



**CHESHIRE COUNTY**  
CONSERVATION DISTRICT



SOIL



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# Annual Report 2020

Promoting the conservation and responsible use of natural and agricultural resources for the people of Cheshire County by providing technical, financial, and educational resources.

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11 Industrial Park Dr - Walpole NH 03608 - 603.756.2988

[www.cheshireconservation.org](http://www.cheshireconservation.org)

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## *Board of Supervisors and Staff*

### **Supervisors**

Amy Bodwell, Vice Chair - Roxbury  
Bill Fosher - Surry  
Richard Mellor, NHACD Representative - Rindge  
Andy Pressman, Chair - Jaffrey  
John Treat, Treasurer - Keene

### **Associate Supervisors**

Chris Bowen, Secretary - Swanzey  
Tom Beaudry - Walpole  
Holly and Chris Gowdy - Walpole  
Todd Horner - Keene  
Frank Hunter - Westmoreland  
Tracie Loock - Fitzwilliam  
Michael Nerrie - Walpole  
Sara Powell - Chesterfield  
Peter Renzelman - Alstead  
Pete Throop, SCC Representative - Keene

### **CCCD Staff**

Lola Bobrowski, Outreach Coordinator  
Amanda Littleton, District Manager

### **NRCS Staff, Walpole Field Office**

*The District works in partnership with the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Services (NRCS) staff who supply technical conservation assistance.*

Mary Ellen Cannon - Soil Conservationist  
Heidi Konesko - Soil Conservationist  
Jonathan Meadows - Soil Conservationist  
Julicia Myers - Program Assistant  
Wendy Ward - District Conservationist

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The CCCD Board of Supervisors meet on the 4th Thursday of each month at 9am at the CCCD Office. These meetings are open to the public, please call the District office if you would like to attend a meeting.

## 2020 Cooperator of the Year

### *Wingate Farm of Hinsdale, NH*

Each year the Cheshire County Conservation District honors an individual, business or organization with the “Cooperator of the Year” award. This is done to celebrate the efforts the recipient has undertaken to steward the natural resources on their land in cooperation with the Conservation District and the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). This year we are happy to announce Wingate Farm of Hinsdale, NH as our 2020 Cooperator of the Year.

Wingate Farm is owned and operated by Olivia Pettengill and Susie Parke-Sutherland. They have been operating the diversified farm business and stewarding their 60 acre property since 2014. They graze 1,000 hens on 14 acres of pasture, have 1.5 acres of vegetable production, and 1 acre in pollinator habitat.

Olivia grew up on the land which is now home to Wingate Farm and has spent her whole life gardening and farming in the Connecticut River Valley. She has a deep family connection and strong commitment to her ancestral land and local community. She wants to ensure this land is stewarded for future generations to enjoy.

Susie grew up in central Missouri spending all her free time outdoors. She had no exposure to agriculture in her early years but started farming in New England in 2007 upon her college graduation. She has been farming ever since and wouldn't want to see it any other way. Susie takes



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## Cooperator of the Year continued

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inspiration from her role on the farm as a mentor to youth who are looking for a safe and joyful space to explore who they are, their role in agriculture, and the natural world. Agriculture is often a male dominated field and she and Olivia appreciate the opportunity to work with young women to empower them to discover their interests and passion.

Both Olivia and Susie share a deep passion for hard work, being in nature, and continually seeking improvement in their farm systems. Their dedication has been fruitful in creating a business that supports their livelihood and offers a good quality of life.

Their primary product is pasture raised eggs that they produce through intensely managed rotational grazing. The hens are moved daily to optimize pasture and animal health and vigor. They also sell vegetables and flowers at Farmers Markets in Brattleboro, Vermont and Northampton, Massachusetts. Their main egg market channel is community supported agriculture (CSA) shares. These are sold through partnerships they have built with produce CSA farms in the region. When the COVID 19 pandemic hit in 2020 they felt it was critical to find a safe way for the community to access their farm food. Olivia and Susie were quick to adapt and innovate by creating a “Fresh Food Pick-up” option for retail customers interested in ordering online and getting their products delivered to one of four drop locations. This has become a great way for customers to feel secure in their food purchasing and to connect directly to the farm.

Caring for the natural resource base of their property is the foundation for their work. In August of 2015, the Pettengill Family, working with Mount Grace Land Trust, placed a Conservation Easement on the farm. This will ensure that the property is forever protected from development and will remain farmland in perpetuity. This was done with the USDA NRCS Farm and Ranchland Protection Program. Wingate Farm has also worked with USDA NRCS through their Environmental Quality Incentives Program to improve soil health, water quality, efficiency of water usage, and wildlife habitat through implementing the following practices: High Tunnels, Irrigation, Wells, Cornell Soil Health Assessments, Cover Crops, Crop Rotation, Mulching, Pollinator Plantings, Forest Management Plan, Stream Habitat Improvement & Management, Tree & Shrub planting, Riparian Forest Buffer, and Critical Area Planting.

Olivia and Susie are committed to improving their pastures for the health of

their birds and the future of their farm. To improve the forage quality and quantity they use manure and wood ash on the fields and work to diversify their pastures through the use of a no-till seed drill. They are committed to using reduced tillage practices in their vegetable operation to retain and build soil organic matter.

“Susie and Olivia show a level of dedication to stewardship, quality, and animal welfare that go well beyond best practices. They are examples of how to run a small diversified farm that just about anyone could learn from and be inspired by. They are keen students of agriculture, and are always looking for ways to do a better job,” shared Bill Fosher, Cheshire County Conservation District Board Member.

When not found working on the farm there is a good chance you will find Olivia and Susie cooking, enjoying, and sharing the bounty of their harvest. Together their hard work and stewardship has created a safe and supportive place for youth, a thriving agricultural business on healthy pastures, and a place that will continue as productive agriculture for generations to come. It is with great honor that the Cheshire County Conservation District presents Wingate Farm with the 2020 Cooperator of the Year Award!



## 2020 Educator of the Year

### *Steve Roberge of UNHCE*

Each year, the Cheshire County Conservation District honors an individual or organization with the “Educator of the Year” award. This is done to celebrate the efforts the recipient has undertaken to steward a conservation ethic and awareness through their personal and professional work, in whatever form of education that takes. This year we are happy to announce Steve Roberge as our 2020 Educator of the Year.

Steve Roberge has dedicated his career to supporting forestry conservation in the granite state. For the last 13 years, Steve has served as Cheshire County Forester before transitioning in March 2020 to his current role as the University of New Hampshire Cooperative Extension State Forestry Specialist. At its core, Steve’s work is focused on the education of landowners and the training of foresters.

Steve grew up in Berlin, NH admiring the White Mountains from his kitchen window. Steve’s parents were avid hikers and campers who instilled an outdoor ethic within him that stuck with Steve throughout his entire life. Originally, Steve attended college at UNH with the intention of becoming a game warden, but soon switched his wildlife major to a forestry major after just his second semester. After graduating in 2003 with his forestry degree, Steve attended the Yale School of Forestry from 2003-2005.

Throughout his schooling, Steve spent his summers researching and measuring course woody material, logging what his professor called “world record hours” in woody material data collection. After his time at the Yale School of Forestry, and before becoming the UNH Cheshire County Forester, Steve worked for the



Connecticut Wildlife Division and did some non-profit work on a conserved land CSA in Weston, MA where he mainly ran the sugary and trails operations of that property.

Steve's favorite part about working in the field of forestry is that "there's so much to learn and see", there's a variety of place and work, and he frequently gets to see something different every day. As Steve likes to say, "if you're out there and you're not learning anything, you're not looking."

UNH foresters are also considered "Extension Educators," making Steve an ideal candidate for this award. County Foresters are licensed foresters who don't write management plans or sell timber, but rather provide service and education to landowners. Steve's goal is always to build awareness and fully inform landowners of the wide range of management options available to them, always leaving the final decision up to the landowner. As Steve says, his work is about meeting people where they are at, so he never comes to a landowner's property with an agenda.

Steve's goal is simply to connect people to their land to inspire stewardship. This, to Steve, is the most rewarding part of his work – getting folks out onto their properties in a way that is comfortable for them, helping them discover the value held within their land, and hopefully, instilling a desire within the landowner to become a better steward of their land.

The most difficult part of Steve's work is simply getting folks to know that he, and other County Foresters across the state, are a free and widely available resource. In NH, there is one forester position for every County and in Cheshire County, that equates to one forester for approximately 5,000 landowners with 10+ acres of forest. When utilized, foresters are a valuable resource for landowners providing site visits, education, follow up, and guidance all along the way with the end goal of building a foundational understanding within the landowner, and again, to inspire future commitment to stewardship.

In Steve's newest role as State Forestry Specialist, he is not out in the woodlots as much as he once was, but this has provided him the opportunities to think more creatively about forestry work in NH. Through this position, Steve gets to explore new ways to support the County Foresters he now oversees, he is developing new projects, writing grants, and working directly with partners to promote forestry conservation throughout the state.

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## Educator of the Year continued

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We at the CCCD and NRCS are also immensely grateful for Steve's partnership over the years. County Foresters have a formal agreement to provide forestry expertise to NRCS staff by assessing projects and properties, as well as training NRCS staff on forestry issues. Steve has also maintained long stability working alongside the CCCD. Over the years, we've partnered numerous times on educational opportunities for the public and supported each other's efforts through shared promotion and outreach, which has allowed us to reach a wider audience and build greater awareness and support of forestry programs across the County.

As if Steve hasn't been busy enough, he also currently chairs the NH Forester Licensing Board, is a member of the Northeastern Forest Resources Extension Council and the Hubbard Brook Research Foundation Advisory Council, and is executive committee chair of the Society of American Foresters, Granite State Division.

Here in the granite state, as our landscape becomes increasingly more fragmented, we face the potential loss of valuable ecosystem services and the forestland itself. This makes the educational work of County Foresters like Steve invaluable to the future of conservation in NH. It is with great pleasure that the CCCD presents Steve Roberge with the 2020 Educator of the Year Award. Congratulations Steve! We so value the work that you do!







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FARM VIABILITY

Thank you for your support as we celebrate 75 years of Conservation in NH!



## Organizational Membership

- **Antioch Community Garden Connections - Advisory Committee**
- **Monadnock Conservancy - Stewardship Committee**
- **Monadnock Farm and Community Coalition - Board of Directors**
- **Monadnock Economic Development Corporation - Board of Directors**
- **National Association of Conservation Districts**
- **New Hampshire Association of Conservation Districts**
- **New Hampshire Food Alliance - Land Resources Action Team**
- **New Hampshire Nutrition Incentive Network - Regional Lead**
- **Southwest Region Planning Commission - Natural Resources Advisory Committee**

## Fiscal Sponsorship & Fundraising

The CCCD serves as the fiscal sponsor for the Monadnock Farm and Community Coalition. The CCCD Board of Supervisors conducted an annual appeal and offered four fundraisers during 2020 to provide additional funds for CCCD programs.



- **Conservation Plant Sale - Bulb Sale - Bulk Seed Sale - Pizza Night at Orchard Hill Breadworks**

We would like to offer many thanks to the community members who participated!

## Planning & Communications

The CCCD adopted a five year Strategic Plan in 2017 setting the organization up with refined priorities and measurable outcomes. During 2020 significant strides were made to achieve our strategic objectives. We continually seek an open dialogue with stakeholders in our community and welcome your feedback.

**The Cheshire County Conservation District was created in 1945. It is a political subdivision of the State of New Hampshire, [RSA 432:12](#), with a 170 C 1 non-profit status under the IRS tax code. As a subdivision of the State of New Hampshire, conservation districts foster partnerships between federal, state and local agencies interested in the wise use of natural resources.**



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## 2020 Highlights

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**The CCCD reached out to over 3,200 individuals in 2020 with programs regarding resource conservation & farm viability. If you are interested in learning more or have suggestions for future programming please don't hesitate to contact the CCCD office.**



### *NRCS Farm Bill Program Workshops & Demonstration Projects*

Each year the conservation district works along side their partner the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) to assist landowners on the voluntary conservation of natural resources on their land. This is accomplished by providing administration of the technical and financial assistance that enables good stewardship of the soil, water, air, wildlife, and related natural resources. This year workshops were offered on how landowners can apply for financial and technical assistance from NRCS through the 2018 Farm Bill —workshops included— **Cover Crops, No Till Farming, Soil Health Equipment Demonstrations, and Wildlife Habitat** Educators from Cheshire County UNH Cooperative Extension (UNHCE) are key partners in these workshops.

### *Services of CCCD*

Offered historical **aerial photography** of Cheshire County and provided soil information to Cheshire County landowners, particularly the **Soil Potential Index** (SPI) assessment for landowners in the Current Use program. Provided **talks as well as educational displays** at community events through out the year. Worked with landowners on an individual basis to assist them in better understanding the resources on their property and how to conserve them. The CCCD also offers **outreach on behalf of NRCS** to make landowners aware of the conservation programs available to them.



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**All programs are offered on a non-discriminatory basis without regard to race, color, national origin, religion, sex, age, marital status, disability or political beliefs.**



## Supporting Healthy Productive Soil through Education and Equipment Rentals

### SOIL

In 2020 the Conservation District further developed its Soil Health Education and Equipment Rental program to help producers meet their soil health goals while improving farm efficiencies.

The following implements are now available: no-till seeder (7' & 12'), wood ash/lime spreader, aerway aerator, roller-crimper, zrx roller corn planter, no-till transplanter, BCS walk behind tractor with six implements, single shank sub-soiler, and penetrometer.

We worked with UNH Cooperative Extension, NCAT, and USDA NRCS to offer workshops, demonstrations, and equipment field days

We also served on the NH Soil Health Partnership collaborating on statewide initiatives.



## *Reducing Tillage on Vegetable Farms*

2020 was our third of a three year grant to focus on reducing tillage on vegetable farms to benefit soil health. To accomplish our goals we acquired new equipment, offered trainings, and partnered with farms on field demonstrations. Partners included the Belknap, Hillsborough, Rockingham, Strafford, and Sullivan CCDs, UNHCE, the National Center for Appropriate Technology (NCAT), and USDA NRCS. Funding was provided by a USDA Specialty Crop Block Grant through the NH Department of Agriculture, Markets, and Food and the NH Association of Conservation Districts (NHACD) and USDA NRCS.



## *High Tunnel Management with Soil Steamers*

Soil steaming is an emerging technology that is being utilized to manage disease, weeds, and pests in high tunnels. There is also an application for steam in sanitizing greenhouse goods and distribution containers. The use of steam offers a solution to perennial challenges for growers. Although this is a proven technology, it is not yet widely adopted in the Northeast.

A problem is that soil steamers are expensive and unattainable for small and medium scale producers, who make up the bulk of fruit and vegetable producers in NH. The CCCD has acquired a soil steamer to make available to growers through our equipment rental program in 2021. This will allow producers to access the equipment in an affordable manner. The CCCD is partnering with Picadilly Farm, UNHCE, and NCAT to provide trainings for farms, on-farm demos, and facilitate peer to peer education on the best practices of soil steaming.





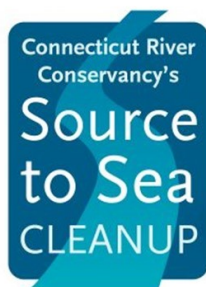
## Improving Water Quality Through River Clean Ups and Farm Partnerships

### WATER

### *Source to Sea River Clean Up*



On September 26th a group of enthusiastic volunteers pitched in to help clean up the Ashuelot River in Keene and Swanzey and Beaver Brook in Keene as part of the Connecticut River Conservancy's "Source to Sea Cleanup". 45 volunteers pulled over 1,585 lbs of trash from the two water bodies! All while soaking in the beautiful fall colors and catching glimpses of great blue herons, kingfishers, and more. We would like to thank the amazing group of volunteers who turned out with such great attitudes! There was a contingent of students and staff from Keene High School, a group from the Keene Unitarian Universalist Church, and many more individuals and families. This event is made possible by the partnership of the Ashuelot River Local Advisory Committee, the City of Keene, Keene State College, Moosewood Ecological, the Harris Center for Conservation Education, and NH Water Works Association Young Professionals.



## *Dairy Farms Invest in Water Quality*



Reducing tillage from your management regime can improve your soil's structure and stability, water infiltration and water-holding capacity, organic matter content, while reduce compaction, runoff, erosion, and ponding. The Cheshire, Rockingham and Strafford County Conservation Districts obtained grants to help farmers pay for modifications to their corn planters in order to make them work in a no-till system. Any New Hampshire farmer with a corn planter and a desire to go no-till is eligible for funding for equipment and technical assistance. CCCD serves as the statewide administrative lead for this project and to date has provided \$52,000 to help 15 farms for this transition to no-till. In conjunction to providing dollars for equipment we also provided free site visits with one on one technical assistance on equipment selection in partnership with UVM Extension.

## *Technical Assistance - NHACD Partnership*

The NH Association of Conservation Districts (NHACD) has been focused on improving soil health and water quality in the Connecticut River Watershed since 2017. Their efforts have been led by Bill Foshier, NHACD staff and project agronomist who offers technical assistance to landowners with a focus on improving water quality. In 2020 this work has expanded it's scope to a statewide focus and Jessica Wright, an additional full time planner has been added to the NHACD staff to increase the technical assistance capacity of Conservation Districts in NH.



## *Building Skidder Bridges*

CCCD is partnering with Long View Forest of Westminster, VT and Peter Renzelman Forestry Management Services to build a new skidder bridge that will be available for use by the public in the Monadnock Region. The use of a skidder bridge during a timber harvest is a Best Management Practice that protects stream and brook banks, minimizes soil erosion, and protects water quality and wildlife habitat.



## Improving Wildlife Habitat for the Health of Our Ecosystems

### WILDLIFE

### *Birding On The Farm Workshop Series*

In 2020 a partnership was strengthened between USDA NRCS, Antioch University Bird Club, and local Conservation Districts through a unique educational workshop series that introduces participants to the role farms play in providing habitat for wildlife, how and why bird species utilize different farming practices (grazing pasture, row crops, hay field, and orchards), and explore the seasonality and natural history of wildlife in our region.

This series also encourages participants to learn more about agricultural management practices and farm businesses in the region. Much of the planned programming was delayed as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic but we are hopeful that we will be able to resume the series in the Spring





## *Conservation Opportunity Grant Program*

In 2020 thanks to the generosity of a local donor and support from the NH Charitable Foundation the CCCD launched a Conservation Opportunity Grant program for small landowners in Cheshire County interested in improving the wildlife habitat on their property. Eligible activities include creating pollinator habitat, installing rain gardens, and creating/maintaining early successional habitat. In 2020 the CCCD awarded \$5,500 to four awardees.

This is an annual opportunity to support the ecological integrity and stewardship of wildlife habitat in Cheshire County NH. The next Request for proposals will be announced in December 2021.



## *NH Integrated Pest Management Partnership*

Spotted wing drosophila (SWD) and other pests cause devastating crop loss on fruit and berry operations. SWD is a relatively new pest in New Hampshire that has increased pressure on farms to spray insecticides, which are harmful to native pollinators and the overall environment. Integrated Pest Management is an approach that balances pest control with costs and environmental impacts that can be used to reduce the negative effects of pest control.

To address the unique and changing pest control needs of New Hampshire fruit and berry growers the CCCD is working with the Strafford and Rockingham County Conservation Districts to create a NH Integrated Pest Management Partnership. This will bring together UNHCE, Xerces Society, USDA NRCS and other relevant experts, service providers, and farmers to work together to efficiently collaborate on research, farmer financial and technical opportunities, and education. Grant funds have been secured to offer an innovative cost-share program for farmers, including netting for SWD, to lower the costs of adoption of these IPM practices.



## Initiatives to Improve Farm Profitability, Expand Markets, & Increase Food Access

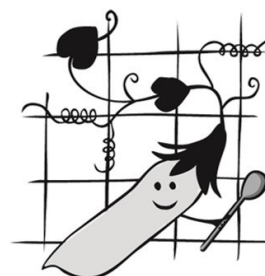
### FARM VIABILITY

The Monadnock Food Co-op Farm Fund's mission is to support local farmers in increasing sustainable food production and wholesale sales to contribute to a thriving local farm economy. This grant opportunity for local farmers is made possible through a partnership with the Monadnock Food Co-op. Six grant awards were made in 2020 to Abenanki Springs-Farm, Green Wagon Farm, Pete's Stand, Picadilly Farm, Stonewall Farm, and Windyhurst Farm. Now in its fourth year the fund has awarded over \$59,000 to area farmers. We owe a great deal of gratitude to Co-op customers who round up their change at the register to contribute to this fund. Additional funding is provided by the You Have Our Trust Fund and the Monadnock Food Co-op.



### *Monadnock Localvores*

In 2020 the Monadnock Localvores offered scholarships to 15 Cheshire County youth to attend summer farm camp through the Jeffrey P. Smith Farm Scholarship program. This is made possible through funding from the You Have Our Trust Fund, generous local donors, and the commitment of a volunteer steering committee. Partners include Stonewall Farm, The Orchard School, UMass 4H Camps, and Kroka.





The mission of the NH Farm Future Fund is to provide funding for farm viability planning in concert with the conservation of important agricultural soils. This program will leverage the singular opportunity of putting a conservation easement on farmland to also invest in the future viability of the farm business. The goal of this fund is to ensure that farmland is conserved, productive, and available for future generations. Funding was provided by the You Have Our Trust Fund, the Maddison Fund of the NH Charitable Foundation, and the generosity of individual donors. \$90,000 was awarded during the first grant round to five land trusts and the RFP for the 2021 grant round will be available in November 2020. This program is a partnership with NHACD and is an integrated approach to funding farm viability, farmland conservation, and farmland access and fills an important niche in building the capacity of agricultural service providers in the state.



## *Community Supported Solar for NH Farms*

In 2020 the CCCD has worked with Sun Moon Farm of Rindge, NH and ReVision Energy to launch a Community Supported Solar installation in cooperation with farms in the region. Nixon Peabody LLP and Orr & Reno have generously provided legal counsel to pave the way for this project's success and to create a model that can be utilized by other NH farms. The array will be constructed in November 2020 and we are currently accepting interest from farms who would like to participate. Funding is provided by the Thomas W. Haas Fund of the NH Charitable Foundation.





In 2020 we strengthened our Cheshire County network of farms and farmers markets to double Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP/food stamps) benefits with Granite State Market Match (GSMM). There are now thirteen farm locations in Cheshire County that accept SNAP and offer GSMM. These locations include Farmers

Market of Keene, Foggy Hill Farm, Great Falls Farmers Market, Hillside Springs Farm, Hinsdale Farmers' Market, New Dawn Farm, Pete's Stand, Picadilly Farm, Stonewall Farm, Sun Moon Farm, Team Jaffrey Farmers Market, Tracie's Community Farm, and the Winchester Farmers Market. We continued work with a statewide network of incentive providers lead by the NH Food Bank to share resources and best practices. Funding is made available through the USDA Food Insecurity Nutrition Incentive Program, the Wholesome Wave Foundation, and Healthy Monadnock.



The Keene, Hinsdale, and Team Jaffrey Farmers' Markets worked with the CCCD to offer a Veterans Appreciation Month program during September 2020. Each market day Cheshire County Veterans were invited to the market and provided a \$20 Voucher to purchase food from area farmers. The goal of this program is to show our gratitude and appreciation to service members for protecting our freedoms and to expand markets for farmers. Funding was provided through Cheshire Medical Center's Center for Population Health to increase community members access to healthy foods, an effort which supports the Healthy Monadnock Initiative. \$12,200 of Vouchers were distributed to 170 veterans in 2020.



## *Monadnock Farm Share*

Nine Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) produce farms in the Monadnock Region came together in 2020 to work with the CCCD to ensure that farm fresh CSA vegetable shares are affordable for all interested community members.

The Farm Share Program provides limited-income Monadnock Region residents with the opportunity to support their local CSA farmer and receive reliable high-quality produce on a regular basis all season long. The prices are discounted through an innovative cost-share model. Participating families and individuals end up receiving a discounted vegetable share at 50% of its value. Farmers raise funds to cover 25% of the program costs and 25% of costs are provided by the Cheshire Medical Center for Population Health through its Healthy Monadnock Initiative. Thirty-four families participated in 2020 and we look forward to continuing to grow the program in 2021.



The 3rd annual summit brought together 520 people from 42 states who are passionate about creating vibrant, robust, rural communities. CCCD hosted the Land and Community Track. This track included three workshops on conservation and working lands. Session topics included Fibersheds, Food Hubs, and Connecting with Nature: Rural Implications for Health and Land Use. The Hannah Grimes Center & Keene Sentinel were lead organizers of the event.

## *Cheshire County Complex - Westmoreland Garden*



In 2020 the County of Cheshire continued their partnership with Antioch University New England's Community Garden Connections (CGC) program to cultivate vegetables at the Cheshire County Farm in Westmoreland NH. The 1,100 lbs of produce they harvested was donated to the Community Kitchen in Keene. CGC staff and supervisors were aided by the help of 13 volunteers that came out to help during this challenging year.

**The Cheshire County Conservation District welcomes your input on future programming and services that we can make available to landowners and communities. Please contact us with your ideas!**



## **USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service District Conservationist Fiscal Year 2020 Report for Cheshire County**

2020 was a year unlike any in recent memory. Steve Pytlik, our District Conservationist of 10 years left late February just as we were beginning the 2020 Farm Bill application round. We had all new policy from Farm Bill 2018 rolled out and we had an agency wide change in our planning and ranking software. And of course, Covid 19 forced us to change to primarily telework with only 1 person in the office at a time. We canceled all workshops and outreach events and had to implement social distancing

### **NRCS Key Performance Measures 2020 for Cheshire County NH**

- Conservation applied to improve environmental quality: 1,241 acres on private agricultural land including forests
- Land with conservation applied to improve water quality: 1,088 acres
- Cropland with conservation applied to improve soil quality, health, and sustainability: 1,012 acres
- Forest land with conservation applied to protect and improve vegetative condition: 1,707 acres
- Non-Federal land with conservation applied to improve fish and wildlife habitat quality: 699 acres

*The Natural Resources Conservation Service is a core partner of the Cheshire County Conservation District. The partnership between the NRCS and Conservation Districts is one that was carefully designed to foster a unique and productive relationship to get conservation on the ground and provide federal resources at a local level.*

rules to work with and serve our forest and farm community of Cheshire County.

Despite these challenges, the Walpole Office obligated 31 new contracts covering 2,837 acres for a total of \$521,102 in Cheshire County in 2020.

NRCS partnered with the CCCD to develop the program and evaluate submittals for the CCCD's new Conservation Opportunity Fund. This fund provides funding & technical assistance for owners of small tracts of land who are interested in improving the wildlife habitat on their property. This program is an annual opportunity to support environmental stewardship and the ecological integrity of Cheshire County NH.

NRCS also partnered with CCCD to develop a workshop series: Birding on the Farm - CT River Valley. The goal is to highlight the important role



farms play in providing habitat for wildlife. A birding field trip is the focus of the farm visit while learning about the birds and habitats on the farm, farming practices and challenges to balance wildlife habitat with business profitability. We did the first workshop last fall and we were only able to do the early spring workshop this year, we hope to re-start this exciting series in 2021.

**Respectfully Submitted,**

**Wendy Ward  
District Conservationist**



**Above:** USDA NRCS stream restoration project on the Ashuelot River in Hinsdale, NH. Rootwads and timber cribbing were used to secure the bank and prevent further erosion of the farmland. This will be complimented by an extensive planting of a riparian buffer on site.

**Left:** Participants are eager to view the waterfowl during Spring migration during one of our 2020 Birding on the Farm workshops that were a partnership with USDA NRCS, the Antioch Bird Club, and local County Conservation Districts



## **NRCS 2020 Report continued**

In 2020 NRCS implemented over 200 conservation practices on 3832 acres totaling \$616,450 in Cheshire County



Top Conservation Practices in Cheshire County for 2020:

1. Nutrient Management – 1,674 acres
2. Stream Habitat Improvement & Management – 740 ft of bioengineered root wads & log cribs on the Ashuelot river
3. Cover Crop – 1,003 acres
4. Pasture & Hayland Planting – 124 acres seeded to perennial forage
5. Conservation Crop Rotation – 748 acres
6. Forest Management Plans Written – 12 Plans written on 1,070 acres
7. Prescribed Rotational Grazing – 70 acres
8. Forest Stand Improvement – 73 acres
9. Irrigation Water Management – 8 systems
10. Fencing for Grazing – 11,719 ft installed
11. High Tunnel Systems – 11,240 sqft installed



## *Financials - 2020 Treasurer's Report*

The Board of Supervisors appreciates the continued support of the District's conservation programs by the Cheshire County Commissioners and the Cheshire County Delegation.

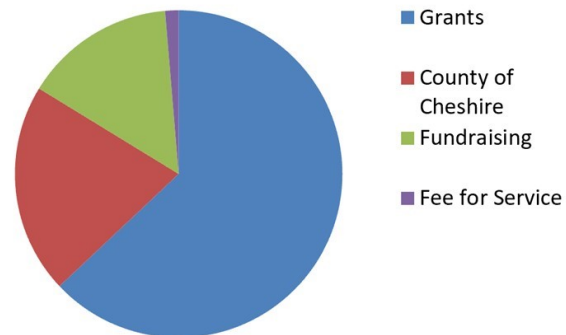
Also appreciated are the technical services offered by our "Partners in Conservation" the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, UNH Cooperative Extension, USDA Farm Service Agency and other cooperating agencies.



### 2020 Receipts, January-September.

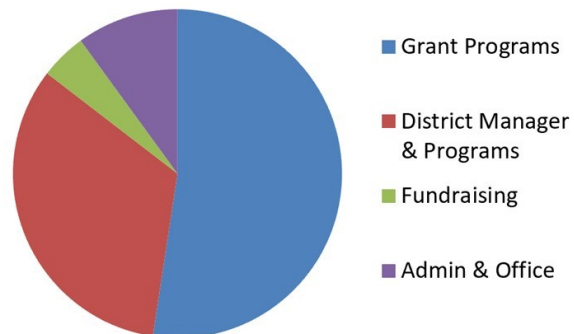
#### Income

Grants	199,664	63%
County of Cheshire	65,843	21%
Fundraising	47,347	15%
Fee for Service	4,199	1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>317,053</b>	<b>100%</b>



#### Expenses

Grants	116,830	52%
District Manager & Programs	73,678	33%
Fundraising	10,159	5%
Admin & Office	22,318	10%
<b>Total</b>	<b>222,955</b>	<b>100%</b>



## *Contributed Support*

A special thank you is offered to the many people that contribute to the success of the CCCD by volunteering their time and energy! We extend our gratitude to the following individuals, organizations and businesses who have made donations or provided grants during 2020:

Alyson's Orchard	Keene Lions Club	John Snowdon
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