



# Annual Report 2023

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



CHESHIRE COUNTY  
CONSERVATION DISTRICT



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



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CONSERVATION DISTRICT



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## Board of Supervisors and Staff

### Supervisors

Amy Bodwell, Vice Chair & NHACD Representative - Roxbury  
Chris Bowen, Treasurer - Swanzey  
Andy Pressman, Chair - Jaffrey  
Sara Powell - Chesterfield  
Peter Renzelman - Alstead

### Associate Supervisors

Tom Beaudry - Walpole  
Emily Daigle - Keene  
Holly and Chris Gowdy - Walpole  
Todd Horner - Keene  
Frank Hunter - Westmoreland  
Richard Mellor - Rindge  
Jenna Rich - Nelson  
Pete Throop, SCC Representative - Keene  
John Treat - Keene  
Sparky Von Plinsky - Keene

### CCCD Staff

Amanda Littleton, District Manager  
Matt Smetana, Community Engagement Coordinator

### NRCS Staff, Walpole Field Office

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

Jessica Barnes - Soil Conservationist  
Jonathan Meadows - Resource Conservationist  
Nick Tsichlis - Soil Conservationist  
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 Hannah Grimes Center in Keene NH. These meetings are open to the public, please call the District office if you would like to attend a meeting.

## 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 2023:

Amy B. Bodwell	Jeanine Lawson	Association of NH
Lizabeth Buoro	Peter & Roberta Letourneau	Scott & Deirdre Oliver
Brookfield Farm	The Madison Fund of the	Valerie Piedmont
Rebecca Cambell Whippie	NHCF	Gisela Rank
Leslie Casey	Anne Meddaugh in honor of	Linda Rubin
Cheshire County Farm	Pete Johnson	Kim Schmidl-Gagne
Bureau	Tory McCagg & Carl	Ann Shedd
Cheshire Medical Center	Querfurth	Dottie Smith
Cleary	Richard Mellor	John Snowdon
Janet Collet	Alina Michelewicz	Roe-Ann & John Tasoulas
Maury & Martha Collins	Jeffrey Miller & Carol	Thomas W. Haas Fund of
County of Cheshire NH	MacKinnon	the NHCF
Connecticut River	Monadnock Food Co-op	21 Bar and Grill
Conservancy	National Association of	Peggy Ueda
Fassett Farm Nursery	Conservation Districts	USDA Natural Resources
Chris & Cindy Feiker	Michael and Kathy Nerrie	Conservation Service
Janice Fiandaca	NH Association of	USDA Northeast
Jean Hoffman Prior	Conservation Districts	Sustainable Agriculture
Todd Horner	NH Charitable Foundation	Research and Education
Carl & Ruth Jacobs	(NHCF)	USDA Specialty Crop
Julie's Garden & Greenhouse	NH Department of	Block Grant
Robert & Barbara Kasper	Agriculture Markets	Meg Whittle
Keene Elm City Rotary Club	and Food	Tim Wood
Keene Lions Club	NH Food Bank	You Have Our Trust Fund
David Kennard	Christine Niland	
Julianna Kremer	Northeast Organic Farmers	



## Financials - 2023 Treasurer's Report

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



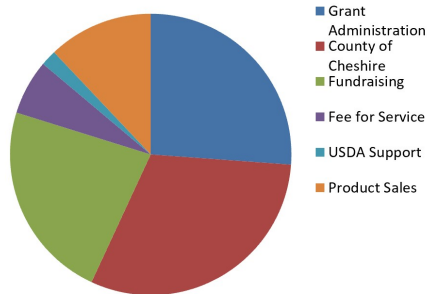
### 2022 Financials

Grant Income in 2022 - \$635,960 in Support of Conservation Programs & Services

#### Operations Income

Grant Administration	68,798	26%
County of Cheshire	80,902	31%
Fundraising	60,250	23%
Fee for Service	16,606	6%
USDA Support	4,768	2%
Product Sales	31,721	12%

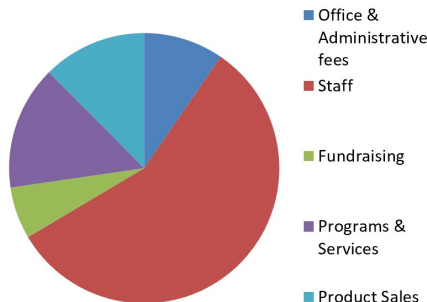
**263,045** 100%



#### Operations Expenses

Office & Admin fees	20,613	10%
Staff	122,454	57%
Fundraising	13,406	6%
Programs & Services	31,946	15%
Product Sales	26,789	12%

**215,208** 100%



## 2023 Cooperator of the Year

### Pete's Stand of Walpole, 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 Pete's Stand of Walpole NH as our 2023 Cooperator of the Year.

Pete's Stand is a mixed vegetable farm with fifty acres in production on fields and in two high tunnels in New Hampshire and Vermont. It is owned and operated by Teresa and John Janiszyn and they are the third generation of the Janiszyn family to be working this land over the past 50 years. Prior to them it was Pete and Mike Janiszyn, John's grandfather and father respectively. Beyond themselves Teresa and John are supportive employers of eight full time employees and other part-time employees in field operations and farmstand management during the growing season.

John started working full-time back on the farm in 2001 after returning from college. Teresa was teaching at a local school and started working at the farm in



the summer of 2007 and she was drawn to making the farm a success. Together they have three children ages 5,10, and 13 who have all been raised on the farm since they were infants and appreciate that a childhood on the farm has been a gift. Seeing the positive impact that the farm can have on child development Teresa and John have worked with the Windham Northeast Supervisory Union to create farm to school programs for the region's youth. They have partnered with Harley Sterling, School Nutrition Director, on incorporating farm fresh food into menus, as well as have kids out at the farm on field trips, and make classroom visits so youth can develop a relationship with the farm.

When asked what motivates them to do this work Teresa shared it is "feeding our community and helping folks maintain the traditions and personal connections they have with food and the land." This work goes beyond the schools. John and Teresa value that their farmstand is a welcoming place for everyone in the community and they take strides to keep it affordable.

Pete's Stand partners with the Conservation District on offering the Granite State Market Match (GSMM) program. GSMM allows low-income shoppers utilizing the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) to double their dollars. For every dollar they spend they get another dollar to spend on fruits and vegetables. Pete's Stand does the most GSMM sales of any farm in Cheshire County. In 2022 they had over 1,200 customer transactions totaling approximately \$9,000 additional dollars of fresh fruits and veggies getting to the people who can most benefit from it. John shared "we love when people come in and can afford to buy in bulk and put food by to feed their families for the year the way their grandmothers did, like buying a bushel of cucumbers to pickle, and it makes financial sense for them to do it."

Beyond keeping food accessible at their farmstand they outright donate thousands of pounds of food annually. In 2022 alone well over 40,000 lbs of food was donated to organizations that include the Community Kitchen of Keene, Fall Mountain Food Shelf, Willing Hands of the Upper Valley of both NH and VT, and local schools. They pay staff to plant and harvest these vegetables so despite the costs being great to them they are deeply committed to improving the food security of our community. As John shared "feeding people is the heart of being a farmer and the stand allows us to make this possible."

In 2020 they added a new building to their farm stand and with that came refrigeration, freezers, more storage and the ability to open earlier in the Spring and stay open through December. As they have expanded and modernized their farm stand they have made space for other local products. Over 35 other farms and a dozen food producers are vendors supported by the farm stand. For some farms this is their most reliable way to get food to customers. Teresa shared that they



7. **Brush Management** – 55 acres
8. **Herbaceous Weed Treatment** - 25 acres
9. **Forest Stand Improvement** – 42 acres is intended that this practice support good forest management that supports long-term sustainable use of forest resources while improving the health of the forest and wildlife habitat.
9. **Early Successional Habitat Development and Management** – 265 acres, delayed mow of fields for grassland bird breeding success or to create young forest habitat for declining species of wildlife dependent upon young forest habitat for part of their life cycle.
10. **Snags, Den Trees, and Coarse Woody Debris for Wildlife** - 607 acres
11. **Subsurface Drain** – 305 ft
12. **High Tunnel Systems** – (7) 7,971 sq.ft. installed. An unheated seasonal polyethylene covered large hoop house that is used to cover crops to extend the growing season, protect crops, and/or for pest management.

**Respectfully Submitted,**

**Wendy Ward**  
**District Conservationist**  
**Cheshire and Sullivan Counties NH**



## NRCS 2023 Report continued

### Top Practices Applied in Cheshire County in 2023

1. **Cover Crop** - 663 acres of annual cover crops to reduce erosion, including adequate fall cover on highly erodible land (HEL) soils. To improve overall soil health (*e.g.*, compaction, microbial diversity, water holding capacity and soil organic matter), and remove excess nutrients (through plant uptake)
2. **Conservation Crop Rotation**— 661 acres annual crop inserted into a crop rotation including grasses, legumes, and forbs for seasonal cover and other conservation purposes. To establish annuals on pastures to address sacrifice areas or to address seasonal feed imbalances (*i.e.*, summer slump with warm season annuals.) Provide pollinator or another beneficial insect habitat.
3. **Residue and Tillage Management. Reduced Tillage** - 32 acres of residue and tillage management, reduced till, and mulching
4. **Forest Management Plans Written** – 5 Plans written to increase forest stewardship in New Hampshire by providing professional guidance for commercial and non-commercial forest activities.
5. **Pasture & Hayland Planting** – 317 acres seeded to perennial forage including rejuvenate to add lime, macro nutrients and legumes such as clover.
6. **Prescribed Rotational Grazing** – 34 acres adoption of prescribed (rotational) grazing by. Two key principles for prescribed grazing are: (i) subdividing pastures to provide adequate rest periods for forage regrowth and (ii) moving animals to new paddocks once a target minimum grazing height has been reached.



“try to give a wide range of producers an opportunity to make sales through the farmstand.” It has served as a launchpad for growing farm and food businesses in the region and their support contributes a great deal to our local food economy.

Our changing climate has put a strain on the resilience of Pete’s Stand. Large storm events and flooding in 2023 caused the loss of 18 acres of crops. Community member support and more people continuing to shop locally is what is needed to keep them growing. They have grown their business; it is now more complex with more demands on management. They are striving to achieve a balance where these investments pay off for the long-term sustainability of their business and they can realize greater stability and a work life balance for their family.

Stewardship of natural resources is an important focus of the farm. John shared that he learned his philosophy on land stewardship from his Dad, Mike Janiszyn, who focused on doing the extra work and being hands on. Together he and Teresa have worked to build a relationship with the land and an understanding of the natural systems and wildlife dependent on the land base they manage. To help them meet their conservation goals they have partnered with the USDA NRCS on practices that include the use of cover crops and crop rotation, reduced tillage, irrigation water management, nutrient management, and the installation of seasonal high tunnels. They have also worked with a local landowner on one of the fields they crop to help install a riparian buffer and natural material revetments along the Cold River. What keeps drawing them to farm season after season is that care for the land, the observations of the natural world, and the hands on work to connect our community to these resources.

Though the farmers of Pete’s Stand have stewarded this land for many decades it has all been leased land and is desirable for development. Teresa and John purchased a 7.3 acre parcel of farmland and are actively placing a conservation easement on it with the Monadnock Conservancy. They want to see the land remain in agriculture for generations to come. They will continue to support other property owners who are interested in putting their farmland in conservation for the value it offers the community. John and Teresa shared that “after all the farm is where people connect to the land and eating food is their connection to the earth. having access to agriculture is a real touchstone for our community.”

We are thankful to call Pete’s Stand our partners and it is with great honor that the Cheshire County Conservation District presents them with the 2023 Cooperator of the Year Award. We invite you to please join us in offering congratulations and by visiting them up at their farmstand on Route 12 in Walpole. Congratulations John and Teresa!

## 2023 Educator of the Year

### *Susie Spikol of the Harris Center*

Each year, the Cheshire County Conservation District (CCCD) honors an individual or organization with the “Educator of the Year” award. This is done to celebrate the recipient’s efforts to steward a conservation ethic and awareness through their personal and professional work. This year we are happy to announce Susie Spikol as our 2023 Educator of the Year.

Susie Spikol is a local naturalist, author, educator and mother, having spent over 30 years inspiring people about the wonders of nature. She serves as the Community Programs Director and a Teacher-Naturalist at the Harris Center for Conservation Education in Hancock. Susie is known for leading engaging public programs and writing on the interconnectedness of humans and the natural world.

“No matter where you are in life, there are things in nature that will touch you”, says Susie. She is living proof of this philosophy, having spent her childhood in Brooklyn, NY watching ants commute along pavement cracks and rescuing worms from sidewalk puddles. Her family also spent time in the Vermont woods, where she broadened her exploration to different animals and ecosystems.



*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.*

### *Birding on the Farm*

An annual series of quarterly workshops designed to increase community understanding of the unique role farms play in providing wildlife habitat. Community members are invited to improve their birding skills, learn more about farm management practices, and build their understanding of seasonal changes and the ecology of our region. Farms visited in 2023 included Green Wagon Farm and Stonewall Farm in Cheshire County NH as well as the Harlow Farm and Upper Meadows in Windham County VT. This series is a partnership between the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, Windham County Natural Resources Conservation District, Cheshire County Conservation District, Southeastern Vermont Audubon Society, and the Antioch Bird Club.







## USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service District Conservationist Fiscal Year 2023 Report for Cheshire County

### NRCS Key Performance Measures 2023 for Cheshire County NH

- Conservation plans written – on 61,605 acres
- Conservation applied to improve environmental quality: 37,644 acres on private agricultural land including forests
- Non-Federal land with conservation applied to improve fish and wild-life habitat quality – 15,973 acres
- Forest land with conservation applied to protect and improve vegeta-tive condition – 7,508 acres
- Cropland with conservation applied to improve soil quality, health & sustainability: 880 acres
- Land with conservation system applied to improve irrigation efficiency: 14 acres
- Cropland with an applied Soil Health Management System 69 acres
- Land with a conservation system applied to improve agricultural irriga-tion water management: 5 acres.

She holds a deep curiosity and love for the natural world, which developed in childhood and has carried throughout her adult life. This curiosity inspired her to want to be a wolf scientist, but the academic demands of the scientific fields lead her instead to major in English at Barnard College in NYC.

While at Barnard, she interned with the Central Park Conservancy—educating and introducing kids from Harlem and Morningside Heights to the natural world. This experience sparked her realization that you could be a naturalist and make a difference in others’ lives using the experiences and skills of her childhood. This understanding brought her to work as an educator for Audubon and after college to an environmental center here in southern New Hampshire.

Signs (and colleagues) pointed her to Antioch University, where she took courses and received a Masters degree in environmental studies and her teaching certification in 1992. As part of her program at Antioch, she interned with the Harris Center, an opportunity that kickstarted her 30+ year career with the organization. Their mission of helping people fall in love with the place where they are, is one she believes wholeheartedly. The enthusiastic and curious energy of her colleagues inspires her to keep following this path.

Every day is different for Susie, one day she will be out searching for frogs with middle school students and the next will be leading a group of young families with their babies through an old growth forest. She believes that people of all walks of life, affiliations, abilities, and ages should be outside and is honored to be able to provide those opportunities through the Harris Center. Thinking about the evolving inclusivity of the Harris Center, she says “You want to be who you are in nature but may not instinctively feel safe. When you’re surrounded by your people, you can recognize that this space is for you. Nature is home for everybody.” Remarking on her favorite parts of her work, Susie says that “nature is always going to surprise you. You could be out ponding, and a kid is going to catch a weasel! I’m always considering the possibility of what we might see.” The endless opportunity is part of what attracts Susie to environmental education work in our community.

“I’m a believer that you have to let people, especially kids, have those moments where they’re really physically engaged in appropriate and compassionate ways with the wildlife and wild things around them.” By simply describing the natural world, it becomes “like a museum behind glass”, ignoring our naturally-curious minds and the influence we have in our surroundings. She encourages people to visit with animals, and to be curious, gentle, and thoughtful. Speaking of salamanders, “they respire through their skin so if you have [bug spray, lotion, sunscreen] on your hands, use a barrier between you and the salamander.” You hold them and look just for a moment before letting them go. “There’s a lot of value in letting a wild

## Educator of the Year continued

animal go—deciding that we aren’t keeping them for ourselves.” She says that this teaches curiosity and respect for those around us.

Susie’s educational philosophy flows into her writing. She has been writing stories since childhood, and much of this work articulates her perspective on the interconnections between humans and other animals. She remarks that so often we think we’re different from nature and other animals. “We’re told as teachers ‘you cannot anthropomorphize\*’ because it’s not scientific” but she believes that this has allowed us to ‘other’ and exploit the natural world.

“At the heart of a human, we’re animal. And we’re seeing the world through our animal gaze. And of course, as animals we’re going to look at something in nature and think “how is this like me?” In her work, she chooses to use language that acknowledges the connection. “We’re looking each other in the eye. I’m looking at you and you’re looking at me and you’re seeing the animal in me”.

In 2022, she released her first book, *The Animal Adventurer’s Guide: How to Prowl for an Owl, Make Snail Slime, and Catch a Frog Bare-Handed*. She loves how language can evoke your emotion and sees that the natural world is full of interesting stories waiting to be discovered. “Nature isn’t just when an eagle catches a fish or a brilliant sunset. Nature happens in every tree, with a pigeon bobbing their head. The everyday animals are just as wild and inspiring as the humpback whale.”

When asked what gives her hope, she points to young people, sharing that “most kids are curious in the natural world. Encouraging and acknowledging this gives them permission to fall in love in a very deep way.” Furthermore, “kids see things we forget to see. They are just waking up to the world. Kids will be so excited to see an ant or anthill, and you forget that “oh my, it *is* an ant”.

The Monadnock Region is rich in natural resources, and Susie says that sharing this with families and communities makes us celebrate where we live. “People come here to vacation and hike Mount Monadnock from far, far away. This is your place, your home. Get out in it.”

The Cheshire County Conservation District is immensely grateful to Susie for sharing her passion for the natural world with so many in our community. It is with great pleasure that CCCD presents Susie Spikol with the 2023 Educator of the Year Award. We invite you to join in congratulating her by picking up *The Animal Adventure’s Guide* or participating in a community program through the Harris Center. Congratulations Susie!

## Monadnock Farm Share

Seven Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) produce farms in the Monadnock Region came together in 2023 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 it’s value. Farmers raise funds to cover 15% of the program costs and 35% of costs are provided by the Cheshire Medical Center’s Center for Population Health through it’s Healthy Monadnock Alliance. Twenty-eight households participated in 2023 and we look forward to continuing to grow the program in 2024.



The 6th annual summit brought together over 400 people from 40 states who are passionate about creating vibrant, robust, rural communities. CCCD hosted the Land and Community Track. This track included two workshops on conservation and land use. Session topics included the social value of agriculture and the agrarian collaborative. The Hannah Grimes Center and Keene Sentinel are the lead organizers.

## Farm Energy Workshops

In 2023 CCCD is working with partners to kick off a series of ten on-farm workshops focused on energy efficiency and renewable energy efforts farms in our region have taken. In 2023 we have partnered with Stuart & John’s Sugarhouse, Sun Moon Farm, Partners’ Gardens, Green Wagon Farm, and Winter Street Farm. This work is funded by the NH Dept. of Agriculture Markets and Foods through a USDA Specialty Crop Block Grant. In 2024 we look forward to providing twenty Cheshire County farms with stipends of \$2,000/each to invest in energy improvements on their farms.

**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!**





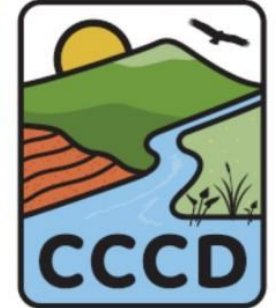
## Granite State Market Match

In 2023 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 nine farm locations in Cheshire County that accept SNAP and offer GSMM. These locations include Dog Days

Farm, Farmers Market of Keene, Green Wagon Farm, Hillside Springs Farm, Pete's Stand, Picadilly Farm, Stonewall Farm, Team Jaffrey Farmers Market, and the Winchester Farmers Market. Through September 2023 approximately \$22,000 has been distributed. We continued our 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 Cheshire Medical Center's Center for Population Health.



The Farmers' Markets in Hinsdale, Jaffrey, Keene, and Winchester worked with the CCCD to offer a Veterans Appreciation Month program during September 2023. 312 Veterans participated and \$19,965 was distributed. 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 Alliance.



SOIL



WATER



WILDLIFE



FARM VIABILITY

Thank you for your support as we celebrate 78 years of Conservation in NH!



## Organizational Membership

- Antioch Community Garden Connections - Advisory Committee
- Conservation District Employee Association of New Hampshire
- 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
- 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 and the Monadnock View Community Garden.



The CCCD Board of Supervisors conducted an annual appeal and offered a seed sale fundraiser during 2023 to provide additional funds for CCCD programs. We would like to offer many thanks to the community members who participated!

## Planning & Communications

The CCCD developed and adopted a new five year Strategic Plan in 2022. This plan sets the organization up with refined priorities and measurable outcomes. 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.**



SOIL



WATER



WILDLIFE



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

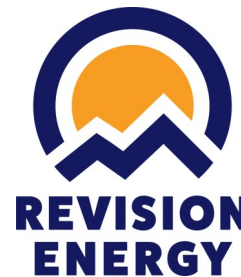
opportunity of putting a conservation easement on farmland to also invest in the future viability of the farm business. The goal of this fund is to ensure that farmland is conserved, productive, and available for future generations. Funding was provided by the You Have Our Trust Fund and the Madison Fund of the NH Charitable Foundation, \$100,000 was awarded during the fourth grant round in 2023 to three land trusts working with five farms and the RFP for the 2024 grant round will be available in February 2024. This program is a partnership with the NH Community Loan Fund, Land For Good, and the ten County Conservation Districts 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.

## Business Planning for Specialty Crop Producers

The CCCD received a USDA Specialty Crop Block Grant from the NH Dept. of Agriculture Markets and Food to partner with NCAT and the Hannah Grimes Center to offer free Business planning courses to Specialty Crop Producers in 2022 and 2023. Participating farms received a \$2,000 stipend to invest in their farm business at the completion of the course as well as financial assistance for bookkeeping. Eighteen farms participated in the program.

## Community Supported Solar for NH Farms

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. In 2021 a 100kw Solar Array became fully operational. In 2023 membership became fully subscribed with nine farms from Cheshire County.







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

### FARM VIABILITY

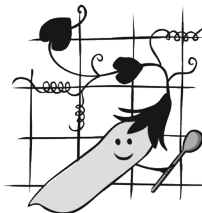
The Monadnock Food Co-op Farm Fund's mission is to support local farmers in increasing sustainable food production and wholesale sales to contribute to a thriving local farm economy. This grant opportunity for local farmers is made possible through a partnership with the CCCD who serves as the fiscal sponsor and managing partner. Three grant awards totaling \$32,906 were made in 2023 to Blackfire Farm, Dog Days Farm, and Manning Hill Farm. Now in its seventh year the fund has awarded over \$152,000 to 19 area farms. 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.



### *Jeffrey P. Smith Farm Scholarships*

In 2023, 30 scholarships were offered to 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, Cheshire County Farm Bureau, Elm City Rotary Club, Keene Lions Club, and generous local donors. Partners include Stonewall Farm, The Orchard School, UMass 4H Camps, Kroka, and Keene Housing.



## 2023 Highlights

The CCCD reached out to over 4,500 individuals in 2023 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: **Energy Efficiency, 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.



**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.**



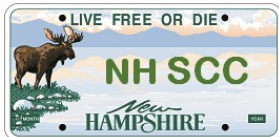
**SOIL**

## Supporting Healthy Productive Soil through Education and Equipment Rentals

In 2023 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 no-till corn planter, no-till transplanter, soil steamer, BCS walk behind tractor with six implements, single shank sub-soiler, and penetrometer. Our total equipment value of the 17 implements is approximately \$180,000.

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



## Conservation Opportunity Grant Program

CCCD offers 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 2023 the CCCD awarded \$11,558 to ten 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 November 2023.



## NH Integrated Pest Management Partnership

Integrated Pest Management (IPM) is an approach that balances pest control with costs and environmental impacts. IPM can be used to reduce the use of pesticides. 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.

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 has brought 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.





**WILDLIFE**

## Improving Wildlife Habitat for the Health of Our Ecosystems & Fostering Stewardship of our Landscapes

### *Pollinator Education*

NH Fish and Game Department partnered with CCCD on a Butterfly Identification Workshop in May. Pollinator Palooza, a family friendly afternoon with over 100 community members learning and celebrating pollinators was hosted by CCCD and community partners in June. In October a pollinator habitat establishment workshop will be hosted by Monadnock View Community Garden, UNH CE Mater Gardeners, and CCCD.

### *Monadnock Outdoors - Connecting with Nature*

Monadnock Outdoors has a mission to foster connections to nature and holistic community well-being through education and the promotion of active living by means of physical activity, active transportation, and recreation in the outdoors. Monadnock Outdoors is a work group of the Healthy Monadnock Alliance with a vision that Monadnock region residents are equipped with the knowledge, confidence, and motivation to get active, connect with nature and community, and improve well-being. The CCCD provides staff support to this group as we understand that strong natural resources stewardship starts with making a connection to and caring about the place where you live. In 2023 Monadnock Outdoors - launched a Gear Library in partnership with the Keene Public Library that will continue to expand in 2024;

- Improved the online Outdoor Recreation Resource Map to highlight recreation opportunities and resources available for community members to connect with nature; - Offered a training session using the HETAP (High Efficiency Trail Assessment Process) machine in partnership with UNHCE to collect information on trail usability and management.



### *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. Through a partnership with Picadilly Farm the CCCD has acquired a soil steamer to make available to growers through our equipment rental program. This will allow producers to access the equipment in an affordable manner. The CCCD is working 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.



### *Monadnock Grows Together*

The CCCD working in partnership with Antioch University New England's Community Garden Connections (CGC), the National Center for Appropriate Technology (NCAT), Monadnock Farm and Community Coalition (MFCC), and the Keene Public Library offered technical assistance, education, and gardening equipment to small-scale urban farmers and gardeners for growing their production capacity while conserving natural resources such as soil health, water quality, and pollinator habitat.

The Monadnock Veiw Community Garden of Keene is an important partner in this work. \$6,000 in grant funds were contributed to build a tool shed, purchase fencing, shared tools and equipment, irrigation supplies, and undertake soil testing for the Community Garden. Along with this, ten public education workshops were hosted for the community and a weekly garden club was hosted this Spring in partnership with the UNHCE Master Gardeners. Funding is provided by the National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD) and USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS).



**WATER**

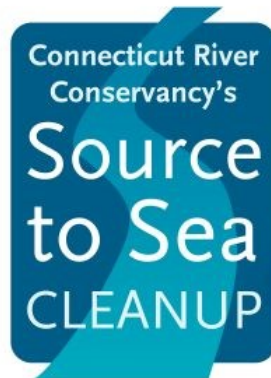
## Improving Water Quality Through River Clean Ups and Farm Partnerships

### *Source to Sea River Clean Up*



On September 29-30th a group of enthusiastic volunteers pitched in to help clean up the Ashuelot River in Keene, Swanzey, and Winchester and Beaver Brook in Keene as part of the Connecticut River Conservancy’s “Source to Sea Cleanup”. Volunteers pulled over 2,700 lbs of trash from the two water bodies! All while soaking in the beautiful fall colors (some rain drops!) 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 the Keene High School, as well as a large group of employees from Eversource. They were joined by individuals and families from throughout the region for a total of 74 volunteers. This event is made possible by the partnership of the Ashuelot River Local Advisory Committee (ARLAC), City of Keene, Moosewood Ecological, Harris Center for Conservation Education, Keene State College, and the Cheshire County Conservation District.



## *Climate Resilience Grant Program for Farms*

The NH County Conservation Districts have launched a farm viability program to improve the resilience of NH farms in the face of extreme weather events and a changing climate. Direct grants to farms to invest in on-farm infrastructure, equipment, and innovative practices will support farm profitability and the long-term viability for NH’s agricultural sector.



The mission of the NH Conservation Districts Climate Resilience Grant is to support and empower local farmers to build climate resilience throughout the granite state. This will be done through reducing the impact of agriculture on climate change (mitigation) through greenhouse gas emissions reduction and carbon sequestration, and through increasing the resiliency of New Hampshire Farms in a changing climate (adaptation), while meeting farm’s conservation goals and needs. This

grant through the NH County Conservation Districts seeks to support farmers in soil health improvement, water management, integrated pest management, and energy conservation.

Since 2022, the NH Conservation Districts Climate Resilience Grant has distributed \$345,661 to 49 farms across New Hampshire. 2023 Cheshire County awardees include Deer Hill Farm, Dog Days Farm, Lucky 13 Farm, and Manning Hill Farm.

The 2024 grant round opens in November 2024 and there will be \$300,000 available to NH Farms.

