

The logo for the Southern Rhode Island Conservation District is a circular emblem. It features a light green background with a faint outline of the state of Rhode Island. The words "Southern Rhode" are written in a light green, sans-serif font along the top arc, and "Conservation District" is written along the bottom arc. In the center of the emblem is a stylized green and white circular graphic that resembles a leaf or a drop.

**Southern Rhode Island
Conservation District**

2001-2002

Annual Report

About the Southern Rhode Island Conservation District

OUR MISSION:

The mission of the SRICD is to promote and achieve a healthy environment and sustainable use of natural resources for the people of Kent and Washington Counties and the state of Rhode Island, by providing technical, educational and financial resources in coordination with our partners.

OUR STAFF AND BOARD

The SRICD is governed by a board of directors consisting of five voting directors, two appointed and three elected, and several associate directors who provide technical assistance and diversity. Our board represents various communities and interests throughout Kent and Washington Counties. If your community is not represented, perhaps you would be interested in joining us. Call us at 401-822-8832.

Staff

District Manager: Alicia Lehrer

Storm Water Management Specialist: Kristine Stuart

Education and Outreach Director: Susan Letendre

Special Projects Coordinator: Patty Tanalski

Consultants

Consulting Civil Engineer: Anthony Nenna

Consulting Professional Engineer: Jean Lambert

Consulting Project Assistant: Rebekah Greenwald

Our Directors

Chair: Patricia Lenihan (East Greenwich)

Vice Chair: Edward Renehan, Jr. (North Kingstown)

Treasurer: John Devaney (Narragansett)

Secretary: Rudolph Hemepe (Narragansett)

Harriet Powell (North Kingstown)

Associate Directors

Richard Donnelly (North Kingstown)

Stephen Donohue (South Kingstown)

Paul Gardner (Charlestown)

W. Michael Sullivan (West Kingston)

Robert Swanson (Hope Valley)

Marjorie Weeden (Ashaway)

Bryan J. Wolfenden (West Warwick)



SRICD Board & Staff

Left to right: Marjorie Weeden, Kris Stuart, Patty Tanalski, Harriet Powell, Pat Lenihan, Ed Renehan, Alicia Lehrer, Rudi Hemepe

THE CRITICAL ISSUES THAT GUIDED SRICD'S WORK IN 2001-2002:

- Water Quantity—Too Much or Too Little
- Promotion and Recognition of the Importance of Agriculture and Farmers
- Building District Capacity and Visibility
- Protection and Improvement of Water Quality
- Conservation of Farm Forest and Open Space
- Habitats—Save the Best, Restore the Rest
- Strong and Functioning Rhode Island Conservation Districts and State Conservation Committee

ISSUE: WATER QUANTITY

Managing Water Use In South County

SRICD has long been a partner in the Pawcatuck Watershed Partnership and its offshoot, the Water Use Stakeholders Group (WUSG). The WUSG has been meeting since December 1997 to discuss and develop a **non-regulatory** approach for managing water needs and uses in the area.

In an effort to keep stakeholders in South County aware of the inter-relationships between water use, water quality and wildlife habitat, SRICD, the Audubon Society of Rhode Island (ASRI), and the Wood Pawcatuck Watershed Association (WPWA) shared and carried out a project through a grant from the US Environmental Protection Agency. SRICD conducted workshops to inform South County irrigators of recent USGS studies that will help guide water use as competition for it increases. ASRI informed residents about the importance of water protection and conservation through direct mail and personal visits to homes in the Queen's River Watershed. They distributed information and refrigerator memo boards listing important contacts for water. WPWA, meanwhile, kept South County community boards informed of the activities of the WUSG and continues to do so.

Water use will become a hotter and more complex topic in South County as development places additional burdens on the sole source aquifer. Over the next few years, the Rhode Island Water Resources Board will most likely exercise its authority to develop a Water Use Management Plan that will determine how water will be allocated throughout Rhode Island, should the need arise. It is critical that all stakeholders take an active role in the planning process to ensure that their needs are represented. Finding the solutions that best meet the needs of all stakeholders and the environment will take everyone's participation.

ISSUE: BUILDING DISTRICT CAPACITY AND VISIBILITY

Storm Water Service Center—Expanding Our Opportunities

SRICD, on behalf of all Rhode Island Conservation Districts operates a statewide Storm Water Service Center. We are glad to report that many communities and landowners have made use of our programs and have been very pleased with the services we provide.

Our services include:

- Site Plan Review
- Open Space and Parcel Mapping Services
- Community Storm Water Management Planning

Community Partnerships for Phase II Services

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Storm Water Phase II Final Rule requires urbanized areas to develop and implement stormwater management programs. In 2002, Rhode Island adopted its own version of the Phase II regulations.

This year, SRICD formed partnerships with the Towns of Cumberland and Narragansett to develop their storm water management plans. We expect to develop these plans by March 2003. We hope to assist those communities and many others in implementing their plans over the next five years.

ISSUE: PROMOTION AND RECOGNITION OF THE IMPORTANCE OF AGRICULTURE

Farm Viability

Thanks to a grant from the USDA, RIDEM was able to form a Farm Viability Task Force in 2001. The Task Force consists of partners who are committed to the future of agriculture throughout Rhode Island. They generate ideas and facilitate projects to help keep our farmers in business and doing better than ever.

Our own Susan Letendre co-chairs the Agricultural Education Subcommittee of the Task Force and is helping to develop and implement programs in RI Public Schools that teach students the importance of agriculture, nurturing a future citizenry that will support farming.

Five Years of Kids Grow!

Our *Kids Grow!* program is now active in four schools in the Chariho District, and is indeed growing all the time! This year, we made new strides in empowering youth. Older students with special needs adopted their own raised beds at Ashaway Elementary School, and then mentored younger students in the ways of gardening. We have forged an alliance with a group of URI student volunteers, "Down to Earth, Up to Us" who will be mentoring and teaching middle school students about sustainability, and working with high school students to research and implement sustainable methods for operations, such as vermi-composting for cafeteria waste and solar and bio-fuels for the greenhouses. And, of course, our gardens grew and produced, helped along by record numbers of participants and volunteers.

ISSUE: PROTECTION AND IMPROVEMENT OF WATER QUALITY

Watershed Action Teams

SRICD continues its work to promote citizen partnership for conservation by creating and facilitating watershed action teams. Two teams are now meeting and working together: one in the Narrow River watershed, and one in Warwick, encompassing the Brush Neck and Warwick Cove, Old Mill Creek, Buttonwoods, and Warwick Neck watersheds. The teams identify specific issues, decide how to address them (using partnerships, education and other resources), and then work toward their goals.

The Warwick Team, has put up signs along popular walking paths educating dog owners about the effects of pet waste. They also work with schools and local businesses on projects to reduce non-point source pollution, and is designing a veterinarian outreach program.



Implementing the BMP at Circuit Drive, Narragansett (*Finally!*)

For those of you who have been following SRICD's exploits closely over the last four years, any mention of the storm water management practice at Circuit Drive probably makes you jump up and say, "Isn't that done yet?" For our new friends and partners, SRICD started working on the design of a storm water treatment system for all the storm water entering the Narrow River from the Conanicus and Wampum Road neighborhoods in Narragansett since 1998.

SRICD designed constructed wetlands to replace the poorly functioning wetland that captures storm water from the two neighborhoods. The design was debated between RIDEM and CRMC several times:

1. Will the design take out enough pathogens as well as solids?
2. Will it be enough to treat all the storm water?
3. Will we endanger any rare salamanders or toads by destroying the existing wetland?

This debate prevented the project from being permitted for years. However, we are greatly relieved to announce that the project has been permitted and the best management practice (BMP) will be installed in 2002. We have confidence that the BMP will remove most of the sediments that enter the Narrow

ISSUE: CONSERVATION OF FARMS, FORESTS & OPEN SPACE

Rural Lands Coalition and the Farm Tour

In 2001, SRICD continued to coordinate the Rhode Island Rural Lands Coalition, a partnership between agencies, non-profits and individuals working to ensure the future of Rhode Island's farms, forests and open spaces.

On behalf of the Rural Lands Coalition, SRICD organized a Rhode Island farm tour with some funding through RIFCO and RIDEM's Division of Forestry. Twenty two participants enjoyed an afternoon in September 2001 touring the Ocean Breeze Dairy Farm in Westerly, the Greenview community-supported organic vegetable farm in Wakefield, and the Amore Tree Farm, a managed forest in Richmond. Even though the day was a bit chilly and drizzly, the tour received rave reviews and everyone learned a little more about what it takes to be a farmer in Rhode Island.

The next tour is planned for the spring of 2003. Please join us then; call the office (401-822-8832) and we'll make sure you're notified

Constructed Wetland like the one being installed at Circuit Drive.



River from the two neighborhoods and will reduce the pathogens as well. We eagerly await the tastefully planted construction and have high hopes that it will improve the water quality in the Narrow River.

Our special thanks to RIDEM Director Jan Reitsma who helped move the project along when it looked like it would stand still indefinitely, and to the engineering and planning staff of the Town of Narragansett, who were willing to stick by our partnership patiently with a commitment to improving the water quality in the Narrow River. Also, many thanks to Tony Nenna, our contract engineer, who donated so much of his time to making this project permissible.

ISSUE: HABITATS—SAVE THE BEST, RESTORE THE REST

Upper Duck Cove, North Kingstown: A Marsh Restoration Success

December 3, 2001, marked a day to celebrate the culmination of six years' effort to restore a seven-acre salt marsh in North Kingstown. After the 18" pipe connecting Upper Duck Cove to the Lower Cove and Narragansett Bay collapsed in 1995, resident Gidget Loomis began looking for ways to halt the subsequent invasion of *Phragmites* in the marsh. Her efforts re-invigorated the local Duck Cove Bluff Association and Lone Tree Point Neighborhood Association, pulled a number of agencies and organizations together, and ultimately resulted in the re-establishment of ditches and installation of a much larger culvert.

SRICD became involved in the project in 1997, when the Associations needed a project manager for an Aqua Fund grant they received from the RIDEM. Early on, SRICD called on the NRCS for assistance under the Wetland Reserve Program. NRCS provided expertise in the hydrology and biology of salt marsh restoration. SRICD coordinated the planning process, which also included input from RIDEM, the Mosquito Abatement Coordination Program, Save The Bay, US Fish and Wildlife Service and the Town of North Kingstown, as well as the local residents. The District also conducted pre-construction monitoring and prepared the documents needed for permits.

All the planning and partnering paid off in April of 2001, when the Mosquito Abatement Program's low-pressure machine entered the marsh and restored the ditches that bring the tides to the back end of the marsh. Then in November, the old culvert was pulled out and a new 3' X 4' box culvert was installed in the causeway that divides the Upper from the Lower Cove. And so, on December 3, about 30 people gathered to watch the tide flow through, to reflect on the efforts that were needed to make it happen, and to celebrate the promise of improved conditions for salt marsh vegetation, fin and shellfish and waterfowl.

SRICD is very pleased to report that as we follow up on the restoration through a RI Aquafund grant, we are already seeing a marked decline in *Phragmites* growth and an increase in salinity in the marsh.



Here's the new culvert shortly after installation, before the tides were let back into the Upper Cove.

SRICD: 2001-2002 FINANCIAL STATEMENT

EXPENSES

Salaries and wages		
Staff and Consultants	\$	101,984.32
Taxes & Payroll Expenses	\$	11,036.02
Benefits	\$	9,475.31
Insurance	\$	1,416.75
Office Expenses	\$	27,001.94
Program Expenses		
Annual Dinner	\$	984.72
Seedling Sale	\$	393.17
Sales Expenses	\$	113.58
Site Plan Review Contractor	\$	942.50
Open Space Mapping Contractor	\$	3,225.00
Grants Expenses (other than salary)	\$	6,397.27
Unpaid Participation Assistance	\$	306.37
Monthly and Annual Planning	\$	1,310.34
Professional Development	\$	832.03
Dues and Subscriptions		
NACD	\$	750.00
RI Agricultural Council	\$	78.00
Envirothon Support	\$	100.00
Sam's Club	\$	30.00
Science Wise Funding Alerts	\$	29.95
RIACD	\$	91.67

TOTAL EXPENSES \$ **166,498.94**

INCOME

Annual Dinner Income	\$	719.00
Annual Town Contributions	\$	4,361.00
AWESome! Curriculum Sales	\$	225.00
Contracts Income from Partnerships With	\$	453.97
Dividends from Insurance Holdings	\$	76.00
Farm Tour Income	\$	412.50
Grants Income	\$	60,697.72
Interest Income	\$	164.41
Open Space Mapping Income	\$	6,737.50
Parcel Mapping	\$	150.00
Refunds	\$	64.00
Seedling Sale Income	\$	952.93
Site Plan Review Income	\$	800.00
State Allocation	\$	72,000.00
Tax Rebate	\$	228.96

TOTAL INCOME \$ **148,042.99**

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ALPHABET SOUP:

You will find several acronyms used regularly throughout this report. Here is a handy guide to decoding them:

ASRI	Audubon Society of Rhode Island
AWESome!	SRICD's Active Watershed Education curriculum for educators
BMP	Best Management Practice
CRMC	Coastal Resources Management Council
NRCS	USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service
RIDEM	Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management
RIFCO	Rhode Island Forest Conservator's Organization
SRICD	Southern Rhode Island Conservation District
URI	University of Rhode Island
USDA	United States Department of Agriculture
USEPA	United States Environmental Protection Agency
USGS	United States Geological Survey
WPWA	Wood Pawcatuck Watershed Association
WUSG	Pawcatuck Watershed Partnership Water Use Stakeholders Group

AWARDS

2001-2002 Annual Award Recognition

*Outstanding Conservation Legislators—
Senator V. Susan Sosnowski, Deputy Majority Leader
and*

*The Honorable Peter T. Ginaitt,
Chairman, State Conservation Committee*

*Outstanding Conservation Community—
The Town of East Greenwich*

*Outstanding Conservation Cooperator—
Rodney Bailey of Bailey Brook Farm*

Outstanding Conservation Farmer—SODCO, Inc.

Outstanding Teacher—Denise Moretti-Foggo