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# BERKSHIRE CONSERVATION DISTRICT FY 2005 ANNUAL REPORT

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## CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Robert Lear

As the leaves piled up on my lawn during this season of change, it occurred to me that this year had indeed been one of great change for the Berkshire Conservation District. Many long time relationships have changed or ended and new ones have begun which hopefully will be rewarding for many years to come.

At the very end of 2004, just before Christmas, our vice chairman and long time member of the district, Adrian "Beau" Meyer, passed away after a long illness. For a good many years he had provided the district with wonderful accommodations for the annual tree and bulb sales at his property in Peru, and had been providing us with the bird and bat houses (with his distinctive moniker branded on the back) which we have been offering as well. A larger than life personality, he worked tirelessly for the district as well as many other organizations on behalf of the forests and agricultural lands of western Massachusetts. He will be greatly missed by many, and I hope that our efforts to set up a scholarship in his name will be helpful to future students and keep his memory alive.

During the first part of this year, Fred Turner decided it was time to step down as chairman of the district board, a position he had held for many years. I am sure that you will all join me in thanking

Fred for helping to guide the district in its conservation programs over the years as well as providing a good liaison with SCS/NRCS. Although stepping down as chair, Fred plans to remain as a member of the district board so we will not lose all of his valuable experience.

Following the time-honored tradition of many committees, the two officer vacancies created have been quickly filled by two new members of the board before they had a chance to have second thoughts. Yours truly agreed to take on the chairmanship position with only a couple of years as a full member on the board. I will be learning on the job, and hope that I will be able to carry on the tradition established by Fred and others who have come before me.

Aimee Thayer, who had recently come on the board as an associate, and then was quickly elevated to take Adrian's spot as a full member, has graciously agreed to take on the position of vice chairman. She has already demonstrated a wide knowledge of conservation programs and will be a great asset to the district in the future. Welcome aboard Aimee!

This summer, District Conservationist Bruce Philbrick retired from NRCS after 30-odd years of working with farmers and other landowners here in Berkshire County. Thank you Bruce for your many years of service, and we all wish you a happy and healthy retirement.

In a surprisingly quick decision, for which we thank them, NRCS has appointed Kate Parsons from the Hadley office to fill the position of DC. During the three months or so that she has been here to date, Kate has shown both knowledge and enthusiasm for the position, all of which bodes well for the future of our Berkshire County programs. Welcome, Kate!

Finally, only a week or two ago, Arthur "Sonny" Williams retired from his position as County Executive Director for Farm Services Agency here in Berkshire County. Sonny is well known to farmers and other landowners throughout the county due to his efforts at helping them deal with many conservation programs over the years. In addition, he is a long time member of the district and has served as its treasurer for many years. At present, he plans to continue on the board at least for a while. Congratulations Sonny, and best wishes in your retirement.

These many changes have not left me any room to talk about the various conservation programs and activities over the year. And yet, in a way, spending some time speaking about these people really does tell us something about our various successes, for these are some of the people who make the programs run in the past, present and future.

## **NRCS ACCOMPLISHMENTS**

Kate Parsons

Hello Conservation District supervisors, members, family and friends! I am excited to serve as the district conservationist in Berkshire County and have already greatly enjoyed meeting you and some of the great farmers in the county. In cooperation with the Berkshire Conservation District, I look forward to providing the farmers and other

landowners in Berkshire County with technical assistance that will help protect our great natural resources.

Below is a summary of the major NRCS activities and accomplishments from 2004.

- Conservation Security Program (CSP) - The north and central portions of the Housatonic and Farmington River watersheds were selected as one of 202 watersheds nationwide included in the 2005 CSP program. CSP is a voluntary stewardship program that provides financial and technical assistance to promote the conservation and improvement of soil, water, air, energy, plant and animal life, and other conservation purposes on Tribal and private working lands. CSP recognizes the efforts of farmers who have been practicing conservation and taking care of land for some time.
- 5 Berkshire county farmers with land totaling 550 acres were accepted into CSP.
- Comprehensive nutrient management plans (CNMPs) were developed for 4 farms and implemented by 3 farms.
- Land users were aided in planning approximately 1220 acres of crop land and 280 acres of grazing land.
- Land users were aided in implementing grazing practices on approximately 225 acres.
- Soil erosion was reduced by approximately 1345 tons on 656 acres of cropland.
- Invasive species control was implemented on 5 acres of forest land under a Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program (WHIP) contract.

USDA through the Farmland and Ranch Protection Program (FRPP), in cooperation with the State of Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources' (MDAR) Agricultural Preservation Restriction (APR) program, permanently preserved 74 acres of farmland on two different farms.

Various landowners were provided engineering and other conservation technical assistance, helping them to protect their natural resources.

### **MASSACHUSETTS ENVIROTHON**

**Congratulations to 4-H Bristol County, the overall first place winner, of the 2005 Massachusetts Envirothon.**

Next year's envirothon will be held May 11th, 2006 at the Blackstone River & Canal Heritage Park in Uxbridge, MA. Volunteers are being sought to help out with this worth while event. This years current topic will be: Acting Locally For Climate Change

### **Berkshire Community College 2005 Scholarship Recipient**

Congratulations to Brett Dalzell, this year's recipient of the \$250 Berkshire Conservation District Environmental Science Scholarship at Berkshire Community College. Guidelines for this scholarship require that the student be a second year environmental studies student, pursuing studies at BCC that will lead to a career in natural resources. Brett hopes to someday become a wildlife biologist. He plans to graduate BCC next year and then go on to earn a bachelor's degree.

## **ANNUAL SALES**

The Berkshire County Conservation District sold 8700 seedlings at our annual spring sale and 965 packages of bulbs at last year's annual fall bulb sale. Thanks to all the volunteers who help make our fundraisers successful. This year we had to move the Peru pickup site from Beau's down the road a piece to the Burke's. Everything fell into place and the customers found us just the same. The 2006 spring sale brochure will be mailed out by February 2006. Proceeds from these sales go towards providing technical assistance to landowners, the BCC scholarship and environmental educational materials to schools in Berkshire County.

## **Berkshire Conservation District FY 2005 Annual Meeting**

ZUCCHINI'S RESTAURANT  
PITTSFIELD, MA  
6PM WEDNESDAY  
November 16, 2005

<b>BOARD OF SUPERVISORS</b>	
Robert Lear	Chairman
Aimee Thayer	Vice-Chairman
Arthur Williams	Treasurer
Dennis Mareb	
Ned Kirchner	
Dave Jurczak	
Fred Turner	
<b>ASSOCIATE SUPERVISORS</b>	
Daniel Galusha	
Frances Turner	
<b>STAFF</b>	
Deborah Burke	Administrator
Beverly Daignault	Secretarial Support