

Winter Spring  
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**RESOURCE NEWS**

## Attending NRCS Conservation Boot Camp - What I Learned -

by Celia Rodrigues,  
Agriculture Conservation Specialist  
Cape Atlantic SCD

NRCS Conservation Planning Boot Camp is a three-week, intensive training course for technical employees that covers current conservation planning policy, procedures, and guidelines.



Celia Rodrigues (left) poses with fellow classmates at boot camp

Celia Rodrigues, Agriculture Conservation Specialist, Cape Atlantic SCD, attended this past summer and relayed her experience as follows:

Conservation Boot Camp has been an experience that I will never forget. When I arrived in Lincoln NE, I wasn't sure what to expect. To my surprise, I found it to be an upbeat downtown area with many activities to do.

My instructors hosted a meet and greet at the hotel the evening before class began. There were approximately 40 attendees and only 3 were from the northeast. The majority of my peers were from the mid-west or southeast. After getting a feel for my fellow classmates, there were two things I knew I needed to address during my introduction at the first day of class: New Jersey natives don't have an accent and people from New Jersey are nothing like *that* TV show (Jersey Shore).

My instructors kicked off week one with the 9-step planning process, soil health, a tour of the National Soil Survey Center (NSSC), and toolkit basics. I am still amazed at how many samples are stored at the NSSC.



Soil samples collected from across the US  
Celia Rodrigues

**continued on pg. 2, Boot Camp**

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# Regional Conservation Planning Partnership Helps to Deliver Conservation on the Land

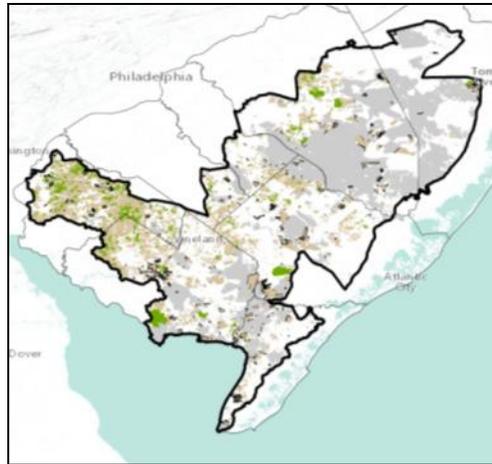
By David Reilly,  
District Manager

The Cape Atlantic Conservation District entered into a 5 year agreement with the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation in 2014 to provide conservation planning assistance to landowners.

Best management practices such as riparian buffers, filters strips, grassed waterways, no-till farming, crop residue, cover crops and irrigation water management help to reduce sediment and nutrients from entering streams and rivers.

This program increases the amount of conservation planning on agricultural lands in partnership with USDA

Natural Resources Conservation Service to implement best management practices in Atlantic, Cape May and Cumberland Counties to help improve water quality in the Delaware Bay.



Through this program 2,900 hours have been spent delivering the work elements of the project. The District's Agricultural Conservation Specialist, Celia Rodrigues, completed 60 conservation plans, design and implementation of conservation practices occurred including 90 inventories and evaluations, 88 surveys for engineering design or layout and 139 practice design and checkouts. District staff conducted outreach activities through participation at regional estuary summits, presentations at national and regional conservation meetings and a GIS based mailing reaching more than 780 potential participants.

## Boot Camp, from pg. 1

During the first week, we met with our simulated "farmer" and discussed the concerns he would like to address on his newly leased ground. Our objective was to go through the planning process from start to finish and create a plan that best suited the "farmer's" needs and resource concerns. The tricky part was creating a plan without having programs in mind. I still couldn't help but ask program questions. Oops!

There were two farms the class visited through our stay. Rogers Family Farm which is a corn, soybean, & sorghum operation, and the second farm called Prairie Pines is a rangeland & pasture

operation. Some of my favorite points were learning how to execute a survey, using the new Integrated Soil Tool (IET) program, and soil health.

Another highlight was that this training ran August 7th through the 25th, and Lincoln, NE, happened to fall under the path of totality for the eclipse that occurred on August 21st. It was amazing.

It was great getting to network with people from different areas and making new friends. I would like to thank the NACD, Cape Atlantic SCD, and NRCS for allowing me the opportunity to attend this awesome training. I hope that other partner employees

will take advantage of this training experience.

Thanks so much everyone!



Total eclipse captured  
by Celia Rodrigues  
in Lincoln, NE

# Conservation Poster Contest Theme Chosen

The annual NACD and NACD Auxiliary Poster Contest provides students the chance to have their art displayed as part of a national conservation outreach initiative.

The Stewardship theme for 2018 is “Watersheds; Our Water, Our Home.”

Water is one of our most precious resources. Watersheds supply water for drinking, recreation, irrigation, manufacturing, and wildlife and bird habitat. It is essential that each of us adopts good water conservation habits so that we can keep our water resources safe and productive now and for future generations.



The Cape Atlantic Conservation District invites all schools and students in grades 2 to 12 to participate. The poster contest is open to public, private, and home-schooled students.

The contest starts at the district level, where the first and second place winners in each category receive gift cards. The top winning posters will advance to the state level, and then to the national level, where they receive recognition at NACD’s annual meeting. The top three posters in each category of the national contest will receive monetary prizes.

Rules, deadlines for submission, and entry form can be found on the [District website](#). Resources for creating your poster can be found on the [National Association of Conservation Districts website](#).

## Your Conservation Tip of the Season

### BACKYARD CONSERVATION

It'll grow on



### Improving Soil Health

Improving your gardening success starts with building a healthier soil. And fall is the best time to do it!

#### Soil Amendments

Organic soil amendments release their nutrients slowly over several months. Adding them in fall allows nutrients to be available in spring, when they are needed. Manure, shredded leaves, humus and

compost are some amendments that can be added. Applying additional nitrogen along with the organic matter will aid the beneficial organisms to decompose any raw organic material. The addition of bone meal will accomplish this. Spread amendments evenly over your garden.

#### Fall Tilling

Advantages of tilling include:

1. incorporates amendments into the soil
2. increases oxygen

3. improves drainage
4. alleviate compaction



The irregular surface created by tilling will eventually wear down over winter, carrying amendments deeper into the soil.

#### Check Your pH

Changing the pH of your garden should be done slowly, over a three to six month period. A soil test will

determine your pH after which, you can raise or lower the pH as you see fit. The addition of lime, elemental sulfur or peat moss, accordingly, will accomplish your goal.

# 2018 NJ Envirothon in Salem County

The table is set to have the 2018 NJ Envirothon at Camp Grice boy scout camp on Saturday May 5 in Salem County. It's actually in Elmer, "The Small Town With The Big Welcome" or **124 Daretown Road**, to be more precise.

As always, the current issue changes from year to year with 2018 being "**Western Rangeland Management: Balancing Diverse Views.**" The NJ Envirothon has a variation of the theme which is "**Managing NJ Pastureland and Western Rangeland: Balancing Diverse View.**"

Western rangeland management objectives include grazing, timber harvest, recreational uses (including hiking, camping, fishing, hunting, etc.) and mining.

Envirothon teams will learn how Best Management Practices are used to protect western rangelands, improve grazing management schemes, promote pest



Camp Grice is part of the Roosevelt Scout Reservation

management, reduce uncontrolled wildfires, and improve habitat for sage grouse and other wildlife.

Three **Envirothon training sessions** will be available for students wishing to brush up on station testing material. The

sessions are also a good introduction for new schools/students who are unfamiliar with the Envirothon. Schools do not need to be registered for the Envirothon to attend a training session. Cape Atlantic Conservation District staff is available to visit a school as well. Schools/teams have the opportunity to reserve one of three **Envirothon training trunks** to aid them in studying for the Envirothon testing stations too.

The Cape Atlantic Conservation District is offering five, \$100 mini-grants to teams in Atlantic and Cape May Counties that register and compete in the NJ Envirothon. The form may be found [here](#).

Contact [Rich Belcher](#) or fill out a [registration form](#) to participate in the Envirothon.

## - The 2017 National Conservation Envirothon - A Personal Perspective

Submitted by  
Owen Mehler,  
Cedar Creek High  
School

On my adventure through the NCF Envirothon, I learned exponential amounts of information and advice. This was all from taking in the different stories and experiences of teams from other states and countries or taking in the clues and tips from advisors that were professionals in the environmental field of careers.



Owen Mehler, Riley Blankenship, Laurel Worth, Patrick Elkner, and Tim Meineke at the National Conservation Envirothon at Mount St. Mary's University

This doesn't even include the daily informative lessons that were well planned by the faculty to fit each student and participant. We learned all different aspects of the envirothon subjects including

the soils, aquatics, wildlife, current issue, and the presentation topic.

The trip developed countless memories for my teammates and I, and it could be said that it was a true once in a lifetime

experience for kids, like myself, looking into the career of Environmental Science.



The teams took a side trip to Washington

## Soil Erosion & Sediment Control Plans Report for FY 2017

The District is responsible for enforcing the Chapter 251, P.L. 1975 Soil Erosion and Sediment Control Act, (NJSA 4:24-39 et seq.) in Atlantic and Cape May counties. Both counties have a combined total of 39 municipalities consisting of 15 coastal municipalities and 24 municipalities on the mainland. The following represents how the District implemented the Chapter 251, P.L. 1975 Soil Erosion and Sediment Control Act, (NJSA 4:24-39 et seq.) for FY 2017 which runs from July 1, 2016 to June 30, 2017. Projects include land clearing and demolition, single family dwellings, multiple family dwellings, commercial, utilities, and roads.

Applications Received	592
Certifications Issued	542
Area of Projects	539 acres
Reports of Compliance Issued	654
Site Inspections Performed	4949
Staff Hours Devoted to 251 Implementation	4002

Fiscal year 2017 was a busy year with the termination of the Permit Extension Act, N.J.S.A. 40:550-136.1 et seq. The District had to either recertify or expire over 1100 projects to be sure they were all in compliance with the Soil Erosion and Sediment Control Act. The District is looking forward to a busy and productive FY 2018.

## Soil and Water Conservation Grants Available to Farmers

By David Reilly, District Manager with information provided by New Jersey State Agriculture Development Committee (SADC) and USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS).

Recently, the SADC's FY17 appropriations request was signed by Governor Christie. SADC is making at least \$500,000 available to eligible farmers and landowners for Soil & Water Grants. First priority will be given to farms that are permanently preserved through the SADC. Farms enrolled in the 8-year program will be second priority. In order to meet the anticipated demand for Soil and Water Grants, SADC entered into an agreement with the USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) to offer technical assistance to farmers and landowners.



Cover Crops help to protect soil from erosion  
Courtesy of USDA NRCS

New Jersey farms already enrolled in the New Jersey State Agriculture Development Committee's (SADC) farmland preservation program that are eligible for USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) may apply for both EQIP and N.J. Department of Agriculture (NJDA) Conservation Cost-Share Program (CCSP) this year. By participating in both these programs, landowners can realize a higher rate of payments for implementing soil and water conservation practices on permanently preserved farmland, estimated to be about 75 percent to up to 90 percent of project costs. Eligible applicants interested in this opportunity should submit an application at their local NRCS office.

# Awards at Annual Conservation Partnership Meeting Hit Close to Home

Each year, the 15 conservation districts and its partners in New Jersey gather for the Annual Conservation Partnership Meeting. This year, it took place on November 2nd and was held at the Rutgers Eco-Complex in Bordentown. While the meeting covers relevant and wide-ranging issues, it also allows the New Jersey Association of Conservation Districts (NJACD) to acknowledge those persons and organizations that have made an exceptional contribution towards achieving the resource conservation and management goals of the district and the State Association.

## Outstanding District Administrative Achievement Award

The 2017 Outstanding District Administrative Achievement Award went to Marie Rogowski of the Cape Atlantic Conservation District. Marie is an Administrative Assistant II and assists with the administration of Ch.251 while conducting the initial review of applications for completeness. She also coordinates the RFA program and serves as the district website administrator and maintains the districts' filing system of active and archived project files.

Marie started with the District in 2004 as an Administrative Assistant I and was promoted to Administrative Assistant II in 2014 and has been instrumental in maintaining records for recertification due to the end of the Permit Extension Act. Marie also serves a valuable role in providing assistance to applicants and municipal officials on the status of SE&SC plan certifications.

Over the past fourteen years with the District, Marie's roles and responsibilities have grown due to her superb organizational skills. These skills were no more evident than they have been during the past year. With the end of the Permit Extension Act this year, the need to process recertification request letters for more than 1,100 projects was performed.



Marie continues to be an invaluable part of the District and well deserved of the award bestowed her.

Congratulations, Marie!

## Outstanding Professional Conservationist Award

Christopher Miller was awarded the 2017 Outstanding Professional Conservationist Award. Chris is the manager at Cape May Plant Materials Center (CMPMC) and previously served as a plant materials specialist. He serves as a training resource for the New Jersey Association of Conservation Districts /State Soil Conservation Committee for plant material information. Under Chris' leadership, the CMPMC has continued to develop new innovative plant technology to address changing conditions related to sea level rise, coastal erosion, storm water intrusion and the improvement of water quality and soil health.



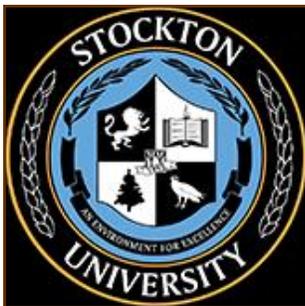
Chris has been the manager of the 88 acre facility since 2009 and has partnered with the Cape Atlantic Conservation District on many projects, seminars and other events.

He has been a significant source of plant material information for the Cape Atlantic Conservation District and other conservation partners in New Jersey. Under his management, the CMPMC has maintained its standing as the premiere federal facility that develops the large scale commercial availability of plants and plant use technologies to address natural resource concerns. His efforts have helped to support the recovery of coastal resources from coastal storms that continue to effect the service area while helping to develop delivery strategies that can be used by Plant Materials Centers across the country.

Congratulations Chris!

## Internship Possibility

Every fall and spring semester, the Cape Atlantic Conservation District takes on new ospreys from Stockton University's School of Natural Sciences & Mathematics. The District has an on-going internship program, allowing interested Stockton students to intern at the District. The internship is a great opportunity for students to get hands on work experience as well as fulfill a requirement needed by the students before graduating.



## Contact Us!



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*"Committed to the  
Conservation of  
Our Natural Resources"*

## An Interns Perspective at the District

Contributed by Georgie Grieb and Megan Jones,  
District Interns

Being an intern at the District has provided us with a variety of critical thinking and field skills. As an intern, we were familiarized with the NJ Soil Erosion and Sediment Control Act, Chapter 251, and whether or not projects were in compliance with it. One of the first things we learned was how to process chapter 251 plans submitted to the district. This involved not only handling the administrative paperwork, but also involved GIS mapping and data entry into an existing project database. Outside of the office in the field, we learned how to assess a construction site while interpreting the associated soil erosion plan to determine if the site was in compliance. Observational notes were entered into a project database once



Georgie Grieb checks the placement of a headwall against the construction plans

back at the district office.

Office time also involved entering stormwater management basin data into a centralized database, the NJ Hydrologic Modeling Database. We recorded closed or expired plans into the database, entering basin data supplied by data base summary forms that were collected by the district. Another part of the internship was assisting in educational outreach. We were introduced to the Envirothon, district newsletter, poster contest and earth day events, while being directly involved in contributing to the newsletter, creating an informational bulletin and distribution of poster contest material to schools and teachers.

Our internship also exposed us to the agricultural community with visits to two farms. Being out on the farms with District and NRCS staff was a very hands-on and informative experience. We helped collect data and observe several field practices used to test the quality and health of the soil. The group set up an infiltration system in order to calculate the amount of runoff from rainfall while digging a soil pit to observe and document the qualities of different soil horizons.

This internship has already helped us apply what we have learned at Stockton University and improved our communication and technological

skills.



Rich Shaw, NRCS NJ State Scientist, demonstrates how to measure infiltration rate on a farm field while interns Megan Jones (center) and Georgie Grieb look on.