



ANNUAL REPORT

FY 2021-2022



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OUR VISION

To promote and improve long-lasting and environmentally-friendly practices that protect natural resources such as soil, water, and air.

OUR MISSION

To meet our vision through outreach, education, help with environmental questions, and financial assistance. We work with a variety of people and groups including farmers, landowners, cities, towns, schools, and others in the community.

The ERICD is governed by a volunteer Board of Directors, consisting of five voting directors and several associate directors. These local individuals provide administrative guidance and focus on the actions of the Eastern District, which include the Newport and Bristol Counties.



BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Chair: Beverly Migliore, Barrington
Nancy Parker Wilson, Portsmouth
Brenda Mottram, Tiverton
Jessica Cullinan, Tiverton
Robert Carr, Tiverton

STAFF

Sara Churgin - District Manager
Nate Lukas, Emma Crisfield - Outreach & Agricultural Technicians
Raymond Munoz Tabares - Civil Engineer Technician
Ryan Brancato - Portsmouth AgInnovation Farm & Stormwater Outreach
Lauren Carson - Stormwater Outreach & Implementation



MELVILLE ELEMENTARY RAIN GARDEN & OUTDOOR LEARNING ACTIVITY ZONE

PORTSMOUTH, RI



ERICD celebrated the official opening of its Outdoor Learning Activity Zone at Melville Elementary School in Portsmouth with a ribbon cutting ceremony on June 10. Cutting the ribbon was Elizabeth Viveiros, who is currently Deputy Superintendent of the Portsmouth School Department and was principal at the school while the project was underway. Also present were representatives from project partners ERICD, RIDOT, and Thrive Outside, as well as community members, Portsmouth Town Council and School Committee members, and students and parents.



The Outdoor Learning Activity Zone at Melville acts as an outdoor classroom, which allows students to learn safely while adhering to social distancing protocols. People of all abilities can enjoy this garden because it is fully handicap accessible.



This project was made possible by a partnership between ERICD, Thrive Outside, RIDOT, and Melville School. The design incorporates a rain garden, which collects polluted stormwater that would normally flow into Melville Pond, an integral water source in the Narragansett Bay Watershed. Each year it will remove an average of .48 pounds of phosphorus, .33 pounds of zinc, and 4.28 pounds of nitrogen.



PORTSMOUTH AGINNOVATION FARM

PORTSMOUTH, RI

The Portsmouth AgInnovation Farm, founded in 2020, continued to blossom this year. The project is a partnership between Portsmouth Middle School and ERICD, led by Science Coach Margie Brennan and is located at Cloverbud Ranch. This year, students designed a new garden area, developed an irrigation system for their crops, and learned how to fish. A new shed was built that will act as a classroom for educational programming.

The kids started growing seeds inside this Spring, which were then planted at the farm. Produce grown was donated to both St. Lucy's and St. Joseph's food bank. A team of volunteers diligently weeded and watered in order to make room for vegetables.

Each child saw the full process of how food is grown, helping them to appreciate the food chain we each take part in every day. In addition to the crops the kids were tending, there were plots available to the community to grow their own food.

A seasonal high tunnel, installed last year, extends the growing season and provides a place for the kids to continue learning about agriculture during the shoulder season. A big thank you to Margie Brennan for leading this project, and to all of our volunteers and donors. Thank you!



CUTTING THE RIBBON

PORTSMOUTH, RI

In April 2022, Portsmouth Middle School Principal João Arruda officially cut the ribbon on the Portsmouth AgInnovation Farm. The hugely successful event was attended by a wide range of community members, students, teachers, parents, the Portsmouth School Committee, Portsmouth Town Council members, and Congressman David Cicilline.



POLLINATOR PATH AT AGINNOVATION

A pollinator path was installed this year, funded by the National Association of Conservation Districts. A stunning range of non-invasive pollinator plants provide food to our critical pollinator insect population, while instructional signs will soon guide visitors and educate them about the importance of pollinating insects and pollinator plants with interactive QR codes.



The site has been selected for a Bee study being conducted by a URI Masters Class led by Professor Steve Alm. The group will visit the farm once a month during the April-November growing season as part of its study; while providing technical assistance to ERICD on how to further grow the pollinator habitat, as well as exploring the world of pollinators with the students.

PORTSMOUTH AGINNOVATION FARM STUDENTS AWARDED PRESTIGIOUS NATIONAL AWARD

PORTSMOUTH, RI

Portsmouth Middle School AgInnovation students and families, led by Margie Brennan, the Science Instructional Coach, traveled to Washington D.C. to accept the President's Environmental Youth Award (PEYA) at the EPA's award ceremony on August 4. While in D.C., the students had the opportunity to meet with Senator Jack Reed at the Capitol, and explore our nation's capital city.

This is a prestigious national award which recognizes outstanding environmental stewardship projects developed by K-12 youth. Since 1971, the President of the United States has joined with the EPA to recognize young people for protecting our nation's air, water, land, and ecology.

The students raised funds for the trip. Thank you to everyone for their support, especially to Desautel Law, which generously matched \$2,500 of funds raised!

The students recognized for the award are Tatum Brennan, Maggie Mullen, Brooke O'Brien, Noah Sidewand, Owen Sidewand, Anabella Barber, Rowen Willet, Stella McInerney, Aurelius Brockman, Elle McFadden, Elizabeth Lantz, Fiona Sarro, Olivia Purdy, Olivia Almilli, Dahlia Brillhante, and Cameron Davis.



SCENES FROM AGINNOVATION FARM



USDA NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE (NRCS)

NEWPORT & BRISTOL COUNTIES



Natural Resources Conservation Service

REGIONAL CONSERVATION PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM (RCPP)

The Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) promotes coordination of NRCS conservation activities with partners that offer value-added contributions to expand our collective ability to address on-farm, watershed, and regional natural resource concerns. Through RCPP, NRCS seeks to co-invest with partners to implement projects that demonstrate innovative solutions to conservation challenges and provide measurable improvements and outcomes tied to the resource concerns they seek to address.

RCPP Farm Conservation Planning (FCP) – Rhode Island's farms, forest and other open space provide many benefits to its citizens. Local farms ensure a readily available source of food close to metropolitan areas, while forestland and open space are key natural resources that provide recreational areas and contribute to the welfare and happiness of the state's inhabitants. Because of the economic pressure to convert these lands to development or another more profitable land use, Rhode Island's farms, forests and open spaces are rapidly disappearing. The Farm, Forest and Open Space Act helps citizens conserve these lands for themselves and for future generations.

Rhode Island law (Chapter 44-27) allows property enrolled in the Farm, Forest and Open Space Program to be assessed at its current use, not its value for development. The purpose of the law is not to reduce property taxes, but to conserve Rhode Island's productive agricultural and forest land by reducing the chance it will have to be sold for development.

Once accepted into the farm designation portion of this program, the landowner is required by law to get a full farm conservation plan. The RCPP FCP funding enables district staff members to write plans for the landowners, as no cost to them.

REGIONAL CONSERVATION PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM (RCPP) CONT'D

RCPP Farm Conservation Implementation funding is used to promote and encourage implementation of best management practices (BMP) on statewide agricultural lands, and monitor the impacts on Rhode Island's surface water quality. To date, the following has been done:

- o 9 contracts have been completed.
- o 36 applications have been obligated.
- o 72 practices have been certified.

PEOPLES GARDEN

The Peoples Garden grant is a statewide program funded by NRCS. For the past three years, each of the Rhode Island Conservation Districts (Eastern, Southern, and Northern) has sought organizations in urban, suburban, or rural areas to install community gardens or high tunnels and maintain them for a minimum of 18 months (gardens) or 36 months (high tunnels). This project is funded by an agreement between the RI State Conservation Committee (RISCC) and the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (USDA NRCS).

Past and Present Grantees:

- Aquidneck Land Trust
- Aquidneck Community Table
- Portsmouth AgInnovation Farm
- Bristol Conservation Commission
- East Bay Food Pantry
- Norman Bird Sanctuary
- Highlander Charter School of Warren
- Newport Mental Health



EARTH MONTH ACTIVITIES

BRISTOL & NEWPORT COUNTIES

Each year, ERICD hosts a range of activities during the month of April encouraging our community to help our environment. Earth Month programming has expanded each year, and 2022 was definitely the biggest yet.

ERICD Earth Month 2022 by the Numbers:

1,400 - Number of seedlings that will grow into strong allies for our environment

50 - Number of rain barrels sold, which will collect stormwater and prevent it from flowing into Narragansett Bay

260 - Pounds of trash picked up by 'ploggers'

Too many to count - Laughs at our Comedy for Conservation Show with headliner Ashley Gutermuth

Thank you to our volunteers, site-host Greenvale Vineyards, Comedian Ashley Gutermuth, Coca-Cola for donating the rain barrels, the towns of Middletown and Bristol for hosting rain barrel workshops, Newport Run and Chug, Rhode Races, Home Depot and to our plogging in-kind sponsors Nuun hydration, The Donut Shack, Mermaid Straw, Open Water, Sunmaid Raisins, and Emmy's Organics, and many others who made Earth Month possible!



COMMUNITY OUTREACH

NEWPORT & BRISTOL COUNTIES



ERICD participated in and plugged the Tiverton Celebrates Parade



ERICD hosted its first-ever Yoga & Wine event



ERICD frequently hosts farm tours for the community to learn about conservation practices and NRCS programs



ERICD distributed information and resources at local farmers markets, including the Tiverton Harvest Market, pictured here

STORMWATER MITIGATION IN NEWPORT'S NORTH END

NEWPORT, RI

Through funding provided by The Funders Network, van Beuren Charitable Foundation, Prince Charitable Trusts and the Rhode Island Foundation, ERICD partnered with the City of Newport, the Women's Resource Center, the Newport Health Equity Zone and North End residents. The project's vision focused on fostering civic engagement in this under-represented community by educating them on stormwater issues and actively engaging them in the decision-making regarding solutions. They are the ones who decided where the neighborhood would be best served by a green infrastructure stormwater mitigation installation.

The Green Infrastructure BMP system was installed at Pell Elementary School. Water enters the system in two areas. The first opening is a soft opening designed for light rain storms. It is lined with plants, which absorb the stormwater. The second opening catches water at high velocity rates from the above paved areas. This opening is lined with riprap stone to slow the water entering the system. Once the water enters the system, it is first stored in a fore bay and then overflows into a second bay. Both bays were dug out four feet and filled with stone and engineered soil. We then planted the second bay to help suck up water using the plants. Combined, the bays treat 11,700 gallons of water per one-quarter inch rain event. Once the system is filled up (11,700 gallons) the water is still treated by slowing it down enough using riprap. Prior to this system being installed, the water would run quickly over the drains, causing flooding and allowing polluted water to enter the watershed.



LEGISLATIVE MEET & GREET

PORTSMOUTH, RI

In September 2022, ERICD and its counterparts NRICD and SRICD, along with the Rhode Island State Conservation Committee hosted legislators from across the state to meet conservation district staff and learn about conservation programming. The event was hosted at Greenvale Vineyards in Portsmouth.

*The three Conservation District Managers:
Gina Fuller (SRICD), Molly Allard (NRICD)
& Sara Churgin (ERICD)*



*House Rep. Terri Cortvriend
& ERICD Board Member
Nancy Parker Wilson*



*ERICD District Manager
Sara Churgin & House
Rep. Lauren Carson*



*Sara Churgin and ERICD Board Members Nancy
Parker Wilson, Bev Migliore & Jessica Cullinan*

EASERN RI CONSERVATION DISTRICT

STATEMENTS OF ACTIVITIES AND CHANGES IN NET ASSETS

YEARS ENDED JUNE 30, 2022 AND 2021

	<u>2022</u>	<u>2021</u>
Changes in Net Assets Without Donor Restrictions:		
Revenue and Support:		
Governmental Grants.....	\$258,390	\$264,324
Cares Act PPP Loan Forgiveness.....	\$ -	\$ 21,041
Private Grants & Contributions.....	\$119,115	\$ 30,258
In-Kind Contributions.....	\$ -	\$ 8,294
Donated Program Services.....	\$ -	\$ 9,365
Other Fees for Services.....	\$ 1,500	\$ 1,750
Other Income.....	\$ 13	\$ 19
Total Revenue and Support		
Without Donor Rstrictions and Net Assets		
Released from Restrictions	\$379,018	\$335,051
Expenses:		
Program Expenses:		
Conservation Program Expenses.....	\$204,094	\$220,705
Total Program Expenses	\$204,094	\$220,705
Supporting Services Expenses:		
Management and General.....	\$ 55,571	\$ 50,609
Fundraising Expenses.....	\$ 8,289	\$ 7,108
Total Supporting Service Expenses	\$ 63,860	\$ 57,717
Total Expenses	\$267,954	\$278,422
Increase in Net Assets Withouth Donor Restrictions	\$111,064	\$ 56,629
Net Assets, Beginning	\$157,263	\$100,634
Net Assets, Ending	\$268,327	\$157,263