



*pc K. Greene*

SOMERSET COUNTY



SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT



# ANNUAL REPORT

2022



## District Board - Supervisors

**Ann Mefferd**, Board Chair  
300 Beckwith Road  
Cornville, ME 04976  
(207) 858-3033  
[farmers@onedropfarm.com](mailto:farmers@onedropfarm.com)

*Term ends: 12/31/2024*  
*Years of Service: 6 years*

**Alan Haberstock**  
1392 Hill Road  
Canaan, ME 04924  
(207) 399-0385  
[alanhaberstock@gmail.com](mailto:alanhaberstock@gmail.com)

*Term ended: 12/31/2021*  
*Years of Service: 21 years*

**Gwen Hilton**, Vice Chair  
8 Olde Ferry Road  
Starks, ME 04911  
(207) 399-9866  
[gwenhilton88@gmail.com](mailto:gwenhilton88@gmail.com)

*Term ends: 12/31/2022*  
*Years of Service: 4 years*

**Jon Doty**, Treasurer  
75 Bagley Road  
Madison, ME 04950  
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[jdodzilla@gmail.com](mailto:jdodzilla@gmail.com)

*Term ends: 12/31/2022*  
*Years of Service: 2 years*

**Colin Hoffman**  
571 East Madison Road  
Madison, ME 04950  
(570) 428-3072  
[c.t.hoffman45@gmail.com](mailto:c.t.hoffman45@gmail.com)

*Term ends: 12/31/2023*  
*Years of Service: newly elected*

## District Board – Associate Supervisors

*None*



## District Employees

### ***Executive Director***

Joe Dembeck  
1184 East River Road  
Skowhegan, ME 04976  
(207) 474-9789  
[joseph.dembeck@me.nacdnet.net](mailto:joseph.dembeck@me.nacdnet.net)

*Date of employment 5/11/2015*

### ***Technical Director***

Laura Suomi-Lecker  
PO Box 45  
Liberty, ME 04949  
(207) 589-3018  
[laura.lecker@me.nacdnet.net](mailto:laura.lecker@me.nacdnet.net)

*Date of employment 1/2/2007*

### ***Outreach Coordinator***

Jennifer Brockway  
PO Box 2475  
Waterville, ME 04903  
(207) 679-7306  
[somersetswcd.outreach@gmail.com](mailto:somersetswcd.outreach@gmail.com)

*Date of employment 5/8/2018*



***Note from the Executive Director***

The 2022 Annual Report is dedicated to Alan Haberstock, who after 21 years as a Board Supervisor is stepping down. I am certain he would have stayed on for longer if he hadn't moved out of Somerset County. Alan represents the last Supervisor whose tenure encompassed more than one District Executive Director. In fact, his years on the Board allowed him to oversee three different Executive Directors and a multitude of changes in District work activities, partnerships, and assistance provided to Somerset County citizens. Alan has been steadfast in assisting new Supervisors to learn the role of the Board and provide a solid history of past District efforts, challenges, and opportunities.

Alan's presence on the Board will be greatly missed and we thank him for his 21 years of service!

Sincerely,

*Joe Dembeck*  
*Executive Director*



**A summary of the programs currently in place, program changes and/or new programs SCSWCD plans to implement.**

**Future And Ongoing Projects & Plans**

- Continue participation in Envirothon, a natural resource science-based competition for high school-aged students, at county and state levels. Coordinate with area high schools, groups, and homeschoolers plus assist as requested.
- Continue annual trout sale fundraiser.
- Spotlight and recommend products and Best Management Practices to encourage conservation enhancements, water quality protection, and erosion control.
- Participate in continuing education plus applicable certifications and staff development.
- Continue to provide education and technical assistance on issues including buffer planting, camp road maintenance, erosion control, nutrient management, conservation enhancements, water quality, and forestry management issues.
- Support and expand outreach and education programs to help farmers in such areas as cover crops, marketing, organic transition, and soil health, to name a few.
- Continue partnership with USDA-NRCS, USDA-FSA, Somerset County Cooperative Extension, plus private, state, and federal agencies, and organizations.
- Produce and/or obtain, plus distribute informational materials (i.e.: brochures, booklets, worksheets) focusing on conservation.
- Identify and obtain funding, grants, donations or partnerships for conservation projects and outreach.
- Expand mailing/contact list to include more participants and update current list.
- Contribute press releases and articles to local and regional publications highlighting SWCD issues and events, conservation topics, and completed projects.
- Continued attendance and outreach at area fairs, events, and meetings.
- Continue Web and social media presence, assess user metrics, and modify presented information as necessary.
- Continue the Ag Allies – Grassland Bird Program by further spreading the program's reach through in-state collaborators and with Cornell University to out-of-state entities.



- Continue to provide technical assistance in areas of nutrient management, erosion control, aquatic organism passage, invasive terrestrial plants management, and water resource management to farmers, landowners, lake associations, road associations, and towns.
- Yankee Woodlot Demonstration Forest– Continue collaboration with the Maine Forest Service (MFS) to implement workshops at the forest, improve the recreational trail system, and implement other forestry-related activities.
- Forestry/Wildlife Education/Workshops – Continue collaborations with MFS, Maine Woodland Owners, other Soil and Water Conservation Districts, and NRCS to host outreach events on topics pertinent to private woodland owners.





## Highlights of Proposed 2022 Activities:

- Workshops:\*
  - Apple Tree Pruning Workshop #1 – Skowhegan (early March)
  - Apple Tree Pruning Workshop #2– Skowhegan (early March)
  - Spring Wildflower Identification and Walk (May)- *planning*
  - Invasive Plant Assessment and Management Workshop @ Yankee Woodlot (July)
- Yankee Woodlot Management and Activities
  - Picture Post Project – Post-harvest monitoring of succession
  - Trail Maintenance and Improvements
  - Finalize Invasive Terrestrial Plant Management Plan for Property
  - Work with Maine DACF to initiate treatment of invasive plants in an area as a case study
  - Restore and update the Trail of Thoughts along a portion of the inner loop trail
- Assist with Mid-Coast Regional Envirothon (Collaboration with regional School Districts and other regional Soil and Water Conservation Districts)\*
- Spring Trout Sale – Provide Brook Trout (May) and Rainbow Trout (June) sales for private pond owners to purchase for stocking.
- Agricultural Allies - Grassland Bird Protection and Management Project – Year 7
  - 2022 Field Surveys
  - 2022 Delayed Mowing Payments
  - 2022 Field Renovation Workshops & Technical Assistance
  - Public Outreach and Education efforts through presentations, social media, and news releases
- Participate in MACD Meetings (Spring, Summer, Fall, and Winter)
- Maine Farm Days\*
- Maine Highway Congress – Assist with MACD Training Booth\*
- District Annual Dinner and Awards (Farmer and Woodland Owners of the Year)\*
- Nutrient Management Plans for Farmers



- Assistance to NRCS through Contribution Agreement Grants
- Assistance to NRCS on development of Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plans through Cooperative Agreement
- Collaboration with other Districts (staff development, technical services, outreach, project collaborations)

*\***NOTE:** In person workshops and meetings are dependent upon Covid-19 guidelines.*





**Conservation Priorities of Somerset County  
 Recommended to the NRCS Somerset County Field Office  
 By the Local Working Group for FY 2022 and FY 2023**

The Somerset County Local Working Group met on December 17, 2020, and determined the EQIP funding allocations for FY 2022, Table 1. Recently the Local Working Group at their December 21, 2021, meeting has recommended allocating the available EQIP funds as follows for FY 2023, Table 2. For FY 2023 it was decided by the majority of meeting participants to increase the Forestry funding pool to 20%, while decreasing Animal Waste to 70%, and Cropland & Pasture to 10%. The intent of these changes was to increase funds for forestry related activities due to the high demand of applications by landowners for such practices.

**Table 1. FY 2022 EQIP Funding Allocations**

Resource Category	% of Local Allocated Funding
Animal Waste	<b>74%</b>
Forestry	<b>15%</b>
Cropland & Pasture	<b>11%</b>

**Table 2. FY 2023 EQIP Funding Allocations**

Resource Category	% of Local Allocated Funding
Animal Waste	<b>70%</b>
Forestry	<b>20%</b>
Cropland & Pasture	<b>10%</b>



## SOMERSET COUNTY SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT ANNUAL PLAN OF OPERATION (APO) 2022

This plan identifies the major objectives, actions, and goals that will be emphasized in calendar year 2022 to help Somerset County address soil and water conservation needs as well as focus the public education and outreach efforts of the District.

### District work plan for addressing priorities.

#### I. WATER QUALITY

To reduce erosion and non-point source pollution on cropland, woodland, construction sites, roadsides, and other areas.

- A. Work with units of government and community organizations to:
  1. Provide technical assistance to lake associations, watershed associations, conservation groups, etc.
  2. Expand working relationships with municipalities or municipal road crews.
  4. Create a working relationship with landowners of forestland within the Kennebec River Basin to identify forestland erosion and implement practices to control it.
  5. Provide technical assistance on Nutrient Management planning.
  6. Provide outreach and educational materials to the public.

Who: Executive Director (ED) / Technical Director (TD), Supervisors

When: As needed

#### B. Work with municipalities to:

1. Provide assistance/ permit reviews (LUPC and DEP).
2. Provide technical assistance for construction site (erosion control certification) inspections.
3. Provide outreach and educational materials to municipalities and towns.

Who: NRCS/ ED

When: As needed



### C. Encourage proper management of wastes

#### 1. Agriculture

- a. Provide technical assistance – nutrient management plans to area producers at the current technical assistance rate
- b. Encourage proper management of agricultural waste through manure storage, manure testing (with use of manure management program, nutrient management program, etc.) and land spreading to meet crop nutrient needs
- c. Promote integrated crop management through workshops and Nutrient Management
- d. Pursue funding for surveys, assessments, and implementation projects
- e. Provide outreach and educational materials to the agricultural community
- f. Work with Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation & Forestry to share information, needs, and record updates

Who: ED/TD

When: Ongoing

## II. SOIL EROSION CONTROL / BEST MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

### A. Gravel Road Maintenance

1. Provide public educational workshops on BMP implementation to road and lake associations
2. Gravel Road training sessions
3. General Outreach
4. Partner with Department of Environmental Protection to maintain updated information and training

### B. Proper Forest / Woodlot Management

1. Continue Forestry Program, and educate the public regarding good forest management practices
2. Promote and present developing forestry demonstration areas at the Yankee Woodlot.
3. Award for outstanding Woodland Owner of the Year (reinstated at 2019 Annual Meeting)
4. Pursue or expand forestry funding
5. Provide outreach and educational materials to the public and forestry community



6. Partner with Maine Forest Service/MWO to assist with education programs

C. Crop and Grazing Land

1. Provide public educational workshops on BMP implementation
2. Pasture walks Workshop
3. General Outreach on Cover Crop and No Till Practices

Who: ED /TD, Supervisors

When: As needed

**III. CLIMATE RESILIENCY AND CARBON SEQUESTRATION**

- A. Continue staff training and development on subject matters
- B. Coordinate with appropriate agencies (NRCS, MFS, DACF) and organizations (MWO)
- C. Promote participation in appropriate current NRCS programs (CSP, EQIP, etc.)
- G. Provide outreach and educational materials to the public

Who: ED/TD/NRCS/DACF/MFS/MWO

When: As needed

**IV. WILDLIFE HABITAT**

- A. Hold wildlife workshops (pond building and maintenance, pollinator plantings, etc.)
- B. Proceed with Year 7 of Agricultural Allies (grassland bird) Project
- C. Assess wildlife habitat needs
- D. Provide technical assistance to cooperators
- E. Seek wildlife habitat funding
- F. Promote participation in appropriate current NRCS programs (CSP, EQIP, etc.)
- G. Provide outreach and educational materials to the public

Who: ED/TD/NRCS/IF&W/UMCE/USFWS

When: As needed

**V. CONSERVATION EDUCATION AND OUTREACH**

- A. Ongoing Educational Projects
  1. Involvement with Regional Envirothon
  2. Assist with State Envirothon
  3. Pond Workshops
  4. Nutrient Management Plan (technical assistance)



SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

70 East Madison Road, Skowhegan ME 04976  
Phone (207) 474-8323  
[info@somersetswcd.org](mailto:info@somersetswcd.org) [www.somersetswcd.org](http://www.somersetswcd.org)

- 5. Award Outstanding Conservation Farmer of the Year
- 6. Award Outstanding Woodland Owner of the Year
- 7. Provide outreach and educational materials to the public

Who: ED/TD/MFS

When: As needed

**VI. COORDINATE AND IMPLEMENT DISTRICT OPERATIONS**

- A. Assign committees to plan Annual Report, budget, education and forestry program
  - 1. Budget- Supervisors and Executive Director
  - 2. Annual Report- Supervisors and Executive Director
  - 3. Forestry- Maine Forest Service, Supervisors
  - 4. Education- Supervisors, Executive Director, Technical Director, Outreach Coordinator
  - 5. Personnel Policy- Supervisors and Executive Director

Who: ED/ TD/Supervisors/ NRCS

When: Throughout the year

- B. Advise public of district meetings, elections, newsletters, conservation/education, booths or programs, workshops, and contests (Envirothon, Woodlot Owner of the Year, etc.) through public newspapers, Web pages, quarterly newsletters, and annual report

Who: ED/TD/OC

When: As scheduled, or needed

- C. District Fundraising
  - 1. Trout Sale (*brook trout and rainbow trout for private pond stocking*)

Who: ED

When: Annually in Spring

- D. Interact with state, county, and township officials to integrate their programs with the services the District offers to their communities
  - 1. Contact towns and legislators by letter, explaining district programs, services available and make personal follow-up
  - 2. Provide outreach and educational materials to state, county and township officials

Who: ED/OC/Supervisors

When: Once/twice a year



**VII. CURRENT GRANT PROJECTS**

**A. Grants – Agricultural Allies – Grassland Bird Protection & Management**

1. Continue Year 7 of Project in 2022
2. Conduct farmer and landowner outreach efforts
3. Develop demonstration areas for practices
4. Determine the need for securing additional funding for project

Who: ED/ TD/OC/Supervisors

When: Throughout 2022

**B. Future Grant Projects**

1. Stay “up-to-date” with upcoming grant projects available through Internet, mailings, and other sources for future grant projects (which will promote beneficial conservation practice) such as:
  - a. EQIP
  - b. AOP – Focus on Eastern brook trout, sea-run Atlantic salmon, and diadromous fish species
  - c. SARE
  - d. Small Foundation and Capacity Grants
  - e. Other applicable opportunities

Who: ED/ TD/Supervisors/ NRCS

When: Throughout the year



## Benefits of District Programs

- Solve statewide problems by providing local solutions to many local natural resource problems (one size does not fit all)
- Assistance to agricultural producers in maintaining farming as a viable career and business option
- District provides local leadership as part of a cooperative team to find solutions to problems for residents, businesses, and landowners
- Opportunities which provide education and hands-on training for natural resource issues and concerns
- Technical assistance to landowners that will enhance and improve soil and water quality, plus maintain appropriate certifications and comply with State regulations (i.e.: Nutrient Management Plans)
- Technical assistance and education to reduce non-point source pollution to a target audience of gravel and camp road users. Also work with private road owners to establish a road review and individualized plans for erosion control and road maintenance
- Address the need for agricultural and forestry professionals in Somerset County to maintain necessary certifications, continuing education credits, and training to comply with industry requirements
- Work with schools, groups, and committees to promote soil and water conservation through the awareness and use of Best Management Practices
- Identify agricultural and forest-related priorities and concerns to address issues that could benefit both the landscape and industry needs
- Technical assistance and education to help landowners to better understand and manage their individual woodlots
- Manage and promote the Yankee Woodlot Demonstration Forest in cooperation with MFS, MWO, UMCE, and IF&W
- Promote programs that generate local cash flow for Somerset County residents and landowners through federally funded contracts. Continue to assist federal and state agencies in working to ensure programs are efficiently managed



## Somerset County Soil & Water Conservation District FY 2021 Budget (July 2020 – June 2021)

<b>Expenses</b>	<b>PROPOSED</b>	<b>ACTUAL</b>
Payroll [including taxes]	\$70,132.00	\$75,120.00
Workers Comp	\$350.00	\$352.00
Office Supplies	\$300.00	\$172.00
Postage/Printing	\$200.00	\$910.00
IT	\$300.00	\$396.00
IT – Web Hosting	\$250.00	\$216.00
Sales – Item Costs	\$3,000.00	\$4,821.00
Dues	\$2,400.00	\$2,075.00
Payroll Service	\$1,300.00	\$1,168.00
Travel/Mileage	\$2,300.00	\$1,857.00
Meetings/Events/Workshops	\$1,000.00	\$354.00
Annual Meeting/Dinner	\$2,000.00	\$0.00
Election Expense	\$300.00	\$0.00
Training	\$1,000.00	\$95.00
Licenses/Permits	\$300.00	\$90.00
Grant Payments to Participants	\$8,000.00	\$9,000.00
Envirothon	\$350.00	\$0.00
District Promotional Items	\$600.00	\$164.00
Ag Allies Project - Supplies	\$0.00	\$2,008.00
<b>Total:</b>	<b>\$94,082.00</b>	<b>\$98,798.00</b>
<b>Income</b>		
Somerset County Funding	\$28,500.00	\$28,500.00
State of ME - Dept. of Ag.	\$25,000.00	\$25,000.00
USDA- NRCS Contribution Agreements	\$6,000.00	\$5,074.00
USDA-NRCS CNMP Cooperative Agreement	\$12,000.00	\$8,438.00
USDA-NRCS CIG Invasive Plant Project	\$6,000.00	\$6,409.00
Maine DACF – Forest Pest Project	\$0.00	\$500.00
NACD-TA Outreach Grant	\$0.00	\$500.00
Sales (Trout)	\$4,000.00	\$6,618.00
Workshops/Education	\$1,000.00	\$130.00
Annual Meeting/Dinner	\$1,000.00	\$0.00
Interest Income	\$100.00	\$154.00
MEMIC Dividend	\$45.00	\$46.00
Tech. Assistance/Evaluations - Billable	\$500.00	\$340.00
Envirothon	\$0.00	\$0.00
Grants and/or Additional Fundraising	\$12,000.00	\$17,250.00
<b>Total:</b>	<b>\$96,145.00</b>	<b>\$98,959.00*</b>

\*Note - \$4,500 of FY2021 grants received were not used and moved to FY2022 in agreement with grantors.





**Somerset County Soil & Water Conservation District**  
**FY 2022 Budget (July 2021 – June 2022) (as of Jan. 3, 2022)**

<b>Expenses</b>	<b>PROPOSED</b>	<b>YEAR TO DATE</b>
Payroll [including taxes]	\$82,000.00	\$40,802
Workers Comp	\$350.00	\$505
Office Supplies	\$250.00	\$340
IT	\$300.00	\$75
IT – Web Hosting	\$250.00	\$328
Postage/Printing	\$250.00	\$83
Dues	\$2,400.00	\$2075
Payroll Service	\$1,500.00	\$930
Trout Sales- Item Costs	\$5,000.00	\$0
Travel/Mileage	\$1,300.00	\$642
Annual District Meeting/Dinner	\$2,000.00	\$0
Meetings/Events/Workshops	\$1,000.00	\$121
Election Expense	\$300.00	\$240
Training	\$1,000.00	\$0
Licenses/Permits	\$300.00	\$0
Payments to Landowners – Ag Allies Project	\$11,000.00	\$12,200
Field Rehab Demo Projects – Ag Allies Project	\$10,500.00	\$9,023
Contractor Services – Ag Allies Project	\$4,000.00	\$4,072
Envirothon	\$350.00	\$0
District Promotional Items	\$400.00	\$0
<b>Total:</b>	<b>\$124,450.00</b>	<b>\$71,436</b>
<b>Income</b>		
Somerset County Funding	\$28,500.00	\$14,250
State of ME - Dept. of Ag.	\$25,000.00	\$25,000
USDA- NRCS Contribution Agreements	\$6,000.00	\$1,064
USDA-NRCS CNMP Cooperative Agreement	\$12,000.00	\$2,354
USDA-NRCS CIG Invasive Plant Project	\$4,000.00	\$3,043
NACD-TA Outreach Project	\$2,520.00	\$3,960
Trout Sales	\$6,000.00	\$0
Workshops/Education	\$500.00	\$110
District Annual Meeting/Dinner	\$1,000.00	\$0
Interest Income	\$150.00	\$145
MEMIC Dividend	\$45.00	\$45
Tech. Assistance/Evaluations - Billable	\$750.00	\$1,000
Grants and/or Additional Fundraising	\$43,198.00	\$37,270
<b>Total:</b>	<b>\$129,663.00</b>	<b>\$88,241</b>



**Somerset County Soil & Water Conservation District**  
***DRAFT* FY 2023 Budget (July 2022 – June 2023) \***

<b>Expenses</b>	<b>PROPOSED</b>
Payroll [including benefits and taxes]	\$82,700.00
Workers Comp	\$500.00
Office Supplies	\$650.00
IT	\$200.00
IT – Website Hosting	\$400.00
Trout Sales - Item Costs	\$5,000.00
Postage/Printing	\$250.00
Dues	\$2,250.00
Payroll Service	\$1,500.00
Travel/Mileage	\$1,250.00
Meetings/Events/Workshops	\$1,000.00
Election Expense	\$300.00
Training	\$1,000.00
Licenses/Permits	\$300.00
Ag Allies Project	\$5,000.00
District Annual Meeting/Dinner	\$2,000.00
Envirothon	\$350.00
<b>Total:</b>	<b>\$104,650.00</b>
<b>Income</b>	
Somerset County Funding	\$28,500.00
State of ME - Dept. of Ag.	\$25,000.00
USDA- NRCS Contribution Agreements	\$9,000.00
USDA-NRCS CNMP Cooperative Agreement	\$12,000.00
Trout Sale	\$6,000.00
Workshops/Education	\$500.00
Interest Income	\$150.00
MEMIC Dividend	\$45.00
District Annual Meeting/Dinner	\$1,000.00
Tech. Assistance/Evaluations - Billable	\$1,750.00
Grants and/or Additional Fundraising	\$13,000.00
<b>Total:</b>	<b>\$96,945.00</b>

*\*The FY 2023 District Budget is currently under development by the Board Supervisors and Executive Director.*



## Somerset County Soil and Water Conservation District

### 2021 Accomplishments

*For decades, Somerset County SWCD has been a leading local resource for agricultural producers, the forestry industry, and water resource concerns. With the ability to respond quickly to issues as priorities evolve, SCSWCD helps Somerset County participants stay current and updated with state and federal regulations, emerging technology, and options for project/program funding.*

*Whether providing the agricultural community with state required nutrient management plans, or partnering with local, state, and federal agencies to expand conservation opportunities for area land and business owners, we are proud to provide valuable assistance to the citizens in this unique and diverse county.*

**District Website and Social Media (APO Priorities I - VI):** The Outreach Coordinator monitors use and updates with new information and event postings on the District's Web site, Facebook, and Instagram accounts. Social media platforms, launched in 2018 (Facebook) and 2019 (Instagram), enjoyed a spike in visitation in the first year of the pandemic. More recently, visitation has dropped as fewer people look to the Metaverse for factual information. The Web site, too, has pulses of activity driven by event announcements on social media and traditional program offerings (e.g. trout sales). Since the start of the District Outreach Coordinator position in May 2018, the District has greatly increased interaction with the Somerset County community (residents, municipalities, community groups and NGOs). Instagram continues to be a productive tool for building relationships with NGOs and conservation districts across the state and country. T

**Yankee Woodlot Demonstration Forest (APO Priorities II-B, III - V):** The District has continued implementing its approved 10-year management plan for the Demonstration Forest. Working in collaboration with the Maine Forest Service, Maine Woodland Owners, and the UMaine Extension Somerset Office, the District implemented 12 workshops at the Yankee Woodlot in 2020: 1) Pruning and Managing Apple Trees on two dates in February; 2) two birding walks in collaboration with Skowhegan Outdoors in June and September; 3) Forests Pollinator Workshop with NRCS in June; 4) two Wildlife Habitat in Your Woodlands Workshops in July and August; 5) four snowshoe walks in collaboration with Skowhegan Outdoors; and 6) a spring wildflower walk in collaboration with Skowhegan Outdoors in May.

The Yankee Woodlot was used in May for 2 days of technical training for natural resource professionals seeking certification from the Maine Forest Service for Invasive Plant Control Plans. District staff developed survey materials and locations for participants, provided



oversight during the field sessions and reviewed completed materials submitted by participants.

Throughout 2021 District staff performed periodic trail maintenance, utilized trail cameras throughout the property to assist with entries for District social media sites and “The Yankee Woodlot Blog”, and continued forest monitoring at the 4 Picture Post sites on a quarterly basis.

The District teamed with Maine Audubon to create signs that highlight forest management activities and how they benefit birds. These five signs were installed in April 2021.





### **2021 Workshops/Education/Outreach (APO Priority V):**

**Pruning and Managing Apple Trees Workshops** (Collaboration with MFS, UMaine Extension Somerset Office, MWO) – Held February 21 and 27 at the Yankee Woodlot in Skowhegan.

**Forestry for Maine Birds Workshop** (Collaboration with Maine Audubon, Forest Stewards Guild and Old Canada Road Scenic Byway) – Held June 5 at Robbins Hill Overlook in Solon.

**Birding Walks at Yankee Woodlot** (Collaboration with Skowhegan Outdoors) – June 11 and September 19.

**Forest Pollinator Workshop at Yankee Woodlot** (Collaboration with NRCS) – June 20.

**Wildlife Habitat in Your Woodlands Workshop at Yankee Woodlot** (with First Light Wildlife Habitats) – July 31.

**Wildlife Habitat in Your Woodlands Workshop at Yankee Woodlot** (Collaboration with Maine IF&W and Maine Forest Service) – August 10.

**Snowshoe Excursions at Yankee Woodlot** (Collaboration with Skowhegan Outdoors) – Jan. 12, Jan. 31, Feb. 19, March 12

Spring Wildflowers Walk at Yankee Woodlot (Collaboration with Skowhegan Outdoors) – May 22

Invasive Plants ID and Management Walk (Collaboration with Somerset Woods Trustees and Skowhegan Outdoors) – Sept. 27 at Weston Woods & Waters, Madison

**Grassland Bird Habitat Education/Outreach** - Eight scheduled in-person workshops and talks for 2021 were cancelled due to COVID, but two webinars featuring Ag Allies methods and results were held this season. The first, sponsored by the Northeast Bird Habitat Conservation Initiative (NBHCI), was a webinar to showcase [Ag Allies](#) and the [Bobolink Project](#). A discussion following the presentations started exploring the viability of a grassland/working farm/bobolink pilot project in the Northeast. The second webinar, on October 22, *The Power of Birds to Amplify Conservation, Stewardship and Community Outreach*, was provided for the Land Trust Alliance and showcased Ag Allies as one of the success stories.

(<https://www.landtrustalliance.org/webinar/power-birds-amplify-conservation-stewardship-and-community-outreach>)

Facebook, Instagram, and Web site postings of the Ag Allies program ran throughout the summer, both on the SWCD sites and that of Avian Haven Wild Bird Rehabilitation Center. Handouts discussed above were available at all presentations and for download at the District



Web site. District Facebook page posts were shared and linked by project partners and supporters.

### **Technical Development of Staff (APO Priority VI):**

Staff did take advantage of various online based opportunities throughout 2021. Specific technical development activities included:

- Forest Management Webinars –focused on: 1) invasive species (plant and pest) assessment and treatment; 2) Carbon sequestration in forests and management options; 3) woodland management activities for wildlife, water quality protection and silviculture.
- Certified Crop Advisor In-Service Training
- NRCS Technical Trainings
- Climate Resiliency training for conservation professionals
- Naturalist trainings including winter tree identification, pond life in winter, winter tracking, Maine damselflies and dragonflies
- Solar siting to minimize natural resource impacts

### **Expanding Partnerships and Collaborations (APO Priorities – ALL):**

By working with other agencies and groups the District can diversify and expand education and outreach opportunities for Somerset County residents. Examples of 2021 projects/activities with partners include:

- Invasive Forest Pest Project – Partners: DACF, MACD, MWO, MNAP
- Agricultural Allies – Grassland Bird Project – Partners: Davis Foundation, Cornell Land Trust Bird Conservation Initiative, MDIFW, Avian Haven, MACD, Knox-Lincoln SWCD, Waldo County SWCD, Kennebec County SWCD, Cornell Lab of Ornithology, University of New England, Maine Cooperative Extension, Maine Land Trusts (10), Landowners (36).
- Invasive Terrestrial Plant Project – Partners: MNAP, DACF, Kennebec, Waldo, and Knox-Lincoln SWCDs, Landowners (11).
- Yankee Woodlot Demonstration Forest Workshops – Partners: MFS, BPL, Somerset County Office of UMaine Cooperative Extension, MWO, Forest Stewards Guild, Maine Audubon, Skowhegan Outdoors, Maine IF&W



### **Technical Assistance to Landowners & Community (*APO Priorities I-V, VII*):**

Throughout the year the District receives calls, emails, Facebook inquiries, or office visits from county residents, towns, and resource professionals. Many could be directly handled by District staff, while others were forwarded on to other agencies that could provide further assistance.

Examples of technical assistance provided:

- Landowner requests for soil health/vegetation management assistance
- Landowner requests for forestry information or site visits.
- Landowner/public requests for invasive terrestrial plant information and site visits.
- Landowner/public requests for invasive forest pest information and site visits.
- Landowner/public requests for wildlife habitat information, ex. grassland birds, early successional habitat
- Landowner requests for pond management assistance, ex. algal blooms, fish health, site visits
- Landowner requests for erosion control assistance via site visits
- Public requests about PFAS testing in soil and well water. All inquiries were directed to Maine DACF or environmental NGO assisting communities.
- Public requests for information on well water quality testing, septic system site design, and activities within shoreland zones. All such inquiries are directed to the appropriate state/federal agencies.
- Farmland registration program – DACF program that District performs initial review of application materials.



### Conservation Innovation Grant (CIG) – Invasive Terrestrial Plant Management (APO – Priority II-B):

The District has teamed with the Maine Natural Areas Program and the Kennebec, Knox-Lincoln, and Waldo Districts for a three-year project (2019-2021) that provides invasive plant surveys and reports, with focused management recommendations to landowners in an effort to provide assistance with control of invasive terrestrial plant species in woodlands.

Invasive terrestrial plant species in woodlands have a negative impact on the regeneration of native plant and tree species as well as wildlife habitat. Examples of invasive plant species found in Somerset County are shrubby honeysuckles (*Lonicera* spp.), Japanese barberry (*Berberis thunbergii*), Japanese knotweed (*Fallopia japonica*), and Asiatic bittersweet (*Celastrus orbiculatus*).

The District surveyed five woodland properties in 2019, another 12 properties in 2020, and 7 properties in 2021. The program has been well

received by landowners in all counties that are participating in the project. Though the program came to completion in 2021, the District is investigating other opportunities to provide this opportunity to Somerset County landowners.



### Ag Allies – Grassland Bird Project (APO Priorities IV, VII):

The Ag Allies program focuses on the protection and enhancement of habitat for grassland bird species, most of which are species of special concern in Maine, as well as, throughout their North American range. Grassland habitat is disappearing fast (*State of the Birds Report, 2016* ([www.stateofthebirds.org](http://www.stateofthebirds.org)), and the birds of our grasslands are disappearing just as fast, with an overall decline of 53% in the last 50 years, the most dramatic loss experienced by any of the





major bird families (Rosenberg et al., 2019, *Science*). One third of all grassland species in North America, including the Bobolink (*Dolichonyx oryzivorus*), were on the 2016 State of the Birds

*Watchlist*. This list includes species most at risk of extinction without significant conservation action. More specifically, in Maine, Bobolinks have declined at a rate of -2.97% annually between 1966 and 2005. This annual decline increases to -3.28% when considering just the most recent decade of data, 2005-2015 (Dr. Noah Perlut, pers. comm. 2016).

Ag Allies works with local landowners and land trusts to increase the nesting success of grassland birds through on-farm incentive payments, technical assistance, outreach, and education. The program empowers landowners land trusts to make sustainable bird-friendly management changes on their land; and improve the opportunity for nesting success of grassland birds in Maine. Accomplishments this year include:

1. Help interested farmers, landowners, and land trusts to identify grassland bird breeding habitat and implement practices to protect/improve that habitat: This was accomplished through assessment of fields and implementation of best-fit management practices to integrate farm and wildlife needs.
2. Set up field refurbishment demonstration areas to showcase practices to improve grassland habitat quality. This was accomplished through work with Kennebec Land Trust (KLT) and Georges River Land Trust (GRLT) on designated fields.
3. Provide education and outreach: This was accomplished through one-on-one farm/field site visits to provide technical assistance to landowners and land trusts; educational presentations; articles/media on project highlights and the needs of grassland birds in Maine; production and dissemination of targeted fact sheets and nesting signs for habitat properties.

Specific tasks accomplished to meet objectives:

- On-site grassland bird nesting habitat conservation/creation and tracking: Worked with interested field managers across the state to make best-fit management changes for grassland bird habitat. This involved on-farm assessments to identify fields in use by bobolinks and other grassland birds, followed by discussion of options for bird-friendly management changes. Farmer incentive payments (provided by grants from Cornell Lab of Ornithology and the John Sage Foundation) were used as needed to encourage the use of the program and help offset the cost of management changes.
  - Worked with 10 land trusts, providing both technical and financial assistance. Assistance included: site assessments, grassland management and habitat workshops, signage, and support for habitat quality improvement. Adopted practices included adding delayed mowing to lease agreements, changing location of walking paths, and implementation of leashed dog policy during nesting season.
  - Worked with 36 individual landowners/farmers including dairy, beef, horse, and sheep farmers this year to provide nesting habitat for grassland birds.
  - Worked with 4 additional entities, including the University of Maine, municipalities, and Conservation Commissions.
  - Enrolled over 780 acres in habitat protection through work with a total of 50 participants.
  - Protected habitat resulted in the fledging of an estimated 1450 Bobolinks, 590 Savannah Sparrows, 10 meadowlarks, 4 harriers, and 4 bitterns!
  - 2021 Bird species and numbers were entered into Cornell Lab of Ornithology's Ebird database for research and conservation purposes.



Female bobolink at Singing Pastures Farm, Newcastle



- Field Refurbishment for demonstration areas
  - Worked on improving two land trust demonstration field sites:
    - 20-acre Kennebec Land Trust ‘Surry Hill’ field in Fayette: Field was soil tested spring of 21 and then limed (according to soil test recommendations) and partially re-seeded (according to recommendations from Rick Kersbergen, Crop Advisor and University of Maine Cooperative Extension Service specialist). KLT field will be fertilized next season (2022), after the lime has had a chance to improve soil pH.
    - 40-acre ‘Riverview fields’ at Georges River Land Trust: The GRLT site required no additional lime. Fertilizer recommended by Rick Kersbergen, Cooperative Extension Specialist has been purchased and is on site for spreading in spring of 2022. This site has already hosted to a well-attended summer Walk and Talk event.
    - Both sites will be utilized for further outreach activities in the coming seasons.
  
- Community and landowner outreach:
  - Produced and installed habitat signs: Installed grassland habitat signs on participating fields. Using SWG funding, we were able to supply recipients with signs pre-mounted on metal posts to ensure easy and timely display at habitat locations.
  - Worked with Land Trusts to provide outreach to conservation easement owners: Partnered with GRLT to produce a joint letter (with educational handouts included) specifically targeting grassland-owning conservation easement properties. As a result of positive response to these letters, we conducted 10 preliminary site visits for participation in next year’s program. Partnered more informally with KLT constituents through KLT referral of interested parties, which resulted in an additional 4 program participants (2 in 2020 and 2 for 2022).



Josh Hatley, Whittier Farm Manager, University of Maine



- Provided educational presentations and distributed educational handouts: Educational presentations on grassland birds and their habitat were given to the public, farming community and land trusts to help them understand the needs of grassland birds and possibilities for integrating those needs into working landscapes. Talks in 2021 included: 5 grassland bird specific presentations for land trust and conservation commission events, 3 of which were field based 'Walk and Talk' events; 5 general bird conservation presentations (in partnership with Avian Haven Wild Bird Rehabilitation Center) during which grassland birds and Ag Allies was discussed as part of the program. Handouts discussed above were available at all presentations
- Provided outreach articles and posts: Facebook, Instagram and Web site postings of the Ag Allies program ran throughout the summer, both on the SWCD sites and that of Avian Haven Wild Bird Rehabilitation Center. District Facebook posts were shared and linked by project partners and supporters. Maine Land Trust Network featured Ag Allies program information in their spring e-newsletter. The University of Maine produced outreach for the program as part of our partnership with the Whittier farm. The resulting article was disseminated at University outlets and added to the Maine Beef Council newsletter this summer. Finally, Ag Allies as a 'success story' has been the subject of two recent interviews, through Cornell Lab of Ornithology and the Northeast Bird Habitat Conservation Initiative through Highstead.



Maeve McGowan speaking at GRLT Grassland Habitat Walk and Talk



#### Follow up work:

- As part of our formal collaboration with Cornell Land Trust Bird Conservation Initiative, this year, we participated in a Cornell grant that included the use of Ag Allies as a pilot program model for grassland bird conservation in the northeast. This is the first step in a multi-year plan to create a northeast region conservation partnership for grassland bird habitat. We will continue working with Cornell LTBCI towards this goal in 2022.
- This year, Ag Allies participated in outreach efforts beyond state borders, with organizations such as New York's Open Space Institute; the Hudson Valley Farm HUB and the Grassland Bird Trust of NY. Additionally, Ag Allies personnel served in advisory capacity to efforts with the Piedmont Grassland Bird Initiative and 'Saving Southern Maryland's Grassland Birds through Bird-friendly Mowing' through MD Audubon and other partners. All of these connections will be fostered going forward as we continue to collaborate across state borders to help grassland birds.
- The Ag Allies program worked with the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) state office biologist to include grassland birds in the NRCS Environmental Quality Incentive Program's 'Pollinator Initiative' starting this year. Collaborative work was done this season in Franklin and Aroostook Counties and will be expanding in coming years.
- We will continue working with land managers of priority grasslands across Maine.
- We will continue providing signage to help showcase bird-friendly grasslands and help spread the grassland bird conservation message.
- We will continue working with land trust and other partners to create demonstration areas for education on grassland management.
- We will partner with USFW on pollinator habitat and a possible research project looking at warm season grass establishment in the 2022 season.



### **Nutrient Management Plans (APO Priority I-C):**

The District continued writing State Nutrient Management Plans (NMPs) for local producers in Somerset County this year.

NMPs written by the District satisfy the requirements for the State of Maine Nutrient Management Law and protect producers under [Maine's Right to Farm Law](#). Plans help farmers with the proper storage, management and utilization of both on and off farm nutrients. The District's Technical Director, a certified Crop Advisor (International) and state licensed Nutrient Management Planner, is currently working with farmers in Somerset and surrounding counties to either update their existing NMPs or to develop an initial NMP.

### **Envirothon (APO Priority V):**

The Maine Envirothon is an international science competition with a focus on natural resources. SWCDs statewide have held the events since the program came to Maine, and the event has grown annually. Somerset County SWCD, as part of the Mid-Maine region, provides assistance and support to the event. In 2021 the Maine Envirothon was held as a virtual event due to Covid-19 protocols.

### **CSP/EQIP Activities with NRCS (APO Priorities – ALL):**

Somerset County SWCD maintains a close partnership with **USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)** at the Skowhegan Service Center. Through operational agreements, as well as contribution agreements, we often work in tandem to better serve the natural resource needs of Somerset County. In 2021, we worked on a multi-purpose contribution agreement with NRCS to provide both administrative and technical program assistance. These agreements provide additional conservation assistance to Somerset County participants and provide SCSWCD with supplemental operational funding.



District Contribution Agreement Assistance to NRCS programs this year was with the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP), Agricultural Management Assistance Program (AMA) and the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP). Fifty-four Somerset County producers (approximately \$1,200,000 in funds) in the three programs were assisted through this cooperative agreement in 2021.



**Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plan (CNMP) Activities with NRCS (*AP0 Priorities – I-A, I-C*):**



In 2017 SCSWCD entered into a five-year Cooperative Agreement with the NRCS to provide technical services focused on the development of Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plans (CNMPs) for producers in counties throughout Central Maine. As the District's Technical Director is certified in nutrient management planning this agreement is a direct result of the professional staff employed at the District and the Supervisors' focus on continuing technical development for staff. This agreement fully reimburses the District for all staff time and

mileage associated with the development of CNMPs, which includes: farm site visits, soil tests, plan development, and project administration. In 2021 the District's Technical Director worked on seven different CNMPs in multiple counties including Waldo, Hancock, Somerset, and Kennebec.