



BERKSHIRE CONSERVATION DISTRICT FY 2007 ANNUAL REPORT



MASSACHUSETTS ENVIROTHON

Congratulations to 4-H Bristol County, the overall first place winner of the 2007 Massachusetts Envirothon. On May 10, 2007, nearly 350 Bay State high school students from 40 public and private schools across the commonwealth, along with nearly 200 coaches, judges and volunteers, converged on Mount Wachusett Community College in Gardner, Massachusetts for the 20th Annual Mass. Envirothon. The Envirothon is a statewide competition that tests students' knowledge of aquatics, forestry, soils, wildlife, and environmental issues. This year's topic was "Energy Conservation and Renewable Energy for Massachusetts Communities."

New Envirothon Format

In response to the increasing number of participating teams, the 2008 Envirothon will have a new format, consisting of a three day event. Teams will choose one of the two competition dates, May 6th or May 7th, 2008 when they register. A final competition event and award ceremony will be held on Saturday, May 17th, 2008. At the state finals, the top 4 placing teams from the combined two competition days will offer their presentation to judges and the final winners will be determined. Parents, family members, school reps and all teams may also attend to watch the presentation and awards ceremony. This year's event will be hosted by Hopkinton State Park, in Hopkinton, MA.

ADRIAN MEYER SCHOLARSHIP FUND

In April 2007, UMass contacted us to coordinate a fundraising and phonathon campaign for the Adrian Meyer Scholarship Fund. A fundraising letter was drafted and the kickoff will be in September 2007. In order to make this scholarship a reality, a minimum of \$25,000 needs to be raised.

ANNUAL FUNDRAISING SALES



The Berkshire County Conservation District sold over 7600 seedlings to 177 customers at our annual spring sale and 745 packages of bulbs to 90 customers at last year's annual fall bulb sale. Thanks to all the volunteers who help make our fundraisers successful. Every year the Master Gardeners donate their time and talent to helping us out with preparing for the sale as well as doing soil testing on pickup day. We are very fortunate to have them.

The website, www.berkshireconservation.org, is doing very well and many customers are now making their purchases online. The 2008 spring sale brochure will be mailed out by February 2008. Proceeds from these sales go towards providing technical assistance to landowners, workshops, the BCC scholarship and environmental educational materials to schools in Berkshire County.

DONATED OVERSTOCK



Becket Washington School received dozens of overstock plants last year. The groups that were involved in the removal of Ballou Dam in front of the school used the donated plants to help restore the stream bank habitat this spring.

ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCE SCHOLARSHIP

Congratulations to **Nathan Joyner**, 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.



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Berkshire County Landowners Attended Wildlife Habitat Workshop

The **Berkshire Conservation District**, in conjunction with the **Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)** and the **MA Division of Fisheries and Wildlife (MassWildlife)**, held a hands-on-workshop, demonstrating "Managing wetlands, fields, and forest for wildlife and biodiversity".

The workshop was held September 9, 2006 at the **Moran Wildlife Management Area on Rte 8a in Windsor, MA**. It featured a fecon mower, a vegetation clearing machine that can efficiently mulch or "eat" standing trees up to four inches in diameter. **Jill Liske-Clark, the Upland Program Coordinator for MassWildlife** explained, from a wildlife perspective, why it was time to clear the field. A forester was also on hand to talk about different timber harvest prescriptions that generate early-successional habitat, and how you determine if a timber harvest is appropriate for your site.

Kate Parsons, district conservationist with NRCS in Berkshire county talked about the **Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP)**, that provides landowners cost-share to do these types of projects.

The workshop was a HUGE success! Over 25 people attended the 4 hour session.

STATUS OF STATE FUNDING

Conservation Districts in Massachusetts have not received any state funding since 2002. On March 23, 2007, Massachusetts Association of Conservation Districts held its Annual meeting. The main focus of this meeting was aimed at how MACD and the Districts could develop opportunities to be heard by the new administration. As a result of this meeting all Conservation Districts were asked to submit a work plan. The information from the work plans was compiled and averaged for the state and one model was submitted to the state as the standard for all districts. It is hoped that the new administration will see the need is there for reimplementatation of this funding for Districts statewide.

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FY 07 Annual Meeting

Dakota Restaurant

November 14, 2007 Wed. 6PM

Guest Speaker: Brian Hawthorne, MassWildlife

"A Brief History of the Berkshire Landscape".



NRCS ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Submitted by Kate Parsons, District Conservationist

NRCS, with the assistance from the Berkshire Conservation District had another successful year increasing participation among farmers and other landowners. Conservation plans addressed resource concerns such as water and soil quality, plant production, invasive species, oak regeneration and fish and wildlife habitat for declining species.

Below is a summary of the major NRCS activities and accomplishments from 2007:

- Land users were aided in planning approximately 3686 acres of crop, hay and grazing land.
- Comprehensive nutrient management plans (CNMPs) were developed for 7 farms.
- Conservation practices were applied to improve:
 - Grazing land on 648 acres.
 - Soil quality on 5155 acres.
 - Water quality on 4360 acres.
 - Fish and wildlife habitat on 214 acres.
- Financial assistance was provided to 1 landowner with the construction of a composting facility, 1 with a pond for livestock water and an animal trail and walkway, 1 landowner with a stream crossing, 1 with manure transfer, 11 with implementing nutrient management, waste utilization, prescribed grazing, residue management and/or transition to organic production, 1 with oak regeneration, 3 with early successional habitat and 1 with fish passage.
- 10 EQIP applications were accepted, planned and ranked against others across the state and 8 were funded for a total of \$237,681.
- 7 WHIP applications were accepted, planned, ranked against others across the state and funded for a total of \$267, 619.
- 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 310 acres of farmland on two different farms.
- Financial assistance was provided to correct erosion and sedimentation problems causing a threat to human life or property on 3 locations for 2 towns through the Watershed Protection (EWP) Program.
- Assistance was provided by Edward Drake and Paul Benjamin to the towns of Ashfield and Deerfield, respectively, with the implementation of streambank erosion control measures under EWP.
- Assistance was provided by Edward Drake to New Hampshire NRCS with streambank stabilization projects following the tragic floods in October 2005 in Alstead, NH. Ed's efforts were greatly appreciated and recognized with awards given by NH and MA.