

# 2014-2015 Annual Awards

## Ag Land Conservationist of the Year:



**Wild Harmony Farm - Ben Coerper & Rachel Slattery**

Wild Harmony Farm has been awarded SRICD's **2015 Ag Land Conservationist of the Year** because of their commendable care for their farmland, livestock, and community. By following a polyculture philosophy, Ben & Rachel fulfill their operational mission *"to produce wholesome food in a responsible and sustainable manner that fosters the gathering and enrichment of community."* SRICD applauds these Exeter farmers and recognizes the hard work and dedication associated with intensive livestock rotational grazing, crop rotations, and growing produce organically.

## Forest Conservationist of the Year:



**Ron & Mary Fasano**

Mary & Ron Fasano own and manage a tree farm in Wyoming, RI. The Fasanos have been awarded SRICD's **2015 Forest Conservationists of the Year** due to their care of the land and continuous effort towards improving forest health, protecting nearby lands from fire hazards, increasing wildlife habitat and generally conserving open space.

## Excellence in Conservation Education:

**Eric Zabel, Teacher & Mentor, Narragansett High School Envirothon**

Eric Zabel has been a teacher and mentor at Narragansett High School since 1996. Eric has been awarded SRICD's **2015 Excellence in Conservation Education Award** as a result of his long-standing and commendable leadership of the Envirothon teams at Narragansett High School. Under his mentorship, future conservationists have been molded, trained and encouraged for 19 years!

The Southern RI Conservation District serves the cities and towns of Kent & Washington Counties. If your community is not represented on our board of directors, please consider joining our team. We meet the fourth Monday of each month, in Building #61 (Master Gardener Field House) at URI East Farm, East Farm Road, Kingston, RI. To receive a copy of our agenda and minutes, please call 401-500-0422 or email [SRICD.info@gmail.com](mailto:SRICD.info@gmail.com)

# Annual Report July 2014 - June 2015



All photos within this publication were taken by K.Bousquet, SRICD 2013-2015

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## What are Conservation Districts?

Conservation Districts were established in Rhode Island by State Law in 1944, and are a subdivision of the Rhode Island State Conservation Committee. Thus, Conservation Districts are quasi-public organizations providing a wide breadth of opportunity to focus efforts on the environmental and conservation concerns within our communities.

The function of the Districts is to take available technical, financial, and educational resources, focus and coordinate them so that they meet the needs of the local land user for conservation of soil, water and related resources. They operate on the premise that local people know the most about local needs. The Districts do not regulate or enforce laws. There are approximately 3,000 conservation districts nationwide. There are three Districts in Rhode Island. RI Conservation Districts work in close partnership with one another to capitalize on our staff strengths & maximize the work accomplished.

- ◆ **Southern RI Conservation District, serving Washington and Kent Counties,**
- ◆ Northern RI Conservation District, serving Providence County,
- ◆ Eastern RI Conservation District, serving Newport and Bristol Counties.

### SRICD FREE ASSISTANCE SERVICES

Contact Information & Recommendations for:

- Foresters, Local Technical Service Providers, etc.
- Presentations to Municipal Boards, Commissions and/or Committees
- Site visits to farms and woodlots

### STATEWIDE FEE-FOR-SERVICE Programs

#### **Land & Watershed Management:**

- Farm, Forest & Open Space Program - Farm Conservation Plans
- Open Space Mapping
- Whole Farm Conservation Planning
- Land Use Consultation
- Wetland Determinations & Permitting Assistance
- Soil Sample Collection, Preparation, & Analysis Interpretations
- Natural Resource & Environmental Assessments
- GIS Mapping, Map Interpretation & Analysis
- Invasive Species Assessment & Management
- Public Outreach & Training
- Assistance with US EPA Stormwater Phase II Requirements
- Soil Erosion & Sediment Control Plan Review
- Stormwater Impact Assessment
- Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPP) Review
- Rain Garden & Bio-Retention Basin Design & Installation
- Stream Assessments

## PARTNERSHIPS: the fountain of organizational STRENGTH & EFFICIENCY

### ***SRICD's Primary Partners & Cooperators:***

- ◆ Private Landowners
- ◆ Municipalities, including Coventry, West Warwick, Warwick, West Greenwich, East Greenwich, Exeter, North Kingstown, Hopkinton, Richmond, South Kingstown, Westerly, Charlestown, Narragansett and New Shoreham (Block Island)
- ◆ Municipal and Private Land Trusts and Conservation Commissions
- ◆ University of Rhode Island: *Cooperative Extension* and the *College of Environmental & Life Sciences*
- ◆ Roger Williams University, *Sustainability Studies*
- ◆ RI Department of Environmental Management
- ◆ USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service



Conservation Districts have a unique relationship with USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). Program parameters are established by Congress through the Farm Bill, but local landowners meet monthly to identify and prioritize the needs for each state by local county. The SRICD Board of Directors represent the communities, directing the work prioritized and conducted in Kent and Washington Counties. The District Conservationist at NRCS, John Richard, attends SRICD monthly meetings to work in conjunction with the Board to best serve people and protect natural resources in our communities.

SRICD works directly with USDA NRCS to accomplish and improve the process for NRCS Outreach and Education, Conservation Technical Assistance, Wetland Restoration, enhancing Fish and Wildlife Habitat, Grassland and Forestland Ecosystems, improving Soil Quality, Water Management, Water Quality, Energy Conservation, and Forest/Farmland Conservation.

## SRICD's Work in 2014 - 2015

### ◆ Agricultural & Forestland Outreach

SRICD participated in seven established educational events in Kent & Washington Counties. The purpose of this on-going participation in community events is to encourage public landowners to make the cognitive connection between daily actions and daily impact on their immediate environment.

**Events and Fairs** attended in 2015, included: RI Raised Livestock Association Annual Meeting (Coventry), URI Spring Festival (Kingston), RINLA Green Market Festival (Kingston), two Young Farmer Meetings (statewide), one RIFCO event (Exeter) and one URI Twilight Meetings (statewide).

Additionally, six focused workshops were offered to agricultural and forest landowners in order to provide them with on-site demonstrations of conservation practices, as well as the opportunity to learn about technical and financial assistance available for conservation assistance through USDA-NRCS. Small-scale forestry workshops were the focus of half of these workshops.

**Open-House / Informational Workshops** were held at *Clark Memorial Library* (Carolina), *Loustit Library* (West Greenwich), and *Exeter Library* (Exeter).

**On-site tours / Walking Workshops** were held at *Homelands Forest* (Richmond), *Bryson's Tree Farm* (Carolina), *Rittlings Tree Farm* (Ashaway).

### ◆ Farm, Forest & Open Space Plans

Natural resources on farmland, as well as the finances of farmland owners benefited from the technical oversight of District Ag Planners. Owners of agricultural land who chose to enroll in Rhode Island's *Farm, Forest, and Open Space Program* gained significant tax relief in 2015. District Ag Planners worked with farmers to determine which method for getting a plan written best fit the landowner needs.

### ◆ Improving Public Access to RI's Open Lands with Land Trust Planning Assistance & Trails Mapping

SRICD worked in partnership with two of southern RI's Land Trusts to improve public access and develop maps for recreational trails systems.

**Hopkinton Land Trust** continues to build its relationship with SRICD -- continuing to create trail maps for public lands, along with kiosk maps placed at various trailheads.

**West Greenwich Land Trust** hired SRICD to develop trail maps for two parcels: Pratt Conservation Area and Fry Pond Conservation Area.

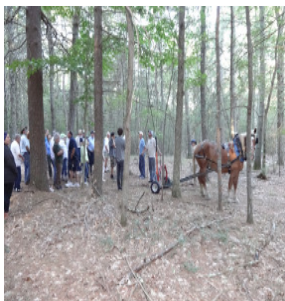
Trail maps for both organizations were developed in various formats and are available at trailheads for hikers. Maps are now available online at [ExploreRI.org](http://ExploreRI.org).

### ◆ Property boundary reconciliation

The Hopkinton Conservation Commission encountered various situations in which reconciliation of property boundaries was required or helpful. SRICD was able to georeference surveys to NAD 1983 State Plane Feet System for RI (in Geographic Information Systems), and overlay with additional information to produce the desired informational product.

### ◆ Farm Conservation Plans

Sustainability via proper use and best management of the available natural resources is at the top of the priority list for most Land Trusts. The *South Kingstown Land Trust* and the *Hopkinton Land Trust* both hired SRICD to develop farm conservation plans based on natural resource assessment, short and long-term goals for the properties' use, as well as consideration of economic resources. Farm Conservation Plans include land descriptions, maps, use comparisons, and potential investments.



## SRICD's Work in 2014 - 2015

### ◆ Partnership with URI Cooperative Extension's Nonpoint Education for Municipal Officials (NEMO)

Over the past 3 years, SRICD has worked with URI, RI DOT and RI DEM to facilitate a successful and major revision of the *RI Erosion and Sediment Control Handbook*. This much needed revision was the cornerstone for addressing Storm Water Phase II regulations. SRICD partnered with NEMO to subcontract with qualified experts to best develop an educational protocol for municipal leaders.

### ◆ Wetlands Permitting Assistance



SRICD successfully completed the desired RIDEM wetland application for the *Town of North Kingstown* for the proper permitting of walking and biking trails within Cocumscussoc State Park. SRICD worked with the Town and a local biking group to GPS existing trails and advise on best avenues for potential new trails; minimizing impact to sensitive wetland areas.

SRICD was also hired by the *City of Cranston* to complete a similar RIDEM wetland permit application on trails in the Knight property. Project objectives included site assessment, wetlands identification, wetlands permitting, proper trails location/mapping.

### ◆ Geese Abatement Program

The Geese Abatement Program efforts continued in the spring of 2015. SRICD supported several workshops and field trainings, resulting in hundreds of resident goose eggs oiled using the GeesePeace methodology. SRICD continues to support the on-going efforts by the Town of Charlestown and is working to develop municipal trainings throughout the state.

### ◆ RI Envirothon

High School and Middle School students from all over Rhode Island came together for the annual environmental competition, known as the *RI Envirothon*, on May 15, 2015. SRICD sponsored and supported the event held at Champlain Scout Reservation (Cranston). SRICD staff served on the judges panel for the Special Topic: Urban & Community Forestry. Congratulations to the winners, Narragansett High and the Compass School (middle school)!



## Local people represent their communities, promoting natural resource conservation

The Southern RI Conservation District is governed by a volunteer Board of Directors and Associate Directors. Directors are locally elected and appointed. At monthly Board Meetings, Directors review requests for conservation assistance on private and local land, review project and program advancements, and establish priorities in response to concerns within the southern RI community.



SRICD Members (left to right): Rudi Hempe, Harriet Powell, Kate Bousquet, Clarkson Collins, Peter Stetson, Carl Sawyer, Harvey Buford, Eric Scherer.

### Board of Directors:

Clarkson Collins, Chairman, South Kingstown  
Rudi Hempe, Vice-Chairman, Narragansett  
Harvey Buford, Treasurer, Hopkinton  
Carl Sawyer, Secretary, South Kingstown  
Antonia Bryson, Carolina

### Associate Directors:

Peter Stetson, Richmond  
J. Eric Scherer, South Kingstown  
Harriet Powell, North Kingstown

### SRICD Staff:

Kate Bousquet, District Manager & Agricultural Planner  
Kathryn Zuromski, Biologist & GIS Specialist

### USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service staff serving SRICD:

John Richard, District Conservationist  
Zachary Fisher, Soil Conservationist  
Ghyllian Conley, Soil Conservationist  
Ronald Lewis, Civil Engineering Technican