# Fall 2020 Education Newsletter

# Soil & Water **Conservation District**



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Also our lending library, ways to stay connected and donating to the PCSWCD!

# PCSWCD Working Through COVID: Impacts & Updates

I started my March COVID Update article with "let's take a moment to breathe together" and I would say that is needed this Fall as well! It has been a difficult time and we have ALL been a part of major changes in our professional and personal lives. We want to thank you all for your continued support. As we closed our office doors to the public, postponed events, put safety guidelines in place and made adjustment after adjustment, you stood by us, met us with understanding and we appreciate that.

Despite the adjustments and with new standard operating procedures in place, the Piscataquis County Soil and Water Conservation District has experienced a number of successes in the 2020 events season. All planned events that exceeded in-person limits or had elements that could not be worked with, will be offered in 2021. The wonderful presenters that work with us were happy to offer programming for us in the coming year and we look forward to working with them and seeing all of you at these events. We also have been working with presenters to offer multiple sessions of outdoor events to both allow for social distancing and accommodate the overwhelming demand for programming. We were able meet the need AND do so safely that's a win, win! We offered three outdoor educational programs this summer - Rotational Grazing with Wendy Russell of Widdershins Farm, Wild Edible Foraging with Tom Seymour and Chainsaw Safety for Women. Each of these events reached capacity and our participants respectfully followed safety guidelines.

Another great success story from Spring and Summer 2020 has been the growth of the LakeSmart program. As we postponed events, we created room to expand LakeSmart and doubled the number of evaluations done in 2019. The program is an evaluation program that helps waterfront property owners address erosion issues on their properties. The evaluations were offered safely and were a great way to make progress on the protection of our natural resources. After all, lakes, ponds and water resources are vitally important!

Our District received support through the Keep Maine Healthy Grant via the Town of Dover-Foxcroft and was able to install hand sanitizer pumps at both of our public lands. Additionally, we purchased portable hand-washing stations, making all outdoor events places where participants can wash their hands and keep themselves and others safe.

These successes would not have been possible without the support received from participants, supporters and our wonderful presenters. Thank you for working with us! As we approach the remainder of 2020 and look forward to 2021, we are ready to continue to be creative, work collaboratively with all of you and offer quality, in-demand programming. We will continue to promote natural resource conservation in every way possible.

Please reach out to us and let us know what you would like to see for programming in 2021. Additionally, if you have questions about anything we are working on, how we could possibly work together, we are all ears!

## Thank you!

Kacey Weber, Educational Coordinator, Piscataguis County Soil and Water Conservation District







# News from our Partners: Bangor Public Health, Breathe Easy Maine

It has been exciting to grow our numbers of partnerships over the years. With each new partnership, we are able to offer more programming and resources to the residents of Piscataquis County and do more for the protection and conservation of our natural resources.

After connecting at a local youth services summit, the PCSWCD began a new partnership with Bangor Public Health. PCSWCD has adopted a new policy through Breathe Easy Maine and Bangor Public Health, which designates our office, the Law Farm and the Demonstration Forest as "Smoke Free." This policy officially prevents smoking, vaping and all tobacco use at our public lands, in and around our office and at our indoor and outdoor events and programs. The PCSWCD is excited to have these spaces now be clean air spaces for all to enjoy!

If you have any questions about our Breathe Easy Maine Policy, we are happy to share it with you!



# Invasive Pest Outreach: Become a Community Detector & Protect Maine's Trees!

ARTICLE SUBMITTED BY ALI CLIFT OF CUMBERLAND COUNTY SWCD

Wait, our name says Soil & Water, not trees! As Conservation Districts we often have to think about the big picture and consider systems, as each of our actions directly or indirectly impacts the environment around us. That means paying attention to the trees that grow and anchor our soils and filter and cool our waters. Without trees, and Maine is 89% forested, our role in conserving soil and water would become even more difficult. With that in mind, the Maine Soil & Water Conservation Districts (SWCD) are working together with the Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation & Forestry to help protect our forests from new invasive forest pests through an education and outreach campaign. The invasive forest pests of concern are Asian Longhorned Beetle, Spotted Lanternfly, and Oak Wilt due to their proximity to Maine and the trees and crops that they damage. The education and outreach campaign focuses on raising public awareness of these new potential pests to increase community monitoring, preventative measures, and reporting.

Invasive species are a costly addition to our management plans since they require substantial amounts of time, effort, and funding. More than \$120 billion is spent each year to help prevent the further spread of invasive species in the United States. If invasive species are not managed, they impact property values, cause damage to public infrastructure, ecological damage, negative impacts to recreational and commercial activities, and increase human health issues.

Fortunately, there are some easy actions everyone can do to help prevent invasive forest pests from spreading to Maine. You can become an informed community detector by attending one of the four fall invasive forest pest webinars. The webinars will be presented by Cumberland County SWCD on Thursday, October 1st

from 4-5PM; Penobscot County SWCD on Wednesday, October 7<sup>th</sup> from 3-4PM; and Central Aroostook SWCD on Tuesday, October 13<sup>th</sup> from 9-10AM. Join our discussion with Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation & Forestry to learn more about protecting our forests and crops from these invaders. These webinars are free and made possible through a cooperative agreement with the USDA-AHPIS.

# GEOCACHING—WHAT AND WHERE IS IT?

Have you heard of geocaching? Put simply, geocaching is searching for hidden objects using GPS coordinates. Hosts hide the objects, in most cases the objects are a box or container filled with knick-knacks, mark the GPS coordinates of the hiding location and share the coordinates publicly. Geocaches can be hidden anywhere and are very common to find on public lands and along trails. Finding geocaches is fun for the whole family and is a great way to enjoy the great outdoors together. Finding caches is also a great way to hone GPS skills, learn about navigation and explore the nooks and crannies of the great outdoors.

PCSWCD has had a geocache at the Demonstration Forest in Williamsburg for many years. Our volunteers are always checking on the cache, making sure it's well-stocked. This year, we added a brand new geocache to the Law Farm! We have enjoyed your notes on the cache log and seeing SO many people exploring the trails. It certainly has been a wonderful addition to the Law Farm Nature Trails! It is very important that once you find a geocache that you put it back in the exact spot you found it in. Since these caches are found using GPS coordinates, for the next person to be able to find it, it will need to be at those exact coordinates! We encourage you to leave a note in the log and tell us about your finds and experiences at the Law Farm or Demonstration Forest! Lastly, some folks like to geocache and take a trinket from the cache and leave something behind. Feel free to do this if you would like!





You can find the Law Farm, Demonstration Forest and several other geocaches on <a href="www.geocaching.com">www.geocaching.com</a> and/or the GeoCaching app that corresponds to that website. The app is free and easy to use - check it out! We encourage you all to get out there and try geocaching. It is a lot of fun! Happy caching, all!

# PCSWCD'S DEMONSTRATION FOREST—WORTH THE TRIP!

Williamsburg Township...have you heard of it? This piece of Piscataquis County is home to our Demonstration Forest. The forest is a 180-acre parcel of public land owned and maintained by the Piscataquis County Soil and Water Conservation District. The forest was once owned by the Larson Family and as you traverse the trails, you will find remnants of their homestead. There are a number of signs describing the sights and discussing the cultural heritage of the area. The trails offer wonderful opportunities for year-round recreation including hiking, bird watching, geocaching, snowshoeing, cross-country skiing and more. It's a great place to bring your dogs for a forest walk, just remember to clean up after them! The trail leads to an outdoor classroom that overlooks the mountain ranges - it's especially beautiful in the Fall! The privy at the main entrance is equipped with an automated hand sanitizer dispenser.



The Demonstration Forest is a truly beautiful and peaceful place. It's enough off the beaten path to offer a quiet forest walk. In recent years, the PCSWCD has made an effort to grow our Friends of the Demonstration Forest and with help from these volunteers, our annual work days at the forest have been SO successful! With every successful work day, comes more progress and updates to the trail system. If you visit the forest and are inspired to join our Friends of the Demonstration Forest group, please send an email to <a href="mailto:sarah.robinson@piscataquisswcd.org">sarah.robinson@piscataquisswcd.org</a> and we will add you to our list!

Take a trip out to the Demonstration Forest today! While you are out there, snap a few photos and feel free to share with us or tag us on Facebook - <a href="https://www.piscataquisswcd.org">www.facebook.com/www.piscataquisswcd.org</a> - or instagram - <a href="https://www.instagram.com/piscataquiscountyswcd">www.instagram.com/piscataquiscountyswcd</a> .

# WHAT'S NEW AT THE LAW FARM?

The Law Farm, one of two public lands owned and maintained by the PCSWCD, is a place we have been working to develop since 2009. Through grants, volunteer efforts, donations and hard work from our staff and Board of Supervisors, we have created a 1-mile loop trail, planted trees, built a privy, updated our parking lot, signage and boardwalk, added benches and footpaths, pollinator gardens and even have an on-going research trial with University of Maine and the American Chestnut Foundation. If all that didn't entice you to check it out and get involved, perhaps these 2020 additions will:



**Thompson Free Library Story walk:** Thompson Free Library reached out to us to set up a Story Walk at the Law Farm, which was displayed there from June 6th-August 31st. The Story Walk consisted of a series of signs featuring sequential spreads from a children's picture book. These pages were spread along a portion of the Law Farm Nature Trails, allowing a reader to follow along with a story by walking. The story featured was Because of an Acorn, written by Lola and Adam Schaefer and illustrated by Frann Preston-Gannin. As the reader walked from spread to spread, there were questions to consider, related sights to take in and more. The Law Farm Story Walk was a great opportunity for children and families to experience the outdoors in a creative way and encourage folks to get outdoors and explore! The PCSWCD has a strong partnership with Thompson Free Library and we hope to continue offering fun opportunities like this in years to come.



Law Farm Land Management with Rotational Grazing: In June 2020, the PCSWCD contracted with Widdershins Farm LLC to bring a herd of grazing animals - 20 sheep and a donkey - to the Law Farm. They were there to manage the land and as part of our ongoing permaculture efforts at the Law Farm. The sheep grazed the fields, which in the past were moved with a tractor, reducing brush and browse, while improving the soil and drastically reducing our use of fossil fuels. Having both the sheep and the donkey grazing together allowed for parasite control and multi-species grazing. The donkey, Moxie, also provided predator protection for the sheep. The sheep were rotationally grazed through mid-July and the before and after grazing photos speak for themselves! Because we attempt to utilize every educational opportunity, we worked with Wendy Russell to put on a Rotational Grazing Workshop, held on July 2nd.



New! Bluebird Trail at the Law Farm: The PCSWCD broke ground at the end of August 2020, on a fun new trail connection at the Law Farm - our Bluebird Trail! This trail had been a dream of our now-retired Technical Coordinator, Lynn Lubas, To honor her for 12 years of service to the PCSWCD, we collected donations, designed and blazed the trail. We dedicated the trail to Lynn and it is formally known as the "Madeline "Lynn" Lubas Bluebird Trail." Want to know what to expect while walking the Bluebird trail? From the parking area you will see new signage "Bluebird Trail" and the short and easy walk to the viewing bench located on the trail. While enjoying the bench, which was provided by a Maine Community Foundation grant in partnership with the Commons, you can enjoy the perennial pollinator flowers which were purchased from Trailside Gardens in Abbott. Lynn is an advocate for native pollinators, being a member of the Beekeepers Association and time spent educating in our communities, and we knew she would appreciate the sentiment. While relaxing on the bench, you will be able to look out into the field where 3 locally-sourced bluebird boxes are placed to watch the comings and goings of the bluebirds. A trail camera was also purchased and placed at the Law Farm, so that we all can enjoy the wildlife that call the Law Farm their home! Photos from the Bluebird Trail Cam will be shared with the social media community. Follow PCSWCD on facebook and instagram for "Bluebird Box" updates!





Afterl



Fall is a beautiful time to visit the Law Farm. The trails are in great condition and ready for you to explore. Go enjoy all the peace nature has to provide and check out some of these updates to the Law Farm.

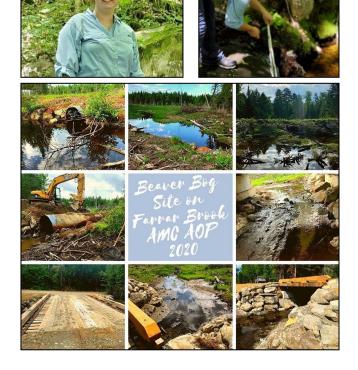
# PCSWCD Joins as Partner on Maine Aquatic Connectivity Restoration Project & Welcomes Emily Dickison, Stream Restoration Project Manager

The Maine Aquatic Connectivity Restoration Project is a five-year, \$6 million effort that provides significant financial and technical assistance to private landowners to upgrade road-stream crossings. The project improves road safety and stability while increasing opportunities for fish and other aquatic life to thrive. Made possible through the Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) of the Natural Resources Conservation Services (NRCS) in partnership with The Nature Conservancy (TNC), the project is available from 2018-2022. The project is supported by a collaboration of 26 tribal, state, federal, nonprofit, and private landowners, and covers 25,255 square miles of project area, including the last endangered Atlantic salmon-listed watersheds in the U.S. and critical Eastern brook trout habitat. The overall goal is to restore aquatic organism passage to at least 50 miles of stream, brook, and river habitat.

This summer, the Piscataguis County Soil and Water Conservation District (PCSWCD) joined the RCPP partnership! Through a sub-award from TNC, the PCSWCD has hired a full-time Stream Restoration Project Manager, Emily Dickison, and is supporting the District's Executive Director to increase capacity for stream and river connectivity in watersheds within Piscataquis County and beyond. With Dickison's diverse background in conservation and enthusiasm for the Piscataquis region, she brings field experience surveying forested lands, threatened and endangered natural communities and species, along with her background in data collection and reporting. Dickinson holds a B.A. in Science in Wildlife Biology from Unity College and served as a research assistant on the Black Bear study with the Maine Collaborative Black Bear Research Unit. She also has experience working with the Maine Natural Areas Program (MNAP), Baxter State Park Scientific Forest Management Area (SFMA) and USDA Forest Service. "We are very excited to have Emily on our team. Her depth of experience in the field, GIS mapping and education will be an asset to PCSWCD and our County," said Sarah Robinson, Executive Director. Robinson describes the hire as a success story. "Emily began with the District in 2015 as our Junior Representative serving on the Community Forestry Committee. For the last five years she's been very dedicated to our organization and what we're trying to accomplish for the future. She is the perfect fit for this position." For more information about Emily Dickison visit our Staff and Board Member Page at http://www.piscataguisswcd.org/staff-and-boardmembers/.

Dickison will assist with the implementation of stream restoration and aquatic organism passage projects through the Maine Aquatic Connectivity Restoration Project and work closely with project partners and private landowners on Aquatic Organism Passage (AOP) projects such as culvert upgrades. This material is based upon work supported by the Natural Resources Conservation Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, under number 68-1218-17-003.

The project was made possible through support provided by the NRCS and TNC, under the terms of RCCP Agreement #68-1218-17-003. The content and opinions expressed herein are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the position or the policy of such agency or The Nature Conservancy and no official endorsement should be inferred.



# Soil Your Undies, Piscataquis!

...say what? PCSWCD decided that 2020 needed some fun! Back in May, we rounded up 12 volunteers who offered a spot in their woodlot, home garden, market garden, wetland, pasture and more, and asked them to plant a pair of cotton underwear, or "soil their undies." We asked them to do this all in the name of soil health! What does planting underwear have to do with soil health? As stated before, the undies are cotton (plant fibers). Soil microbes, which are found in large populations in healthy soil, break down plant fibers overtime. Plant a pair of cotton undies, leave them in the soil for 8-12 weeks, dig them up, then you can SEE just how active your soil is! If the microbes are there and happy, those undies will be pretty broken down! This year, with drought conditions, we got an eye-full of just how much healthy soil needs structure and to be vegetated to help hold on to moisture. Spots where the undies were planted that lacked that vegetation or where in high, well-drained spots, had less microbe activity than others. Why did we do a soil health experiment and why should people care about soil health? That's an easy question to answer: Because soil is life! Healthy soil filters our water and provides us with clean water, without it we wouldn't have most of our food or places to live (wood)! We all need to work to protect our soil!

Enjoy some before and after photos below! To follow the entire experiment, head on over to our <u>Facebook</u> and <u>Instagram</u> pages and search for the hashtag #soilyourundiespiscataquis.













# A Message From Our Educational Coordinator

Hello! Hopefully by now, you have read through this newsletter and heard about all our updates, changes, successes and struggles. It is worth saying one more time—THANK YOU! Thank you all for standing by us and supporting our work!

One big change to note is since our beloved Lynn Lubas is now retired, those of you who enjoy our birding classes and who work with NRCS, will see a lot more of me, as I have taken over those responsibilities from Lynn. I am enjoying the new parts of the job and look forward to working with you all!

Fall is upon us, Winter is approaching and a new year will be here before we know it. We will continue to protect, conserve and promote our natural resources, provide educational programming, work with organizations to bring high quality offerings to our area and so much more. We might do it a little differently, but it will be done! We are committed to adapting and being there for you!









# VOLUNTEERING WITH THE PCSWCD

Piscataquis County Soil and Water Conservation District has two public lands, the Law Farm and the Demonstration Forest. We rely on help from volunteers who care about these lands to make them accessible and safe for the public to enjoy!

It takes a lot of time, energy, power tools and people power to maintain two parcels of 100+ acres. We are fortunate to have a super team of volunteers that help out at our annual Demonstration Forest and Law Farm Volunteer Workdays. Perhaps they come lend a hand because they care about the land, or perhaps they come so they know they would be less likely to get stuck on a fallen tree while riding their snowmobiles through the demonstration forest—whatever the reason, we

# **APPRECIATE the help, so very much!**

Whatever your reason to be moved to volunteer, we would love to add you to this growing and fun-loving group. We can utilize many hands and make BIG changes with more help!

Have we convinced you? Great! Just shoot us an email at <a href="mailto:info@piscataquisswcd.org">info@piscataquisswcd.org</a> or pick up the phone and call us at 207-564-2321 ext. 3 and let us know you want to volunteer with us at either the Demonstration Forest, the Law Farm or both!







# **VOLUNTEER POWER!**

# LOVE THE OUTDOORS? MAKE IT YOUR CAREER!

Are you interested in pursuing careers in Forestry, Natural Resource Conservation or Agriculture? Check out some of the great **opportunities** available to students in Piscataguis County!

*Maine Community Foundation Scholarships* are offered annually to individuals seeking to study in a variety of concentrations. We have provided a link to scholarships available to residents of Piscataquis County.

Award: varies FMI: <a href="http://www.mainecf.org/Scholarships/PiscataquisCounty/tabid/229/Default.aspx">http://www.mainecf.org/Scholarships/PiscataquisCounty/tabid/229/Default.aspx</a>
Deadline: dependent on scholarship

Environmental Policy Interns through Natural Resources Council of Maine, the *Tomorrow's Environmental Leaders Internship*. Applications are accepted throughout the year and should be submitted to lhodgkins@nrcm.org Award: 1,000 FMI: <a href="https://www.nrcm.org/contact/employment-opportunities/">https://www.nrcm.org/contact/employment-opportunities/</a>

Internships and other opportunities through the *United States Forest Service!* Check out their website and read about all the great programs available to youth interested in careers in forestry and natural resources, including programs such as Pathways, Conservation Corps and more!

FMI: https://www.fs.fed.us/working-with-us/opportunities-for-young-people

UMaine School of Forest Resources Scholarships available for the winning Envirothon FMI on Envirothon: <a href="https://www.maineenvirothon.org/">https://www.maineenvirothon.org/</a>

Attending UMaine? See <a href="http://umaine.edu/wle/undergraduate-program/scholarships/">http://umaine.edu/wle/undergraduate-program/scholarships/</a>

# **RESOURCES, FOR YOU!**

Below are suggestions from our in-office lending library.

Looking for other types of resources?

We also have digital files, ready-made curriculum and tons of hand-outs to share!

# **SOIL & AGRICULTURE:**

Dig In! Hands-On Soil Investigations

The Wild Blueberry Classroom Curriculum

Growing a Nation: The Story of American Agriculture DVD

#### **FORESTRY:**

Teacher Lesson Plans and a Special Supplement of Forestry Lessons

The Woods in Your Backvard

<u>Forest Discovery Box</u> - from the Irving Corporation Teachers Resource Guide with 16 overhead transparencies, 6 forestry videos, poster, regional map, forestry pamphlets, 4 specimen boxes with magnifiers, pollen sample, 6 seed cone species, 5 samples of cleaned seeds, ranging from 500 - 2000 seeds each, 4 samples tree cookies, 18 species of wood samples, 9 samples of wood products

Project Learning Tree: K - 6



Project Learning Tree: K - 6

Project Wild Aquatic: K -12

Things to Do in Science and Conservation

Secrets of Nature: Animal Homes

Wow! The Wonders of Wetland

Last Child in the Woods

Water - We Can't Live Without It - Slide and Cassette Tape Presentation

Audubon Adventures: A Classroom Resource Manual

<u>Audubon Pocket Guides</u> including Familiar Flowers of North America, Familiar Birds of North America, Familiar Butterflies of North America and many more!

Small World Maps and Map Making

**Energy Conservation** 

<u>Wild Turkey Box</u> - from the National Wild Turkey Federation, includes: Teacher's Guide with multi-curriculum lesson plans covering math, science, history, English, creative writing, art, technology, design, and habitat management; bulletin board set-up; 30 Turkey bookmarks with facts; 30 turkey rulers; 30 turkey pencils; video with three presentations; and multimedia CD-ROM for Macintosh and Windows with Project Wild Activities for K-12.

### **POLLINATORS:**

The Family Butterfly Book

Audubon Adventures: A Classroom Resource Manual

<u>Audubon Pocket Guides</u> including Familiar Flowers of North America, Familiar Birds of North America, Familiar Butterflies of North America and many more

Acorn 2006 Naturalists Resources for the Trail and the Classroom









**Connect with the Piscataquis County Soil and Water Conservation District:** 

www.piscataquisswcd.org www.facebook.com/www.piscataquisswcd.org www.instagram.com/piscataquiscountyswcd







# HELP PROTECT THE SOIL, WATER, FORESTS & FARMS IN YOUR COMMUNITY...

# Donate to the Piscataquis County Soil and Water Conservation District

Join your local leaders in conservation and together, we can positively impact the future of our natural resources upon which we depend.

Ways to Donate:

On our website: www.piscataquisswcd.org

By mail: 42 Engdahl Dr., Dover-Foxcroft ME 04426

PayPal: via QR code





JOIN US FOR A PCSWCD EVENT, PROGRAM OR WORKSHOP!

www.piscataquisswcd.org/eventsprograms





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Conservation Districts

Natural Resources