

Eastern Connecticut Resource Conservation & Development Area, Inc.

2014-2015 Annual Plan of Work



45+ YEARS OF SERVING OUR
COMMUNITIES

Our Mission

Eastern Connecticut RC&D champions partnerships and initiatives that sustain our natural and agricultural resources while strengthening our economy.

Our Vision

RC&D will be recognized as a leader in promoting and facilitating the following:

- Better land use decision at the local level through education and outreach
- Increase in agricultural production, promoting a healthier food system
- A more viable working landscape and ecosystem
- Greater regional communication and coordination in resource planning



A Message from the ECRC&D President

The long history and very high standard set by the Eastern Connecticut RC&D Council can be daunting legacies to live up to. The RC&D Council has accomplished so much over so many years, that even a year that would be very successful by the standards of an ordinary nonprofit can seem like reason for concern. The past year for the RC&D Council has been one of continuing transition away from close NRCS partnership and into some sort of independent future. We continue to be a very well-kept secret, achieving ongoing success in our Farm Energy, Soil Health, AGvocate, and ERT programs, but without a strong, over-arching organizational identity. Each of these projects, and many more, have an important purpose and an appreciative constituency, but we must work harder to place them all in the larger context of the RC&D Mission.

In ongoing discussion with our sister council, King's Mark RC&D, we have been moving slowly toward a single, statewide Council. It is our hope that this westward expansion and formal partnership will be the start of a renaissance of interest and energy in the RC&D Program. The hallmark of the Program, especially in Connecticut, has been its ability to adapt to the changing circumstances and needs of its communities. The coming year will put this ability to the test, but I have confidence that the passion and expertise of our partners will continue to strive toward making Connecticut a better, stronger, healthier, and more sustainable place to be.



A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'J. Guskowski'.

John P. Guskowski
Eastern CT RC&D Council President

Eastern CT RC&D Executive Board

John Guskowski, President

Working Lands Alliance

Lois Bruinooge, Vice President

The Last Green Valley

Barbara Kelly, Treasurer

North Central Conservation District

Margot Burns, Secretary

Lower CT River Valley Council of Governments

Eastern CT RC&D Board Members

John Guskowski (CME/Working Lands Alliance), Margot Burns (RiverCOG), Barbara Kelly (NCCD), Lois Bruinooge (TLGV), Tom O'Dell (CRCCD), Tom Seidel (SECCOG), Jim Larkin (NECCOG), Judy Rondeau (ECCD), Jim Gooch (CFT), Jennifer Kaufman (Town of Mansfield)

Administrative Goals

In the 2014-2015 Program Year, the Eastern Connecticut RC&D Council will undertake a number of administrative and board development projects, including:

- Complete a merger with King's Mark RC&D and revise by-laws and organizational documents to become the Connecticut RC&D.
- Developing wider, active Board representation.
- Explore staffing reorganization to give more management responsibility to staff.

Budget

The Council budget associated with the Council's Annual Plan of Work and Administrative obligations is a separate document that is approved annually at the same meeting as the Annual Plan of Work. When separate project proposals are received and approved and grant funds are sought and received, then each project has a separate project budget associated with it.



2013 Eastern CT RC&D Annual Meeting

Resource Conservation and Development is a program of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). It was created by a provision of the Food and Agriculture Act of 1962. The Secretary of Agriculture gave the Natural Resources Conservation Service responsibility for administering the program.

Eastern CT RC&D is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

Eastern CT RC&D Partners

US EPA
USDA-Farm Service Agency
USDA-NRCS
USDA-Rural Development
Connecticut Department of Agriculture
Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection
Connecticut Department of Public Health
University of Connecticut
University of Connecticut Cooperative Extension
Working Lands Alliance
American Farmland Trust
Connecticut Farmland Trust
The Last Green Valley
The Institute for Sustainable Energy
Eightmile River Wild & Scenic Watershed
Connecticut Forest and Park Association
Connecticut Farm Bureau Association
Massachusetts Farm Energy Program
Rhode Island Farm Energy Program
Energize CT
The Nature Conservancy
Capitol Region Council of Governments
Northeast Connecticut Council of Governments
Southeast Connecticut Council of Governments
Windham Region Council of Governments
Lower CT River Valley Council of Governments
Connecticut River Coastal Conservation District
Eastern Connecticut Conservation District
North Central Conservation District
Thames River Basin Partnership
Essex Land Trust
King's Mark RC&D
AGvocate Towns: Ashford, Bozrah, Brooklyn, Canterbury, Chaplin, Franklin, Hampton, Killingly, Pomfret, Scotland, Sterling, Thompson, Windham and Woodstock
Town of Lebanon
Town of Putnam
City of Hartford
Knox Park Foundation
The Montessori Magnet School at Annie Fisher
Brownfields Alliance of Northeast Connecticut
CME Associates, Inc.
Canaan Valley Cooperative
The Farmer's Cow
Connecticut Horse Council
Pace University Law School
National Fish and Wildlife Foundation
The Community Foundation for Greater New Haven

2013-2014 Eastern CT RC&D Highlights

- In partnership with The Last Green Valley, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), USDA Farm Service Agency, University of Connecticut, CT Department of Agriculture and others, continued the “AGvocate” program in CT with funding of \$44,000.00 provided by the Connecticut Department of Agriculture Viability Grant program to host a “Train the Trainer” event for CT AGvocates, that was held at Goodwin College in January 2014.
- Convened the 3rd Annual Connecticut Agriculture Commission Conference in Hampton, CT. The event was developed as an outgrowth of the AGvocate program and was attended by over 50 participants.
- Through Board representative John Guskowski, served on the State of Connecticut Farmland Preservation Advisory Board and assisted in the development of program standards and criteria for the State of Connecticut’s Community Farms Preservation Program.
- Continued, through a grant of \$70,000 from Clean Water Act Section 319h Nonpoint Source, a study to determine the viability of using dairy manure fiber, a byproduct of anaerobic digestion, in growing media for commercial plant production.
- Conducted outreach and coordination activities with Connecticut beef producers, wholesalers and a slaughterhouse owner to develop a “Value Chain” for Connecticut Local Beef. Funding for the study was paid for by a State of Connecticut AG Viability Grant.
- Conducted, through a Contribution Agreement with NRCS, the first two of four scheduled in-depth workshops on Soil Health. Several additional demonstrations of a Healthy Soils rainfall simulator were conducted at various educational events. Two more in-depth workshops are planned for Fall 2014. Began drafting, with support of North Central Conservation District, a Regenerative Soil Solutions report that will be completed in Fall 2014.
- The Sustainable Communities Committee provided funding to the Tolland Agricultural Center for a large information kiosk and it was constructed and installed by a Boy Scout troop in Fall 2013. The CT Lakes Shoreline Management Manual grant was closed with receipt of a draft manual. A committee member did attend a tour of a Heart of the Harvest a fresh fruit and vegetable processor at the Regional Market. Updates and information from the DEEP Urban Forestry Program were shared on the RC&D website.

2013-2014 Eastern CT RC&D Highlights

- Through a USDA RBEG grant from Rural Development the CT Farm Energy Program (CFEP) was continued (CFEP Phase IV). CFEP continues to provide REAP grant writing assistance and serve as a clearinghouse of information to all Connecticut agricultural producers and rural small businesses in developing energy efficiency and renewable energy projects. In 2013 CFEP assisted with submitting 5 REAP grant/loan applications, with 4 of 5 funded in the total amount of \$ 169,618.00 in assistance for energy projects on CT farms.
- CT Farm Energy hosted 4 energy grant assistance workshops across Connecticut (Torrington, Norwich, New Haven and Vernon) in partnership with other state and federal organizations. CFEP also attended and sponsored several CT agriculture conferences and events.
- CT Farm Energy project work consisted of producing a second edition of the Connecticut Farm Energy Best Management Practice Guide with EnSave, Vermont along with State and Federal partner input. The guide is available as a PDF and 1,000 copies were printed. Additionally CFEP secured funds from a State of Connecticut Department of Agriculture Viability Grant to conduct an energy survey of CT farms.
- CT Farm Energy Program Director was appointed to represent the Agriculture Community on the State of Connecticut Energy Efficiency Board.
- The Environmental Review Team (ERT) Program completed eight (8) ERT reports for the towns of Naugatuck, Bolton, Vernon, Tolland, Coventry, East Lyme, Ashford, Coventry, Plymouth, Southington and Portland. Staff attended EV CT event, CT Soil Day, CT Green Infrastructure Symposium, CACIWC Annual Meeting, Salt Meadow Park Dedication, Middlesex Community Foundation Networking Social, CT Land Conservation Council Annual Conference, CT Conference on Natural Resources, CT Land Conservation Day at the LOB, Sustaining Our Fisheries Forum and providing information for CT Agriculture Day at the capitol.
- The ERT has re-focused efforts and assistance provided to municipalities and has added land trusts as eligible entities to request assistance because of recent funding and state priority issues. To address current issues and needs in land use management the ERT has changed and updated their technical services. There will be an emphasis on open space, natural resource and agricultural planning and management reviews with the added service of grant assistance and referral. New team members in all disciplines are being sought to replace CTDEEP team members.

2014/2015 CT RC&D Goals

Agricultural Viability

Agriculture provides critical goods and services to Connecticut's citizens and ecosystems. Viable agriculture enhances the quality of life for the state's residents through strengthening the economy, preserving cultural heritage, protecting natural resources, and increasing food security.

Goals:

Objective 1: Facilitate and coordinate emerging efforts by agricultural producers, organizations, citizen groups, and governmental entities to increase agricultural profitability and viability in Connecticut.

Strategies:

1. Partner with UConn, Connecticut Department of Agriculture, and Connecticut Beef Producers to provide business assistance to increase capacity and usage of local slaughterhouse operations and processing facilities.
2. Partner with USDA-NRCS to conduct outreach educational workshops and demonstrations of Soil Health principles and practices.
3. Explore ways to assist farmers in making no-till planting practices more feasible.

Objective 2: Partner with USDA-Rural Development and Connecticut Department of Agriculture to enhance on farm energy efficiency and renewable energy through the Connecticut Farm Energy Program.

Strategies:

1. Continue to serve as a resource of information on energy in relation to grant opportunities, loans, audits, education, and events for agricultural producers and rural small businesses across Connecticut.
2. Continue distribution of the 2nd Edition of the Connecticut Farm Energy Best Management Practices Guide.
3. Distribute the report and results of the CT farm energy survey among Federal, State and Local partners.
4. Provide technical assistance in the form of grant writing to eligible Connecticut agricultural producers and rural businesses in applying for USDA-Rural Development REAP grants, as well as providing grant-writing assistance with USDA-Rural Development Value Added Producer grants.
5. Host two statewide grant workshops to provide information about the Connecticut Farm Energy Program, Rural Development REAP Grants, as well as other partner funding opportunities and assistance available to agricultural producers and rural small businesses across Connecticut.
6. Host 2 on farm energy training and education workshops/tours with one held in the Fall of 2014 and a second one in the Spring of 2015 at farms the CT Farm Energy Program has worked with and energy measures have been implemented on.
7. Work to promote and implement state support for energy efficiency and renewable energy programs and assistance on Connecticut farms through board membership on the State of CT Energy Efficiency Board.

2014/2015 CT RC&D Goals

Objective 3: Develop and initiate policies and projects to promote the economic and cultural importance of farmland protection to municipal officials and decision makers.

Strategies:

1. Provide networking coordination and assistance to ensure that municipalities and agricultural producers have access to information and resources about municipal policy best practices for farming viability and promotion.
2. Convene 4th Annual Connecticut Agricultural Commission Conference in partnership with River COG.

Objective 4: Encourage the continued viability of agriculture as a primary land use in Connecticut.

Strategies:

1. Through participation in the Connecticut Farmland Preservation Advisory Board, provide leadership and recommendations on improving farmland protection policies in the State.
2. Support work of the Governor's Council on Agricultural Development through input and participation in working groups.

Objective 5: Increase awareness of the potential environmental impacts of the equine community on the Connecticut landscape.

Strategies:

1. Conduct outreach to equine owners and municipalities about best management practices through the Horse Environmental Awareness Program (HEAP).
2. Promote new and innovative ideas to manage equine waste.

2014/2015 CT RC&D Goals

Environmental Review Team

To assist Connecticut municipalities and land trusts, in the review of projects with an emphasis on conservation and preservation by coordinating multidisciplinary environmental study teams and providing assistance with grant resources, meeting coordination and sustainable land use decision making and implementation.

Goals:

Objective 1: Continue the ERT program with its new and diversified services.

Strategies:

1. Deliver programs and initiatives that foster a deeper local understanding of land use and environmental issues that includes ERT reviews/reports, grant and expert referral assistance.
2. Obtain new team members.
3. Assess and modify the ERT review process, ERT report content and layout based on evaluations and availability of team members.
4. Meet with stake holders for continued support and guidance for direction of the program.
5. Investigate various means to providing follow up assistance to those receiving an ERT report.

Objective 2: Reassess and restructure the administration of the ERT program.

Strategies:

1. Conduct at least quarterly meetings of the ERT Subcommittee.
2. Manage financial resources for continued program operation with annual review of financial management.
3. Explore ways to deliver ERT services in the most timely cost effective manner.
 - a. Prepare a historical analysis of time lines in completing ERT's.
 - b. Identify alternative ways to complete work.
4. Develop a plan for future funding.

Objective 3: Educate legislators, town officials, and land trusts about the ERT Program.

Strategies:

1. Create new ERT program branding, materials and display.
2. Attend meetings, conferences and other opportunities to promote the ERT program and services.
3. Maintain the ERT website and social media presence.
4. Provide state and federal legislators with annual ERT program update and e-mail notifications of completed reviews and assistance.
5. Produce a mailing to town officials and land trusts about the services we offer.
6. Continue to post archived ERT reports to the website.

2014/2015 CT RC&D Goals

Greenways

Greenways provide a prime opportunity to connect people and communities, linking rural, suburban, and urban portions of eastern Connecticut while providing habitat protection and expanding open space and recreational opportunities.

A 'Greenway' is defined within the CT General Statutes under Section 23-100 as a corridor of open space that:

- a. May protect natural resources, preserve scenic landscapes and historical resources or offer opportunities for recreation or nonmotorized transportation,*
- b. May connect existing protected areas and provide access to the outdoors,*
- c. May be located along a defining natural feature, such as a waterway, along a man-made corridor, including an unused right-of-way, traditional trail routes or historic barge canals or*
- d. May be a greenspace along a highway or around a village.*

Goals:

Objective 1: Work with CT DEEP, NRCS, RPO's, University of Connecticut, conservation commissions, open space committees, land trusts, Connecticut Land Conservation Council, Connecticut Greenway Council, equestrian organizations and others to lead a focused effort to identify and connect the many fragmented and local greenways throughout Eastern Connecticut. Identify potential open space and greenway linkages across municipal and regional boundaries, with emphasis on river corridors, watersheds, and regional trails: Special focus to be given to the East Coast Greenway, Air Line Rail Trail, and the Quinimay Trail of Cockaponset State Forest and the Menunketesuck – Cockaponset Regional Greenway.

Strategies:

1. Provide an informational brochure on where to go to learn of greenway and blueway connections within the State, New England, and New York and why they are important, and provide that resource through hardcopy mailing to conservation commissions, inland wetlands commissions, land trusts, and on the RC&D website.
2. Promote/facilitate or help distribute comprehensive CT greenway publications which includes State, regional, and local greenway boundaries, descriptions, and purposes.

Objective 2: Find, coordinate, and support interested citizens, groups, organizations, and government bodies to participate in greenway development through intergovernmental, nonprofit, and NGO's collaborations.

Strategies:

1. Provide support for (2) intermunicipal or regional non-profit conservation collaborative initiatives or continuing organizations.
2. Provide grant assistance through administrative service and/or fiscal responsibility for (1) intermunicipal or regional non-profit organization.

2014/2015 CT RC&D Goals

Objective 3: Partner with the City of Hartford, United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Capitol Region Council of Governments (CROG), State of Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP), and neighborhood groups to identify actionable next steps for the multi-use trail system along the Park River in Hartford and coordinate the completion of existing grants with the identification of additional funding resources.

Strategies:

1. Work with City of Hartford and Connecticut DEEP to transfer remaining project funds and responsibility on South Branch Trail to City of Hartford.

Objective 4: Support connection of environmental justice populations to public services and partner in the development of non motorized corridors.

Strategies:

1. Assist (1) municipality and school district in understanding the Safe Routes to School (SRTS) program concept and seek opportunities to link Safe Routes to School (SRTS) planning efforts to off- street trails and greenways systems.

Objective 5: Partner with CLEAR, RPO's and the CT DEEP to develop a model to assist communities with their greenway and open space mapping and planning initiatives.

Strategies:

1. Participate in (1) natural resource or land use conference concerning the inventory and mapping of open space and development of a statewide geospatial land records system.

Objective 6: Continue to coordinate and partner on greenway and blueway trail identification and statewide mapping and support Rivers Alliance of Connecticut with their statewide blueways initiative.

Strategies:

1. Make (3) global positioning systems (GPS) units available to municipal and conservation non-profits to facilitate, and in exchange for, completion of specific trail mapping projects to be included in the State of Connecticut, DEEP trail geographic information system (GIS) database.
2. Coordinate and/or support the planning of (1) blueway and greenway connection and access point.

Objective 7: Assist conservation organizations with land and trail stewardship capacity.

Strategies:

1. Develop and make available a list of references and organizations that can assist with land and trail stewardship and make available on website.
2. Support municipalities, land trusts, and their partners to create and carry out stewardship/ management plans for existing greenways.

2014/2015 CT RC&D Goals

Sustainable Communities

To promote livable, sustainable communities through partnerships that maintain and enhance the unique quality of life and environment found in Connecticut communities.

Goals:

Objective 1: Educate citizens, town commissions, landscape professionals and others on the importance of installing ecological landscaping practices.

Strategies:

1. Place information on ecological landscaping initiatives on the RC& D website.
2. Provide outreach support for ecological landscaping workshops.
3. Assist with promoting the CIPWG 2014 Invasive Plant Symposium.
4. Post CIPWG news, events, volunteer opportunities and legislative updates on the ERT and RC&D website.

Objective 2: Help educate the public on home-scale organic vegetable production and support the production and donation of organic vegetables to local communities in need.

Strategies:

1. Identify and publicize organic gardening initiatives in Connecticut.

Objective 3: Determine the best way to complete and distribute the CT Lakes Shoreline Protection Manual.

Strategies:

1. Post information on the RC&D website about the new guide.
2. Work with CT DEEP, UCONN Extension and the CT Federation of Lakes to educate municipalities and lake shore owners.

Objective 4: Assist in the improvement of impaired waterways in Connecticut on a project basis.

Strategies:

1. Pursue independently or with partners grant funding.

Objective 5: Assist the CT Department of Agriculture Farm to School Program.

Strategies:

1. Post or reference new Farm to School reports on the RC&D website.
2. Work with the Governor's Council on Agricultural Development to increase spending on CT grown in schools and institutions.
3. Investigate ways to promote CT ground beef and other proteins for use in CT schools and institutions.
4. Investigate ways to encourage farmers to bring more land into farm production.

2014/2015 CT RC&D Goals

Objective 6: Promote successful America the Beautiful and CT DEEP Urban Forestry grant recipient's projects.

Strategies:

1. Highlight with stories and photos of successful projects in Connecticut on the RC&D website.

Objective 7: Promote the CT Tree Warden's Association and their training.

Strategies:

1. Post information on the RC&D website.

Objective 8: Educate municipal agencies on the importance of including tree review in the site review and permitting process.

Strategies:

1. Incorporate tree review and BMP standards during ERT reviews and incorporate into ERT reports.

Objective 9: Support the State Vegetation Management Task Force.

Strategies:

1. Keep track of recommendations as they emerge and disseminate the recommendations throughout Connecticut.

Objective 10: Foster intermunicipal brownfields initiatives involving multiple communities.

Strategies:

1. Coordinate with regional brownfield partners statewide to seek joint project funding and promote revitalization of contaminated properties.
2. Become a member of the Brownfield Coalition of the Northeast (non-profits no annual fee).

Contact Information

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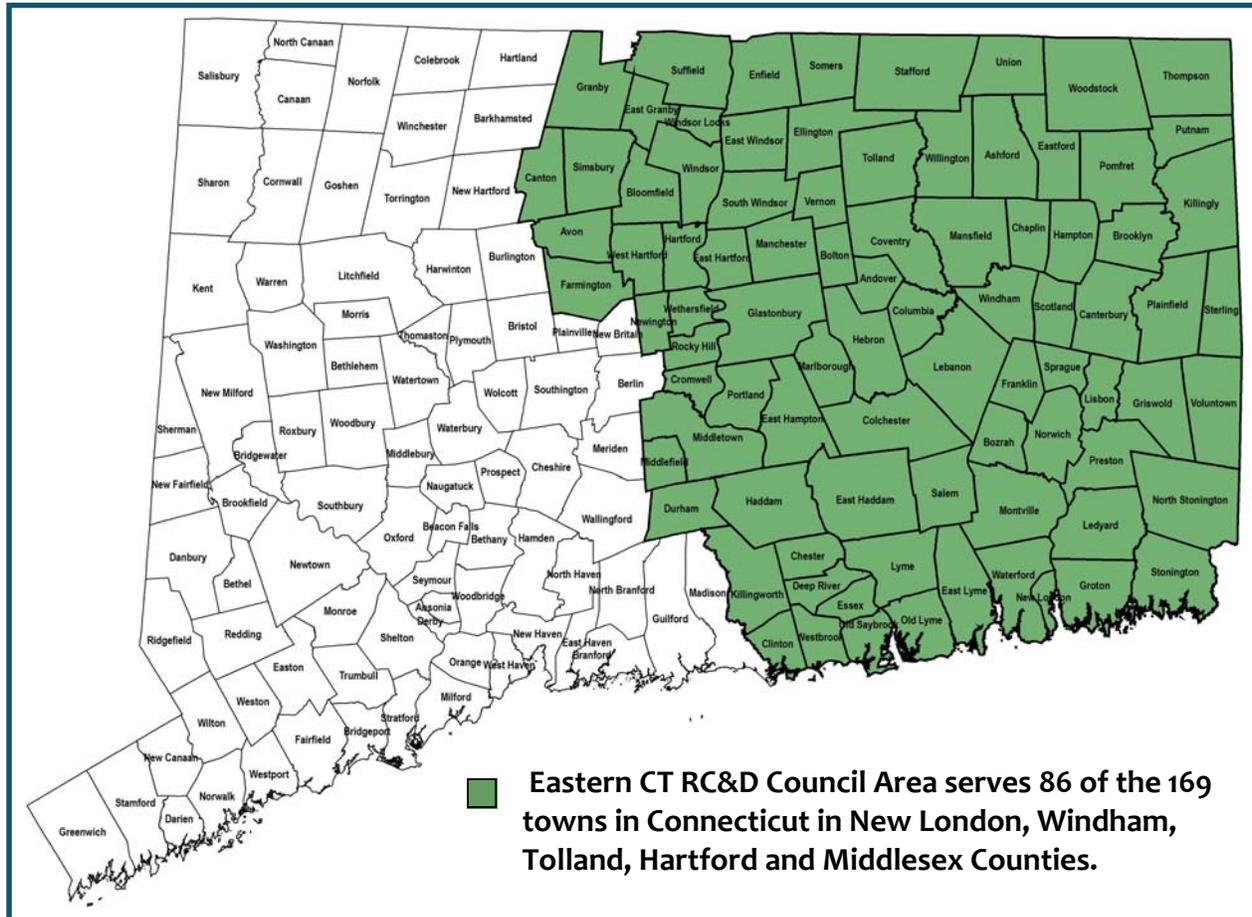
National Association of RC&D Councils

www.narcdc.org

New England Association of RC&D Areas

www.newenglandrcd.org

Eastern CT Resource Conservation & Development Service Area



The Eastern CT Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D) Program:

The RC&D helps people care for and protect their natural resources, improve local economies, and sustain a high quality of life. The Eastern Connecticut Program derives its success from its ability to connect individuals, communities, government entities, and grassroots organizations. These connections and partnerships enable the development of shared visions and resource networks that work toward a healthy future for Connecticut. The RC&D is committed to organizational strength. We will strive to maintain a level of excellence recognized by the Circle of Diamonds.