



Androscoggin Valley Soil & Water Conservation District
Annual Report 2025



Contents

Accomplishments in 2025 _____	3
Watershed Management _____	3
Environmental Education for K-12 Children _____	4
Read ME Agriculture Program _____	5
Conservation Landscape Certification Program _____	5
Native Plant Sale _____	5
Board Development _____	6
Contractor Certification Training _____	6
Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) _____	6
Cooperative Agreement + Partnership _____	6
Technical Assistance Program _____	6
Workshops and Events for the General Public _____	6
Digital Impact _____	7
Annual Plan of Operations 2026 _____	8
Long-Range Planning _____	13
Estimates of Staff Time Allocations for 2026 _____	14
Staff and Board Members 2026 _____	14
Proposed Budget for 2026 _____	15

Accomplishments in 2025

In 2025, the Androscoggin Valley Soil & Water Conservation District continued to make progress towards organizational goals. Below are some of the highlights:

Watershed Management

Support and management of our lakes and ponds has become a large and growing facet of our work for the past three years.

In January 2025, we began administering Clean Water Act funding for implementation of the Taylor Pond Watershed Protection Plan and Thompson Lake Watershed Protection Plan.

In the first year of the Taylor Pond project, we conducted 10 technical assistance visits, where our staff visited properties around the lake and offered free recommendation reports* we offered inventive solutions to stormwater erosion problems like adding native plant buffers or rain gardens, improving drainage through open top culverts or rolling grade dips and adding erosion control mulch to bare soil areas. Three of these residential projects were completed in 2025. We worked with the Town of Minot who completed a town road project to eliminate polluted stormwater runoff within the watershed. The town worked completely independently, without the use of grant funding, demonstrating their high level of stewardship of the natural resources in both their town, and neighboring cities. We hired an engineer to complete four engineered designs on private roads.* We hosted two workshops to improve landowner understanding of problems and solutions related to NPS pollution.

The Thompson Lake project also saw lots of success in its first year of the EPA Section 319 Grant. 10 technical assistance visits were conducted*, both by our staff and Oxford County SWCD staff. Most generated reports, while some chose not to move forward with Residential Matching Grants. One of these residential projects was completed in 2025.* Landowners improved their camp by adding vegetation and check dams to the areas where polluted runoff from the private road passes through their property and reaches the lake. We also completed 5 major NPS projects.* Three projects on town roads in Otisfield, where the town demonstrated a big interest in making improvements to protect the lake. The Town of Otisfield improved ditching, added road material, improved drainage, and installed a sediment pool to slow, mitigate and infiltrate runoff before it reaches the lake. Other major NPS projects were completed on a private road in Oxford, and the Agassiz Village summer camp in Poland. The Thompson Lake Environmental Association's (TLEA) Youth Conservation Corps (YCC) program was also a great success.* Completing 6 projects installing driplines and drywells, rain gardens and vegetative buffers, and adding erosion control mulch to cover bare soil. TLEA also increased their Build Better Buffers outreach program to increase lakeshore plantings around the watershed. We hosted 3 workshops to improve landowner understanding of problems and solutions related to NPS pollution.

In June 2025, we submitted an application for Clean Water Act funding for implementation of the Upper and Middle Range Pond Watershed Protection Plan; our project was approved in August 2025 and we expect grant funds to be awarded for this project with administration beginning in October 2026.

In April 2025, we submitted a Clean Water State Revolving Fund application on behalf of the Sabattus Pond Watershed Project and were approved for funding to conduct a watershed survey of Sabattus Pond in spring 2026.

In May 2025, we coordinated a watershed survey around Nequasset Lake in Woolwich, Wiscasset, and Dresden. Working closely with the Bath Water District, prepared a Watershed Survey Report and Watershed Protection Plan.

**funded in part by corresponding Sections of the US Environmental Protection Agency's Clean Water Act (319) administered by the Maine Department of Environmental Protection.*

Environmental Education for K-12 Children

We continue to provide free lessons and programming to schools, homeschool groups, public libraries, summer camps and more. Learning kits that can be rented by educators have allowed us to expand our offerings beyond the classroom hours our staff can physically facilitate. We encourage educators to host lessons outdoors, encouraging students to develop a connection with our local natural resources.

The District hosted two workshops on January 27 at Poland Professional Development Day. K-12 teachers in Poland and Mechanic Falls were able to look through our learning kits and learn how to access these materials.

The District hosted or co-hosted 7 youth programs:

- 2/25-2/26 – Stormwater Tells a Story – Richmond Middle – 80 6th + 7th graders
- 3/4 - Tracking and Mammals of Maine – St Doms, Auburn – 40 2nd graders
- 3/6 – Mammals of Maine Program – Greene Public Library – 4 children
- 4/28 – Southwest Regional Envirothon Competition – We coordinated venue logistics for the High School Environmental Competition at Evergreen Outdoor Environmental in Auburn this year. 30 students from two schools competed to go on to the State competition in Augusta. We coordinated 20 volunteers, venue, food, and supplies for this outdoor competition.
- 7/9 – Native Plants and Reading the Forested Landscape Program – Maine Community Integration – 19 students
- 5/29-5/30 Forest Trail Scavenger Hunt – Plant a Seed Day -- Marcia Buker Elementary – Richmond – 200 students K-5
- What Do Animals Do in Winter – Auburn Public Library – 3 children

Total number of youth impacted through our Environmental Ed programming: **376**

Read ME Agriculture Program

In 2025, District staff continued coordinating volunteers for **Read ME Agriculture** — a *Maine Agriculture in the Classroom* program—for 8 schools within Androscoggin and Sagadahoc counties. Our staff coordinated volunteers to read “Farmer Eva's Green Garden Life” to 57 classrooms over one week in early spring. Volunteer readers connected with students Pre-K to 4th grade, read a book about a farmer cultivating the smallest microbes in the soil to large community gatherings, and did an activity related to the story. Every classroom was gifted a copy of the book and teachers were given a teacher's guide for additional learning.

Total number of students impacted through Read ME Agriculture: **850+**

Total youth impacted through our programming: **1,226**

Conservation Landscape Certification Program

The Conservation Landscape Certification program is a free program for landowners to encourage better stewardship of our natural resources. Core criteria for certification address wildlife habitat, soil and water conservation practices, controlling invasive species, organic practices, and improving the land for overall ecosystem support. Participants are encouraged to complete a checklist of current practices on their property and then have a meeting with our staff to offer recommendations to improve their site.

The Conservation Landscape Certification program was developed by the Waldo County and Knox-Lincoln Counties Soil & Water Conservation Districts. In 2025, we have worked collaboratively with other SWCDs across the state to improve this program and increase staff capacity for site visits. We coordinated training sessions on May 5th and July 16th to create continuity between practitioners of the program. We improved the checklists to make them more user friendly, clear, and create maximum land improvements for residents.

In 2024, the District certified nine residential properties in Auburn, Lewiston, and Durham. In 2025, we conducted three site visits and prepared recommendation reports, although they did not receive a Certification.

Native Plant Sale

In May 2025, the District hosted its first annual Native Plant Sale. We worked with Marpa Farm & Nursery in Richmond, ME and Crystal Lake Farm & Nursery in Washington, ME to stock native shrubs, trees, and herbaceous perennials. We also sold live stakes through Maine Live Stakes. Pick up day was held at Open Heart Farm in Auburn and Maily Waterfront Park in Bowdoinham on May 23rd. In total, we sold 1,384 plants in 121 orders. We were so thrilled to see the enthusiasm in our district for native plants.

Board Development

In 2025, Chloe Meyers—co-owner of Open Heart Farm in Auburn, ME—and Jeff Stern of Poland; environmental consultant and former employee of Soil and Water Conservation Districts—joined the board as associate supervisors. They join Steve Sinisi, Katie Carville, Kathy Shaw, Eric Cousens, Jeremiah Burch, and Tom Gilbert on our active Board of Supervisors.

Contractor Certification Training

Maine DEP offers a Voluntary Contractor Certification Program in Advanced Erosion and Sediment Control practices. This course covers best management practices to prevent nonpoint source pollution from construction activity, which is critical to protecting the quality of Maine waters. The District hosted two certification trainings in March and May 2025 with 37 contractors in total who attended.

Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)

Cooperative Agreement + Partnership

AVSWCD works closely with the Lewiston USDA Field Office, where our offices are co-located. We have a cooperative agreement and long-standing partnership that helps both organizations work better with farmers across Androscoggin + Sagadahoc counties. We help with specific tasks, office management, data filing, field visits, communication, host events on specific topics, promote NRCS cost-share programs, and host the Local Working Group meeting for the two counties each year.

Technical Assistance Program

The District, in collaboration with area professionals, offers technical assistance services to local landowners. Services available include erosion and sediment control plans, vegetative buffer and bank stabilization guidance, permitting assistance, gravel road maintenance guidance, event and workshop planning, and education/outreach plans. In 2025, the District provided services to 33 different property owners addressing revegetation and erosion control. A 65% increase from services provided in 2024.

Workshops and Events for the General Public

The District hosted or co-hosted 13 educational events for the public:

- Pruning Old Forgotten Apple Trees, Auburn – March 1 – 30 attendees
- Identifying Trees of Maine, Lewiston – March 2 – 19 attendees
- Pruning Old Forgotten Apple Trees, Auburn – March 9 – 10 attendees
- Erosion Control Training – March 13 – 8 attendees
- Auburn Homestead Goods + Farmers Market Outreach Event – April 4 – 50 attendees

- Apple Grafting Workshop – April 5 – 19 attendees
- Mushroom Log Inoculation – April 6 – 20 attendees
- Erosion Control Training – May 29 – 24 attendees
- Gravel Roads Maintenance, Taylor Pond – June 6 – 7 attendees
- Gravel Roads Maintenance, Thompson Lake – June 27 – 26 attendees
- Build Better Buffers, Thompson Lake – August 21 – 25 adults
- Lake Friendly Landscaping, Taylor Pond – August 25 – 31 attendees
- Common Ground Fair Outreach Event – September 19 – 150 people
- Live Staking Installation Workshop Nov 7 -- 19 attendees

Total workshop and training attendees: **438**

Digital Impact

Staff worked to improve our visibility online through regular Facebook and Instagram posts and reels, more resources on the website, and monthly newsletter. Across all of our digital platforms, we noticed an increase in views and contact with existing and new customers.

Some Highlights

232k views on Facebook

26k website views

100% increase in 1 minute views on FB

101 New Newsletter Subscribers

67% increase in Newsletter Open Rate

1408 reactions on Facebook

200 shares on FB

Annual Plan of Operations 2026

In 2026, the Androscoggin Valley Soil & Water Conservation District will continue to focus on three goals to fulfill our mission of promoting the conservation and stewardship of soil, water, woodlands, and wildlife habitat in the Androscoggin and Sagadahoc Counties as communities adapt to a changing climate. These include 1) continuing and improving our education and outreach 2) provisioning technical services to individuals and municipalities in our service area and 3) strengthening partnerships landowners and the National Resource Conservation Services (NRCS) and other local, state, and federal conservation organizations.

1. EDUCATION AND OUTREACH.

We will educate land users in Androscoggin and Sagadahoc Counties to encourage conservation of natural resources.

Objective 1.1: Provide quality educational opportunities and programs for adults.

TASKS FOR OBJECTIVE 1.1:

- Host forestry, water quality, and soil health workshops in both counties, e.g.:
 - Soil Health Series
 - Nonpoint source pollution for lake property owners
 - Tree Identification
 - Forest Management
- Host invasive plant management workshops.
- Host two DEP Erosion and Sediment Control trainings
- Host 2-4 events highlighting NRCS practices, e.g.:
 - Local Working Group Meeting
 - “Working with Farmers” - High Tunnels, Irrigation, Ponds, Low tunnels.
 - “Managing for Wildlife” - Buffers, Hedgerow, Pollinators, Brush Piles, Patch Cuts, Snag Creation, and others.

Objective 1.2: Expand youth education programs and opportunities.

TASKS FOR OBJECTIVE 1.2:

- Contact every school in the District and continue to build up to date contact list of teachers, staff and educators interested in our programming
- Expand outreach for the rental program for our learning kits
- Hone and expand outdoor education programming by working with other organizations to fill outdoor education gaps
- Re-apply for the Onion Foundation Grant in 2026
- Identify new funding opportunities for youth education, like Sewell Foundation

2. TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

We will provide technical assistance to landowners in Androscoggin and Sagadahoc Counties to promote conservation and address natural resource concerns.

Objective 2.1: Provide direct technical assistance to landowners and users.

TASKS FOR OBJECTIVE 2.1:

- Improve on selected District services:
 - Erosion and sediment control plans
 - Stormwater control plans
 - Conservation Landscape Certification
 - Gravel road maintenance, and long-range gravel road maintenance plans
 - Permit applications (Maine DEP Permit by Rule)
- Identify training needed to fulfil these services in-house. If services cannot be completed in-house, identify entities who can perform these services and initiate contact.
 - Work with MACD Employees Committee to improve training for District staff across the state.
- Develop strategies to better inform the public of technical assistance services.
 - Inform municipalities of our technical assistance services
 - Revegetation plans for shoreline violations
 - Conservation Landscape Certification
 - Host programs and informational sessions to enlist new clients, e.g.:
 - Conservation Landscape Certification
 - Lake Friendly Landscaping, Improving Buffers and Livestaking workshops
 - NPS Pollution Workshops

Objective 2.2: Improve the opportunity to implement conservation practices on the land by using programs and grants to assist with funding.

TASKS FOR OBJECTIVE 2.2:

- Assist with watershed surveys, write watershed protection plans, and apply for EPA Section 319 grant on behalf of lake communities in our District.
- Encourage landowners, including municipalities, to participate in the Conservation Landscape Certification program.
- Identify new funding opportunities to implement conservation practices (e.g. NACD)

3. PUBLIC RELATIONS

We will work to expand our presence to further enhance our ability to service the residents of Androscoggin and Sagadahoc Counties.

Objective 3.1: Seek public input.

TASKS FOR OBJECTIVE 3.1:

- Host the Annual Local Working Group meeting with NRCS
- Ask event attendees to offer suggestions on programming opportunities and how the District can better serve the public.
- Ask participants of District programs what natural resource problems they encounter.
- Create polls via Instagram and facebook to engage our followers to provide us with input on more programming and services

Objective 3.2: Increase the District's visibility.

TASKS FOR OBJECTIVE 3.2:

- Evaluate and update the outreach plan to improve our media presence

- Increase online presence through Instagram posts and videos
- Send special or larger event promotions to local newspapers
- Send consistent monthly newsletters (on website and via our email) that states the District's purpose, events, volunteer opportunities, NRCS programs, successes, and contains at least one educational article
- Distribute AVSWCD stickers for free promo.
- Set up a display booth at Topsham Fair (August)
- Table at Auburn Public Library Homestead Goods and Farmers Market Events
- Table and have children's activities at local events to increase visibility, engage local youth, and advertise for events/programs. Possible events include:
 - RiverFest (June)
 - ALT River Clean Up (Sept)
 - Lewiston Farmers Market (May-August)

Objective 3.3 Strengthen relationships with targeted groups.

TASKS FOR OBJECTIVE 3.3:

- To strengthen relationships with targeted groups (farmers, foresters/loggers/woodlot owners, urban communities) we will:
 - Host programs on topics they may be interested in
 - Advertise in places they might see or frequent.
 - Post social media posts on topics in which they might have an interest

4. FUNDING

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

Objective 4.1: Expand or maintain funding from traditional providers.

TASKS FOR OBJECTIVE 4.1:

- Maintain funding from Androscoggin and Sagadahoc Counties
 - Attend County Commissioner meetings with updates about District activities and successes with County specific details.
 - Board Members will attend 2-3 meetings annually to update Commissioners.
- Continue to keep open communication with state and federal partners about District programs and services.
- Maintain NRCS funding and partnership.
- Assist MACD petition in increased DACF funding for each District by providing written testimony.

Objective 4.2: Secure sponsorships

TASKS FOR OBJECTIVE 4.2:

- Follow our new sponsorship model and approach local businesses for sponsorship.
- Promote donation account with links on both the website and the Facebook account for visitors to donate.
- Find sponsorships for workshops and public forum meetings.

Objective 4.3: Generate funds to enable us to increase our level of service.

TASKS FOR OBJECTIVE 4.3:

- Grow our newly established Annual Native Plant Sale to increase district sales and services provided to our community
- Increase or maintain the number of paid programs.
- Sell and/or rent materials on websites.
- Explore additional fundraising ideas and opportunities.
- Explore grant funding opportunities.
- Explore ideas and collaboration for large public event

5. PARTNERSHIPS

To improve District effectiveness and capacity, we will strengthen and expand our partnerships.

Objective 5.1: Strengthen partnerships with local groups.

TASKS FOR OBJECTIVE 5.1:

- Expand board and staff awareness about work of other groups/partners.
- Discuss potential collaboration with other groups/partners on all programs, projects and activities.

Objective 5.2: Expand the District's capacity with a volunteer program.

TASKS FOR OBJECTIVE 5.2:

- Enlist volunteers for events.
- Network with Master Gardener Volunteers and Maine Master Naturalists for well trained volunteers in the conservation realm looking to complete hours.

6. BOARD AND STAFF DEVELOPMENT

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

Objective 6.1: Develop and maintain a skilled and diverse board.

TASKS FOR OBJECTIVE 6.1:

- Recruit new associate supervisors.
 - Publish a press release describing District activities, inviting the public to the next meeting, and the need for dedicated Associate Supervisors.
 - Annually offer a training opportunity at a Board Meeting, use suggestions from Board and staff about what the topic should be.
 - Volunteer recruitment
 - Grant Seeking

Objective 6.2: Expand and/or support staff to invest in our management infrastructure.

TASKS FOR OBJECTIVE 6.2:

- Board will identify training opportunities for staff members.
- Board will set aside thirty minutes quarterly to check the progress of this annual plan and annual work plan and identify places that may need improvement.
- Board will conduct annual staff assessment reviews.
- Attend training workshops and seminars quarterly to build strengths and new skills.
- Gain experience in internal and external transparency and accountability.

Long-Range Planning

	2-Year Plan (2025)	5-Year Plan (2028)	10-Year Plan (2033)
Educational Outreach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Add 5 schools to youth program. Add field trips to offerings 10-15 events for the public annually 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Add 10 schools to youth program. Expand offerings for field trips. Up to 24 events for the public annually 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assistant for events Youth internships 30 events for the public annually
Technical Assistance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve public outreach for services. Develop partnership model to offer more services. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff trained to provide most technical assistance in-house or contracted to other Districts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Have a full list of technical assistance providers to distribute and cover all of Androscoggin and Sagadahoc counties
Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 50% self-funded Create sponsorship model. Donation campaign (add donate option to website) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 50% self-funded Develop sponsorship model. Try one big fundraiser event. Service Provider grant funding (ex. CRP, Ch. 319) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 75% self-funded Maintain sponsorship model with annual dues. Continue Service Provider grant funding
Partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Two new partnerships Develop volunteer system 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> District manager takes on networking tasks and increases partnerships. Implement volunteer system 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Robust partnerships with many local organizations
Board and Staff Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minimum 7 board members 2 full time staff members 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minimum 10 board members Implement board member training system. 3 staff members 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain 10 board members and improve diversity. 3 staff members

Estimates of Staff Time Allocations for 2026

<u>Project</u>	<u>Estimated % of Time</u>
District Administration	25 %
NRCS Support	8 %
Technical Assistance	10 %
Outreach/Education	23 %
Watershed Management	34 %

Staff and Board Members 2026

Staff

Emma Lorusso
Project Director
Date of hire: August 30, 2021
projectdirector@androscoogginswcd.org

Lily Gallagher
Education Coordinator + Technician
Date of hire: January 12, 2026
lgallagher@androscoogginswcd.org

Board of Supervisors

Treasurer: Katie Carville
carvillekc@roadrunner.com

Assistant Treasurer: Kathy Shaw
kath@valleyviewfarm.me

Supervisor: Jeremiah Burch
ranger.jeremiah.burch@gmail.com

Supervisor: Eric Cousens
ecousens@auburnmaine.gov

Associate Supervisor: Tom Gilbert
thomas.gilbert@maine.gov

Associate Supervisor: Chloe Meyers
openheartfarmme@gmail.com

Associate Supervisor: Jeff Stern
sternjm@hotmail.com

Proposed Budget for 2026

Revenue: Direct Funding	\$ 67,500
Additional revenue	\$ 70,100
Expenditure: Total payroll	\$ (115,400)
Expenditures other than payroll	\$ (30,620)

NET REVENUE		\$ (8,420)
Projected expenditures (not payroll)		
Advertising & marketing	\$ 700	
Outside technical services	\$ 5,000	
Equipment	\$ 1,200	
Memberships & Subscriptions	\$ 780	
Board Stipends	\$ 3,000	
MACD dues	\$ 2,000	
Internet	\$ 1,560	
Software	\$ 2,160	
Professional development	\$ 600	
Workshop/event expenses	\$ 4,000	
Travel	\$ 2,500	
Other (supplies, insurance)	\$ 120	
Plant Sale Expenditures	\$ 7,000	
Grant expenditures		
Total	\$ 30,620	

Projected revenue (not direct funding)		
DACF IFP	\$ 1,000	
MACD NRCS-TA	\$ 7,100	
NRCS COOP Ag	\$ 6,400	
Thompson Lake -319	\$ 11,000	
Taylor Pond - 319	\$ 12,000	
Range Pond-319	\$ -	
Sabattus Pond - Survey/Report	\$ 3,100	
Tripp Pond - Survey/Report/WBPP	\$ 5,000	
Events/Workshops	\$ 5,000	
Professional Trainings	\$ 2,000	
Technical Assistance	\$ 2,500	
Plant Sale	\$ 15,000	
Total	\$ 70,100	

254 Goddard Road, Lewiston ME 04240

androscogginswcd.org