

# Rockingham County Conservation District

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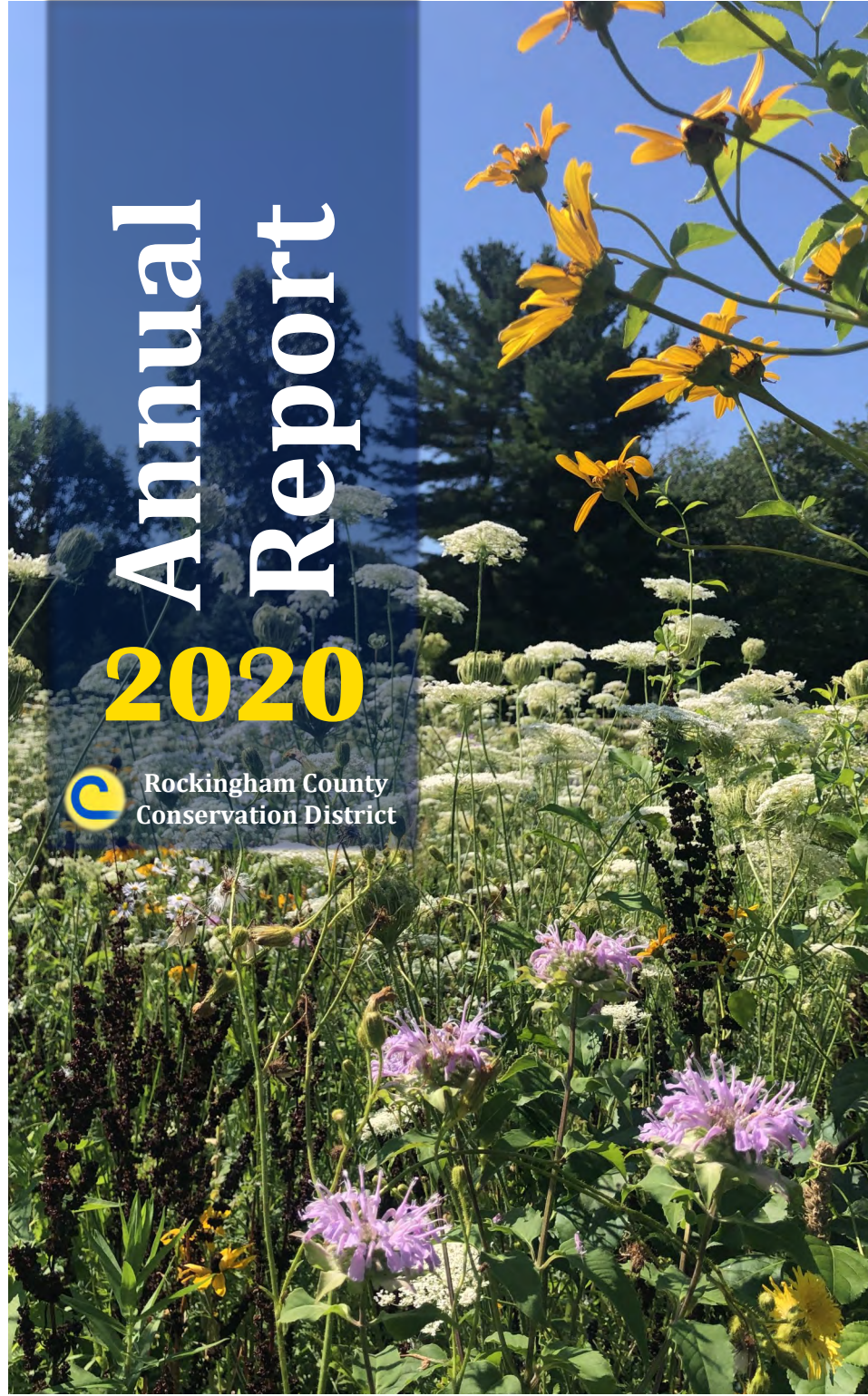
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Website: [www.rockinghamccd.org](http://www.rockinghamccd.org)

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Dedicated to the Wise Use of Our Natural Resources.

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## The Rockingham County Conservation District

*Our mission is to conserve and sustain the natural environment for present and future generations*

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rccd@rockinghamccd.org  
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### Staff

Vicky Nelson - District Manager  
Tracy Degnan - Senior Project Manager  
Arianna Spear - Conservation & Stewardship Manager  
Kelly Brooks- Conservation Technician  
Lorraine Lord - Office Manager

### RCCD As-Needed Staff and Contractors

Michael Cuomo - NH Soil Scientist, NH Wetland Scientist, NH Septic System Designer (Reviewer)  
Gerald Lang, PE - Hydraulic Engineer  
Danna Truslow - Restoration Hydrologist  
David Detour - Surveyor and AutoCAD Draftsman  
Marc Jacobs - NH Soil Scientist, NH Wetland Scientist, Certified Professional in Erosion and Sediment Control

## USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service Partnering

The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service provides technical and financial assistance to farmers, ranchers, and forest landowners to voluntarily put conservation on the ground. This helps them to implement practices which improve environmental and agricultural quality. The District continues to partner with NRCS to identify and address natural resource concerns in communities and to coordinate public and private resources to meet local needs on a grass roots level.

In 2020 the NRCS Epping Field Office (serving Rockingham and Strafford Counties) welcomed Matt Larkin as the New District Conservationist. Matt has been working with NRCS in the Epping Field Office as a Soil Conservationist since 2012. Matt also worked as a Conservation Technician with RCCD over ten years ago before becoming full time with NRCS. The District looks forward to working with Matt in his new role!

*The partnership between the NRCS and Conservation Districts is one that was carefully designed to foster a unique and beneficial relationship to get conservation practices implemented on a VOLUNTARY BASIS and to provide federal resources at a local level.*

The District continues to work under a cooperative agreement with the NRCS, Wetland Reserve Easement Program (WRE) and has initiated conservation practices on 10+ wetland restoration projects.

### NRCS Contracts and Agreements in Rockingham County in 2020

Type of Assistance	# of Contracts	Amount	Conservation Program
<u>Financial</u>	<u>8</u>	<u>\$288,529</u>	<u>Environmental Quality Incentive Program</u>
<u>Financial</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>\$32,155</u>	<u>Agricultural Management Assistance</u>
<u>Financial</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>\$39,080</u>	<u>Conservation Stewardship Program</u>



## Pollinator habitat progress using new mowing techniques!



Many important habitats for many species of pollinators are found in NH. The Monarch Butterfly thrives on Common Milkweed (*Asclepias syriaca*), and it is actually one of the main hosts for Monarchs. Common Milkweed provides them with nectar sources important for reproduction and their migration. Our region supports the 4th generation of Monarchs born here, that then fly all the way to central Mexico where they overwinter. One of the main threats to this species is the loss of habitat, and the loss of Common Milkweed host plants. This is where our mowing demonstration project begins. In 2018, RCCD was awarded funding through an agreement between the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and the New Hampshire Association of Conservation Districts (NHACD) to demonstrate if certain timed mowing practices would enhance the growth of Common Milkweed to promote suitable habitat for this pollinator species. We are working with several partners including NRCS, The XERCES Society, The Nature Conservancy (TNC), NH Fish and Game, and the Strafford County Conservation District (SCCD). This demonstration project will run for two more years. With assistance from our partners we then hope to report on the success of these simple conservation mowing practices. Landowners and others will be able to follow these practices to easily enhance pollinator habitats for this important species.



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## DISTRICT HAPPENINGS

Our past has traditionally been tied to farms and farmers and helping them prevent soil erosion and sedimentation problems. Some of that work continues to this day! Now, the District assists farmers with innovative farming practices such as cover crop mixes or specialty equipment that we continue to rent at a very low cost (see pages 5-6). We will continue our important role of assisting farmers in Rockingham County. The District also assists individual landowners, non-profit organizations, and government agencies at all levels. However, we only provide technical assistance to municipalities - and that is what makes us unique.

We are progressively working with municipalities in the County on local habitat restoration projects. We assist communities in their town forests and conservation lands to control invasive plants and restore native habitats. The District continues to actively promote New England Cottontail, pollinator, bat and turtle habitats, rare plants and communities, and to perform other habitat restoration activities. All of our conservation work continues to support the environmental priorities of the County and of individual communities. Throughout the national response to the pandemic, the District maintained a high quality of work and fulfilled current commitments to clients and municipalities.

The Districts' vision for Rockingham County includes **voluntary, locally led, cost effective natural resource conservation**. As we head into next year, we have renewed focus and dedication to local conservation programs and projects in Rockingham County. We are soon launching a new logo along with our new user friendly website, [www.rockinghamccd.org](http://www.rockinghamccd.org), which will be your source for information on the District and our services. We continue to partner and work cooperatively with many different groups, organizations, and communities in order to nurture stewardship of our soils, water, food systems, and natural resources.





## RCCD'S SERVICES

### TECHNICAL MUNICIPAL SERVICES

- Review of wetland delineation boundaries and required setbacks, prime wetland reviews and other natural resource reviews
- Test pit witnessing and plan review for septic designs
- Restoration of wetland, shoreland, and native habitats
- Expert testimony at municipal board meetings
- Stormwater design and installation reviews
- Conservation easement monitoring for communities

In 2020 RCCD spent 1294 hours reviewing 275 projects in 13 towns.

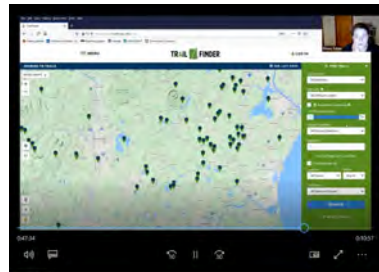
*RCCD offers unbiased, professional, and objective services relating to natural resources **ONLY** to municipalities and cities in Rockingham County.  
RCCD does not perform private service work.*

### Other Services

- Soil health improvement equipment rental program
- Soil Potential Index for Current Use Tax Assessments
- Historic Aerial Photography back to 1943
- Amoozemeter rentals

### Zoom in on the Rock

Like many organizations in 2020, RCCD took a new approach to connecting with the public. RCCD began hosting a virtual monthly program on the second Monday of the month at 7pm called "Zoom in on the Rock". This program is designed to provide the public with current natural resources topics and to connect Conservation Commissions in Rockingham with tools and resources that may assist them with their mission. Visit our website to find the program!



This year, the District focused on approximately 9 acres of Oriental bittersweet, (*Celastrus orbiculatus*) one of the most impenetrable invasive plants found in this area of Odiorne, completely engulfing and overrunning native trees. This shrubland habitat also included the historic McKim-Gage site, so careful and varied Integrated Pest

Management (IPM) practices were employed. Even one year later, it is clear to see the vegetative difference in this once heavily invaded habitat.

Although the District was unable to utilize the awesome volunteer groups that we usually work with

this past year, we were able to install another 1300 native plant seedlings in this area, as well as restored habitat on the west side of Route 1A. It is important to promote the rapid regeneration of native species, and it will also assist outcompeting invasive seedlings.

Additional future planting efforts include tree species such as shagbark hickory, red, and sugar maple to promote roosting sites for bats, and shrub species like Virginia rose, blackberry, northern bayberry and shadbush to promote diverse insect and bird populations.

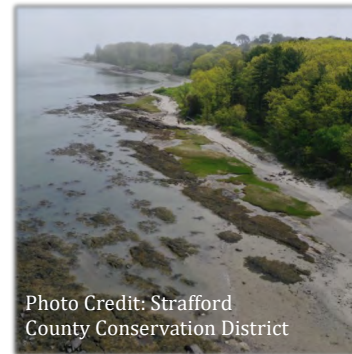


Photo Credit: Strafford County Conservation District

As the District moves forward toward the Frost Point area and Little Harbor shoreline, we will continue with planning and restoration proposals in the near future. Thanks to the NH Department of Natural and Cultural Resources as well as the NH Department of Agriculture, Markets and Foods, IPM program, the NH State Conservation Committee, and the NH Coastal Program for their continued partnership and long-term support for this ongoing project.



## Over a Decade of Results: Restoration of Coastal Habitats at Odiorne Point State Park

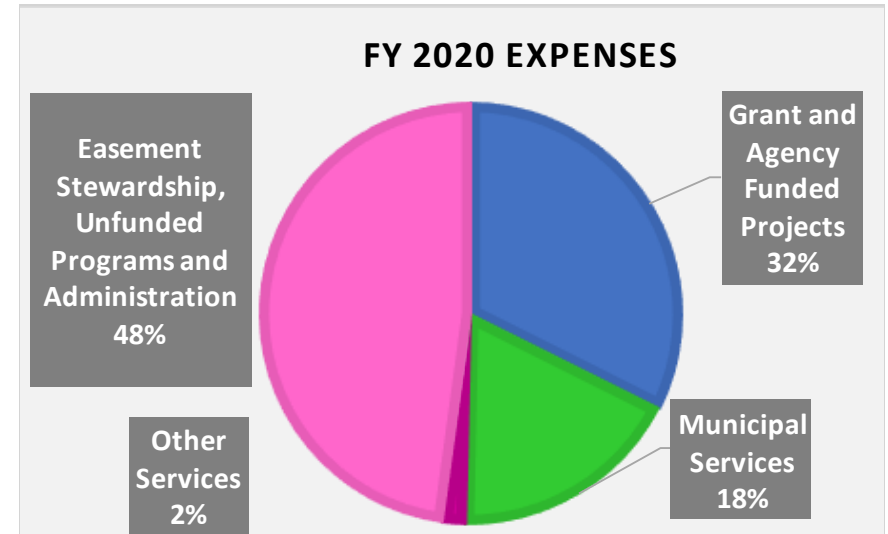
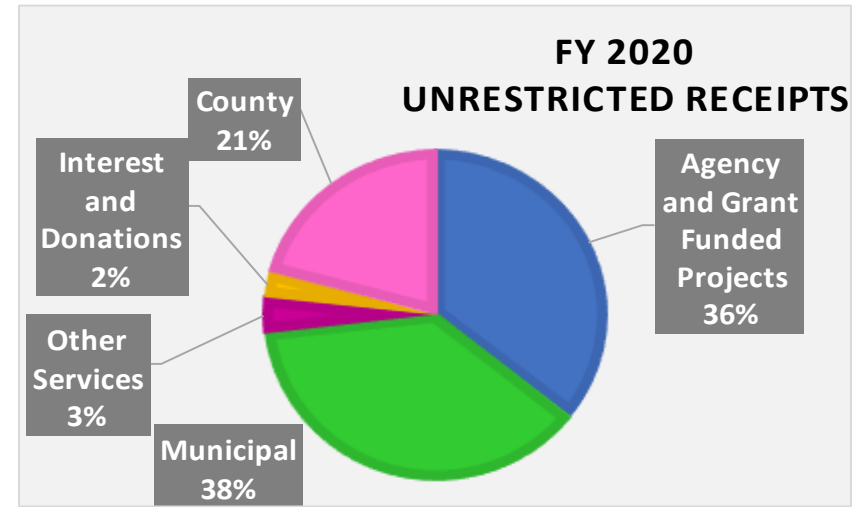
Time marches on and every now and then it's important to look back and see what the District has accomplished. The District started working over a decade ago on habitat restoration efforts at Odiorne Point State Park and has made great strides. The District initiated the project in 2009, had an



invasive species management plan (ISMP) completed for each of the different habitats, and began restoration at the southern end of the park at a small over-wash marsh. It's hard to believe the District hand-cut over a 1/2 acre of Common Reed (*Phragmites australis*), a highly invasive plant shown here in the heat of August in 2010. RCCD composted this biomass off site, and then treated the re-growth using a Low Volume Foliar (LVF) technique in 2011. Several additional years were needed for spot treating a few sprigs of Common Reed, and native plantings were installed. Ultimately we've been rather successful. See the current day results of this over-wash marsh, with native grasses abundant, and **NO** Common Reed in sight.



## Financials



Conservation Districts Enabling Legislation: RSA 432  
NEW HAMPSHIRE STATUE TITLE XL SOIL CONSERVATION AND FARMLAND PRESERVATION

The RCCD Board of Supervisors appreciates the past support of our programs by the Rockingham County Commissioners and the County Delegation.



## New Equipment for Vegetable Farmers Available in Rockingham and Strafford Counties!

BCS Tractor and Attachments: Fail Mower, Ash Spreader, Roller Crimper, Power Harrow, Seeder, Subsoiler, Sickle Bar Mower, Compost Spreader



Photo Credit: Sarah and Dorn Cox, Tuckaway Farm

Existing Soil Health Equipment: Yeoman's Plow; No-till Drill and Seeder; Wood Ash/Lime Spreader; and Soil Aerator



Contact the District to find out more about equipment rentals!



## Helping Farmers with Soil Health and Integrated Pest Management



Photo Credit: Keith Brodeur, Bascom Road Blueberry Farm

### Innovative Integrated Pest Management (IPM)

The District works with neighboring Conservation Districts to fund cost shares to farmers for two innovative practices, weather stations and spotted wing drosophila (SWD) exclusion netting. Weather stations help farmers make accurate decisions about pest management, and help them to better utilize existing pest management models. SWD exclusion netting protects vulnerable berry crops from a new but devastating pest that has increased pressure for farmers to spray insecticides or to stop selling their high value crops early in the season.

### NO-TILL FOR VEGETABLE FARMERS

Reducing tillage on vegetable farms is excellent for soil health, but can create obstacles and challenges. Conservation Districts have acquired specialty equipment to facilitate no-till practices, such as no-till transplanters. This allows farmers to try out no-till practices on their farms.



### NO-TILL RETROFITS

Over the last three years, with the help of four different grants, the District in partnership with other Conservation Districts and NRCS, assisted farmers by financing equipment that turns existing conventional planters into no-till planters. This allowed interested farmers to switch to this beneficial soil practice without having to purchase a whole new planter.