

BENNINGTON COUNTY CONSERVATION DISTRICT (BCCD) - 2020

The mission of the BCCD is to promote rural livelihoods and protect natural resources in southwestern Vermont. Our work in fiscal year 2020 included:

Agriculture technical assistance and outreach was provided to farmers county-wide, to develop nutrient management plans, conduct soil and water samples and assist with resources and grants. Livestock exclusion fencing was provided for a local dairy farmer to keep cattle out of a small tributary in Manchester, in conjunction with the Poultney-Mettowee Natural Resources Conservation District (PMNRCD) and US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). We also participated and provided grant writing for the Northshire Grown: Direct CSA (a project of Merck Forest and Farmland Center - MFFC), which provides directly marketed produce to customers and assists producers during Covid. This effort also supports Neighbors in Need, by providing free food to community members who need it the most.

Partnering with the Town of Bennington and Shelly Stiles (previous BCCD district manager) to research and apply for the necessary permits to connect Headwaters Park with the old One World Conservation property and Y woods in Bennington. Permits were obtained for a new floater's trail and additional hiking access down and across Jewitt Brook.

Participated in the Batten Kill Watershed Comprehensive Invasive Species Management Association (CISMA) including the management of an Eco Americorp Service member and projects like a workshop for Orvis; newspaper articles; and social media outreach.

A VT DEC Trees for Streams / Pur Projet buffer planting was completed in North Bennington to reduce sediment and nutrient run-off into the Walloomsac River. Planting occurred in partnership with the PMNRCD. Over 1000 trees were planted at this site. Future buffer plantings are scheduled for Spring 2021. Outreach was also provided to landowners throughout the county, who would benefit from similar plantings.

Participated in forest connectivity research and outreach, via a High Meadows Grant shared with MFFC. Ecologically significant land that is susceptible to parcelization was identified in the Taconic Forest block (Rupert, Arlington, Sandgate, Manchester, Dorset). Outreach and site visits began this fall, in conjunction with VT FPR County Forester, Cory Creegan.

Developed three stormwater projects, one of which we will apply for design funding at the next grant opening. Projects were located along River Road in Winhall, Bennington College in Bennington and on private property in Woodford. Culverts were also assessed in Rupert and Dorset, in conjunction with USFWS and the Bennington County Regional Commission (BCRC) for aquatic organism passage. We will seek funding in upcoming months for culverts in need of replacement.

Assisting with the development of the new 5-year Battenkill, Hoosic and Wallomsac Basin 1 plan.

Topographic surveys and 50% engineered designs were obtained for stormwater system improvements at the Arlington school and library complex. In the upcoming months, these designs will be developed to 100% with the input of the Battenkill Valley Supervisory Union.

Started a new outreach effort with Trout Unlimited (TU) and the Battenkill Watershed Alliance (BKWA) to provide outreach, education and project development along the Battenkill and its tributaries. This effort has been supported by the US Forest Service and VT Fish and Wildlife.

BCCD has also worked to improve its internet presence with a newly developed website and increased facebook posts, more to come soon.

Working closely with USFS Green Mountain National Forest, the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources, the Vermont Agency of Agriculture, our regional planning commission, many municipalities, and several local and regional non-profit organizations to further our congruent missions.

Respectfully submitted by
Katy Crumley, District Manager