters and public activities. Seek television coverage of special events.

TASKS FOR OBJECTIVE 3:

- Enlist new clients
- Recruit new associate supervisors
- Website maintenance and educational development
- Press releases for all events and educational topics
- Implementation plan for publication and distribution of an online newsletter

INFORMATION AND EDUCATION ASSISTANCE- To educate all land users of Androscoggin and Sagadahoc Counties to encourage conservation of natural resources

Objective 1: Continue to provide quality conservation education assistance and programs

Strategy: Implement Farm Bill educational assistance programs. Maintain library of resource materials. When possible, support participation in conservation education programs. Educate the general public through activities in the water quality grants. Participate in the Envirothon program. Invite conservation groups to attend District meetings and events. Coordinate with other Districts for production and staffing of booths at agricultural events. Participate in conservation and agricultural events, e.g., UMCE Garden Day, Open Farm Day, and Maine Farm Days, Ag Trade Show, Fryeburg Fair. Sponsor conservation demonstration projects. Encourage citizen participation in workshops. Promote conservation education in schools.

TASKS FOR OBJECTIVE 1:

- Implement stormwater drain stenciling event through the Androscoggin Valley Stormwater Group agreement
- Host a Bring Your Own Kayak invasive plants workshop
- Conservation Calendar Contest
- Participate in Maine Ag in the Classroom reading program

Objective 2: Expand educational programs and opportunities

Strategy: Identify areas where conservation programming is needed. Work with students to promote conservation with service-learning projects. Seek input on educational needs from stakeholders and provide workshops as appropriate. Educate non-landowner land users about appropriate uses of private property and impact of activities on the environment. Increase educational programs on issues of interest to municipal officials, e.g., planning boards and conservation commissions. Increase community awareness of District fees-for-service technical assistance program. Offer for-profit conservation related workshops where user need is indicated. Jointly work with other districts and agencies to increase public awareness of the economic benefits of conservation.

TASKS FOR OBJECTIVE 2:

- With the help from a NRCS Contribution Agreement, provide four irrigation workshops, each focusing on a specific need or group interest
- Offer a forestry workshop
- 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

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

Strategy: Charge reasonable fees to workshop participants to offset costs. Seek sponsors, grants, donations, and advertisers to provide funding for effective educational activities and programming. Investigate funding sources to support a part-time position for natural resource education. Continue to educate legislators on the importance for supporting conservation programs. Partner with private

and public resource specialists to assist with District programming. Increase educational programs on issues of interest to municipal official, e.g., planning boards and conservation commissions.

TASKS FOR OBJECTIVE 3:

- Southwestern Maine Regional Envirothon- assist with planning, coordinating, and promoting Envirothon event with outreach to non-participating schools and groups
- Develop opportunities for Ag in the classroom readings, conservation careers, and assistance with classroom conservation projects.
- Provide links to financial resources, assist with recruiting skilled professionals, and provide educational/technical training opportunities.
- Staffing Ag Trade Show booth
- Host Local Work Group Meeting
- Assist with display and staffing booth at District Ag Day with legislators
- Assist with display and staffing at Fryeburg Fair
- Assist with display and staffing at Maine Municipal Association Convention booth
- Website maintenance-educational focus

FUNDING- 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

Objective 1: To expand our funding from traditional providers

Strategy: Remain informed of funding capacities of County Commissions in light of regional needs. Provide reports to County Commissioners and state agencies, boards, and associations about District services that benefit area resources. Keep state and federal legislators informed of District services and programs that relate to local natural resource problems and issues. With MACD and partnering agencies, support efforts to expand state funding for conservation districts.

TASKS FOR OBJECTIVE 1:

- Continue to attend County Commissioner meetings with updates about District activities and successes with County specific details
- 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

Objective 2: To broaden sponsorships

Strategy: Work with District committees and/or interest groups to target funding sources for new programs. Expand the fee-for-service technical assistance and urban development review programs by extending outreach to municipalities and new landowners. With professional advice, establish annual fund drives to be dedicated to District operations. Obtain sponsors for specific programs and activities, such as Envirothon. Keep informed of new funding opportunities by attending regional meetings of nonprofit clearinghouses and organizations. Remain aware of the programs of cooperating agencies in order to direct services to our interest groups. Solicit financial support from corporations and businesses.

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

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

Strategy: Identify marketable materials that support District programs, serve the needs of citizens, and enhance visibility. Develop fee-for-service seminars, programs, and workshops to generate additional income and expand our level of service. Solicit donations from individuals and citizen groups by including appeals in the annual report and in newsletters; recognize donors in publications. Become informed of the necessary mechanisms and financial guidelines that would enable the District to receive bequests from donors.

TASKS FOR OBJECTIVE 3:

- Work with MACD to expand state wide grant projects and district capacity building funding
- Recruit funding from Androscoggin and Sagadahoc Counties
- 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.

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

Objective 1: To communicate better and more frequently leading to the better understanding the diverse conservation needs of the District's constituency

Strategy: Continue to keep community/ partners informed of District activities regularly through press releases, e-mail messaged, public notices, and newsletters. Be aware of community activity and natural resource issues that relate to our mission. Exchange information from other Districts to learn of effective programs and methods, and to strengthen bonds. Keep abreast of current technology and environmental conservation issues. Periodically receive priorities and programming by holding in-house focus meeting of partners, board, and staff in order to enlarge our understanding of current issues. Attend other partnership meetings and report issues related to District priorities.

TASKS FOR OBJECTIVE 1:

- Increase online presence through website and Facebook 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

Objective 2: To strengthen partnerships with local people and groups

Strategy: Develop partnerships that will enlarge our understanding of resource issues and promote our mission. Create a mechanism that will give appropriate recognition and thanks to partners. Increase participation of municipalities in District activities by maintaining regular contact, and by offering programming and technical assistance appropriate to local needs. Remain informed of Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry initiatives and goals, and co-sponsor programming that meets shared objectives. Strengthen relationships with nonprofit resource conservations groups such as Merrymeeting Bay Group, Thorncrag Bird Sanctuary, Volunteer Lake Monitoring Program, Lake Auburn Watershed Protection Commission, Androscoggin Valley Council of Governments, Resource Conservation and Development, Cooperative Extension, land trusts, lake and watershed associations, coastal property groups, and all levels of government. Remain involved with MACD leadership and committee functions. Provide input with Maine Department of Agriculture and Maine Department of Environmental Protection for programs and initiatives relevant to our mission.

TASKS FOR OBJECTIVE 2: Cultivate relationships with;

- Watershed groups
- Interested residents
- Municipal officials
- Private road association members
- Private camping organizations
- County Commissioners and budget committee members
- Farmers and farm provider partners
- Foresters/ loggers/ woodlot owners
- Marine/ coastal groups
- Land trust members
- Federal/ State government agencies
- Educators
- Fish/wildlife groups
- Recreational clubs
- Conservation/environmental groups
- University of Maine Cooperative Extension Service
- Maine Audubon
- The Nature Conservancy
- Maine Rural Partners
- Maine Colleges and Universities

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

Strategy: Ensure that volunteers will have a meaningful learning opportunity in resource conservation. Acknowledge volunteer participation with written thank you notes or press releases as appropriate. Enhance the District's program and service capacity by involving citizens in community action issues. Form a volunteer initiative committee to develop formal recruitment and action plans.

TASKS FOR OBJECTIVE 3:

- Develop a volunteer recruitment plan
- Develop a volunteer enrollment form
- Use the volunteer recruitment plan to enlist volunteers for events

BOARD AND STAFF DEVELOPMENT- 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.

Objective 1: To develop and maintained a skill and diverse board

Strategy: Increase the diversity of the Board of Supervisors and Associated by recruiting members reflective of the District and community needs. Adhere to a realistic time frame for agenda items. Allow time at monthly meetings to talk about objectives, ideas, and natural resource issues. Expand representation from Sagadahoc County. Periodically review training needs with in-house and other resource specialists. Plan orientation meeting for new associated and supervisors. Identify needs and provide training program for supervisors and associates using in-house and other resource specialists. Utilize community expertise for training sessions on marketing and outreach methods, public relations, recruitment of new board members, prioritizing activities and programs, networking, fundraising, and strategic planning.

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 the topic should be

Objective 2: To invest in our management infrastructure

Strategy: Ensure that the board members have adequate training and development opportunities. Keep staff and work targeted to District priorities. Regularly evaluate staff needs, procedures, and policies.

TASKS FOR OBJECTIVE 2:

- Develop and 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

Objective 4: To expand and support staff to meet customer needs

Strategy: Periodically evaluate training needs and staff availability for new positions that will serve demonstrated customer needs and strengthen District capacity.

TASKS

- Provide staff training to build strengths of new employees
- Skills in financial stewardship planning
- Knowledge in legal employment practices and policies
- Experience in internal and external transparency and accountability
- Ability to articulate the District mission, accomplishments, and future programs
- Proficient in building District identity
- Expand board and staff awareness about work of other groups/partners
- Entertain discussions about potential collaboration with other groups/partners and conservation work