



BERKSHIRE CONSERVATION DISTRICT

FY 2012 ANNUAL REPORT

July 1st, 2011-June 30th, 2012

Around this time last year, the district welcomed Aimee V. Annichiarico as the new administrator. Aimee is a resident of North Adams and a recent graduate of Antioch University New England. She has met the responsibilities with energy and enthusiasm and has been successful in the position, thanks to the help of longtime former administrator Deborah Burke, now an associate supervisor, and guidance from the board, particularly chairman Bob Lear. She is in the office twice a week keeping the district moving forward in all of its activities.

Sadly, this past April, the district lost a longtime friend, Aimee E. Thayer, who served both as a supervisor and associate supervisor for many years. Aimee's loss was deeply felt by many people and organizations in our community, including the Farm Service Agency and the town of Lanesborough. We will keep her fondly in our memories and have been accepting donations in her name.

The district continues to be financially challenged by a lack of governmental funding and remains solely dependent on the proceeds of fundraising sales and private donations. The board of supervisors has created a finance committee and has spent many hours, and will continue to do so, strategizing how to close the budget gap and plan for the future. The district has seen its share of ups and downs through the economic crises of recent years, but the board of supervisors is confident that the district will be able to continue its environmental scholarships, education and community initiatives, and support of NRCS assistance to Berkshire County residents well into the future.

We want to thank all of our friends who have supported us within the last fiscal year: customers, donors, volunteers, and associates. We could not have done it without you!

ANNUAL SALES

The fall flowering bulb sale and the spring tree and shrub sale continue to provide local residents, organizations, schools and municipalities with flowers and plants to promote beauty in our community, gardening and food production, and reforestation. They also provide the district with the majority of its operational funds. Unfortunately, the district has seen a decreasing trend over the last several years in profits from these sales. The supervisors continue to strategize on how to increase profits.

The tree and shrub sale work week at the end of April took place at the home of Ned and Kate Kirchner, whom we thank for their hospitality and providing the district with work and storage space. The work week drew a number of hardworking volunteers who dedicated hours of their time to organizing orders and making the sale possible. The district made donations of overstock to local organizations including Westside Initiative community gardens and Hebert Arboretum.

In November and December of last year, Aimee held an online holiday sale promoting the popular pocket nature guides as stocking stuffers and it was a hit! This year the district has added additional nature themed items to the online store, including nature guides by local author Phyllis Pryzby, nature print note cards (Peterson's song birds, dragonflies, owls, and butterflies), and the newly released Peterson's Backyard Birds of the Northeast identification poster. Sales for this holiday season are going on now! Order online (www.berkshireconservation.org) or by phone (413) 443-1776 ext. 102.

BCC 2012 SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENT

Congratulations to Matthew Ferrara, student at Berkshire Community College, and the recipient of this year's scholarship award. Matthew hails from Millriver, MA and is part of the Environmental Science program at BCC.

He has worked at Haymeadow Pond Farm in Southfield, MA and is interested in environmental science and sustainability. He hopes to pursue a bachelor's degree after graduating from BCC.

MASSACHUSETTS ENVIROTHON

The Envirothon program started in 1979 in Pennsylvania and was first known as the Environmental Olympics. Schools form teams of students to compete in a statewide academically rigorous day of events focused on forestry, soil, water, and wildlife. The 2012 MA Envirothon event took place in May at Blackstone River and Canal Heritage State Park in Uxbridge, MA. The current issue was Sustainable Stormwater Management. Registered Envirothon teams from Berkshire County were Hoosac Valley High School, Mount Everett Regional High School, and Taconic High School. Taconic placed 3rd in the Soils events. The district continues to be an annual Envirothon sponsor.

Budget Updates

The Massachusetts Association of Conservation Districts (MACD) and State Commission continue to advocate on behalf of Massachusetts conservation districts requesting funding from the government. This has been done by attending many political meetings and events and putting together a FY2014 budget proposal on behalf of districts in the commonwealth.

The district finance committee drew up a FY2013 organizational budget which was approved in July 2012. The district is facing roughly a \$4,000 deficit in FY2013 and the finance committee will continue to meet over the fiscal year to attempt to address this.

Board of Supervisors and Staff

This year we welcomed Bill Florek, horticulture instructor at Monument Mountain high school to the board of supervisors. Bob Lear was re-elected as chairman. Tony Boyer was elected vice-chair, and Kevin Zimmer as treasurer. Administrator Aimee V. Annichiarico was elected secretary of the board. Deb Burke passed her duties on to new administrator Aimee at the end of 2011. She was extremely generous in helping part-time for a few months after Aimee was hired, and now assists the board of supervisors as an associate member.

Local Work Group Initiative

In FY2011 the district received grant funding from MACD to develop a model working group in Berkshire County to assess countywide conservation needs and natural resources. Within FY2012 the district hired Jess Toro of Native Habitat Restoration to hold a public meeting. The public meeting was held on July 21, 2011 at Berkshire Botanical Gardens and was attended by many local environmental professionals and county residents. The meeting outlined natural resources found in the county and perceived threats. Grant funds were renewed by MACD with the 2nd annual meeting of the Local Working Group taking place in FY2013.

District Initiatives

The district has been striving to connect with local community members and organizations to foster collaborative partnerships and support for community conservation projects. The district attended the Pittsfield Beautiful Round-Table and the Spring Tonic events last March in order to network and promote the district. We have been in contact with organizations such as Pittsfield Tree Watch, Hebert Arboretum, and Westside Initiative community gardens, to name a few. Our chairman Bob Lear also continues to be involved in our partner organizations serving as a voting member of the State Commission, the Berkshire/Pioneer RC&D Council, as well as the MA Forest Landowners Association.

This fiscal year the district has taken steps in going paperless! Although we are required to keep some records in hard copy, we have transferred to electronic payroll and bank statements and continue to try to find ways to reduce our paper consumption.

The district continues to train staff and supervisors on compliance with the MA Open Meeting Law governed by the Attorney General's Office. We have made remarkable progress on this by increasing our presence online by posting agendas and meeting times on our blog site and website and updating our contact information for

town offices. The district also published a public notice in March about our monthly meetings which are held every third Tuesday of the month at 4pm in the conference room at 78 Center Street, Suite 206 in Pittsfield.

Financial Review

Both the bulb and tree sale incomes fell short of the last fiscal year. The FY2011 bulb sale net income was \$2,977.21 and the FY2012 net income was \$1,834.34. The FY2011 tree sale net income was \$7,691.81 and the FY2012 net income was \$6,711.35. The district spent \$67 on the FY2010 Annual Meeting whereas it gained \$128 in proceeds from the FY2011 Annual Meeting. Payroll salaries decreased slightly from last year but payroll processing fees increased due to having two staff members on the books for part of the year while Aimee trained as the new administrator. The costs of website maintenance, insurances, and supplies have increased slightly over the last year. The MACD LWG grant was renewed for \$4,500 and the district began receiving donations in memory of Aimee Thayer. Donations made to the BCC Scholarship Fund and the Adrian Meyer UMASS Fund are included in the annual sales incomes and are not reported separately. The district continues to receive overhead resources from NRCS including computer access and a small office within the main office suite on the second floor of the Conte Federal Building in Pittsfield. See the attached income and expense report for further details.

About the Berkshire Conservation District

Founded in 1946, the Berkshire Conservation District is one of more than 3,000 conservation districts across the country authorized by state law and guided by an elected volunteer Board of Supervisors. Berkshire Conservation District is a not for profit, tax-exempt agency dedicated to the conservation of natural resources in Berkshire County. The District strives to promote environmental education and local conservation efforts through community partnerships and also provides annual scholarships to local environmental students. The district is a sponsor of the MassEnvirothon program and a member of the MA Conservation Districts Association. The District works closely with the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) on matters of local soil, water, and environmental conservation. Conservation planning and services are available to qualifying farmers, and land owners. For more information, call the Pittsfield NRCS Field Office at (413) 443-1776 ext. 3 or visit www.ma.nrcs.usda.gov/.

Board of Supervisors

Robert Lear, Chairman
Anthony Boyer, Vice-Chair
Kevin Zimmer, Treasurer
Dennis Mareb
Ned Kirchner
William Florek
David Jurczak

Associate Supervisors.

Deborah Burke
David Frazier

Administrator/Secretary

Aimee V. Annichiarico

District Conservationist

Kate Parsons, NRCS

FY2012 Income and Expense Report		
July 1, 2011-June 30, 2012		
<u>INCOME</u>		Total
Events/Sales	2011 Bulb Sale	\$4,674.69
	2012 Tree Sale	\$14,571.03
	FY 2011 Annual Meeting	\$920.00
	Product Sales	\$839.49
Grants	LWG Grant	\$4,500.00
Donations	Donations - Aimee E. Thayer	\$145.00
TOTAL INCOME		\$25,650.21
<u>EXPENSES</u>		Total
Events/Sales	2011 Bulb Sale	\$2,840.35
	2012 Tree Sale	\$7,859.68
	FY 2011 Annual Meeting	\$791.90
	Local Working Group	\$3,800.00
Payroll	Payroll – Deborah Burke	\$2,972.96
	Payroll - Aimee Annichiarico	\$4,606.79
	Payroll Processing Fees	\$720.95
	Payroll Taxes	\$2,175.99
Administrative	BCC Scholarship Award	\$250.00
	Donation to MassEnvirothon	\$50.00
	Insurance	\$855.00
	Postage	\$352.00
	Website Maintenance	\$422.50
	MACD Membership	\$25.00
	Supplies ₁	\$1,773.63
	MDAR License	\$70.00
	Conference Fees	\$42.00
	Unassigned Administrative Expense ₂	\$1,403.88
TOTAL EXPENSES		\$31,012.63
INCOME LESS EXPENSES		-\$5,362.42

₁ May include product inventory and office supplies

₂ May include reimbursements for expenses or product inventory



Berkshire County Accomplishments

In 2012, the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), in conjunction with the Berkshire Conservation District and our other partners had another successful year implementing conservation practices.

☼ \$774,470 of financial assistance was provided to landowners to aid in the implementation of the following conservation practices:

Access Road- Ag Waste	1910 sf
Access Road- Erosion Control	3130 lf
Ag Energy Plan	3 no
Animal Trail & Walkway	21,980 sf
Cover Crop	19.4 ac
Early Successional Habitat: (grass/old field)	49.2 ac
Early Successional Habitat: (shrub/young forest)	43.2 ac
Fence	6337 lf
Forage Harvest Management	63.2 ac
Forest Management Plan	5 no
Forest Stand Improvement	19.7 ac
Heavy Use Area	1 no

Nutrient Management	420.7 ac
Oak Regeneration	27.9 ac
Pasture & Hayland Planting	18.4 ac
Pest Management (Invasives control)	809 ac
Pipeline	325 lf
Prescribed Grazing	26.8 ac
Roof Structure (waste storage, heavy use area)	1 no
Seasonal High Tunnel	4 no
Waste Storage Facility	1 no
Waste Utilization	89.1 ac
Watering Facility	1 no
Wetland Wildlife Habitat Management (wood turtle)	3.8 ac

☼ **CONSERVATION PLANNING-** New conservation plans were developed on over 2200 acres of crop, hay, pasture, forest land and wetland. Assistance was provided by partnerships with NRCS, MACD, MassWildlife and the MA DCR.

Financial assistance was obligated for 2082 of these acres, including land operated by one Limited Resource Producer and one Socially Disadvantaged Producer. The new obligations are as follows:

☼ **EQIP-** 35 applications were accepted and 31 contracts were awarded for a total of \$419,743 on 1917 ac. (Environmental Quality Incentives Program) Focus: Invasive species control, forest stand improvement, early successional habitat, forest erosion control, fencing, livestock watering and prescribed grazing, season extension and forest management plans.

Fund Pool	Landowners	Funds	Acres
Certified Organic (Pasture & hayland)	1	\$17,590	52
Forest mgmt plans:	6	\$9971	607
Forest land:	15	\$264,047	1150
Headquarters (Compost)	1	\$46,588	2
Limited resource producer: (Forest land)	1	\$19,754	43
Pasture & Hayland	2	\$33,710	60
Seasonal high tunnel	5	\$28,083	3
	31	\$419,743	1917

- ☀️ **WHIP**- 3 applications were accepted and 3 contracts were awarded for a total of \$95,686 on 165 ac. (Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program) Focus: New England Cottontail under the Working Lands For Wildlife Initiative
 - Three workshops were held in conjunction with MassWildlife in the New England Cottontail Focal areas to promote habitat restoration.

☀️ **EWP**- (Emergency Watershed Protection Program)- Funding was allocated to protect sewer lines, public roadways and one house in 6 towns as a result of streambank erosion damage from Tropical Storm Irene.

☀️ **FRPP** (Farm and Ranchlands Protection Program)- 3 farms were permanently protected from development in cooperation with the MA DAR Agricultural Preservation Restriction (APR) program. The farms total 737 acres with 62% of the soils being prime or state and locally important. This includes 445 acres on beautiful Baldwin Hill in Egremont.

☀️ **ECP** (Emergency Conservation Program): The NRCS office provided assistance to the Farm Service Agency (FSA) with assessing damage from Tropical Storm Irene on 11 farms.

Photos from 2012 Implementation



Roofed Heavy Use Area & Waste Storage Facility



Seasonal High Tunnel



Phragmites Control in high-value wetlands



Early Successional Habitat Restoration

For more information about the MA Natural Resources Conservation Service visit <http://www.ma.nrcs.usda.gov/>.