



Nassau County Soil & Water Conservation District



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A Message from the District Manager

The Nassau County Soil and Water Conservation District (The District) engages with residents and community groups across Nassau County to help promote environmental conservation efforts and provide access to vital state funding for community organizations. 2023 was no exception, and the District is happy to present its 2023 Nassau County SCWD Newsletter! This document not only highlights the success of the District over the last calendar year, but also, and perhaps even more importantly, it showcases the work and dedication of our project partners. From the triumph of the 2023 Long Island Regional Envirothon, to the ongoing success of Nassau County's S.E.P.T.I.C. Program, the District is proud of the work we have accomplished with our partners to help safeguard Nassau County's unique landscapes and resources. We look forward to continued collaborations in 2024 and offer our thanks and congratulations to everyone who helped make 2023 such a success!



MEET THE TEAM



NCSWCD Staff

Derek Betts District Manager
 Olivia Cunningham Conservation Technician
 Sean Rooney Conservation Technician
 Yoan Carrillo Bookkeeper

NCSWCD Board of Directors

Tara Schneider Board Chair
 Eric Swenson Treasurer
 Patricia Aitken Secretary
 Meagan Fastuca Vice Chair
 Reese Michaels Board Member
 Mary Studdert Board Member
 Lou Imbroto Board Member

S.E.P.T.I.C. REPLACEMENT PROGRAM

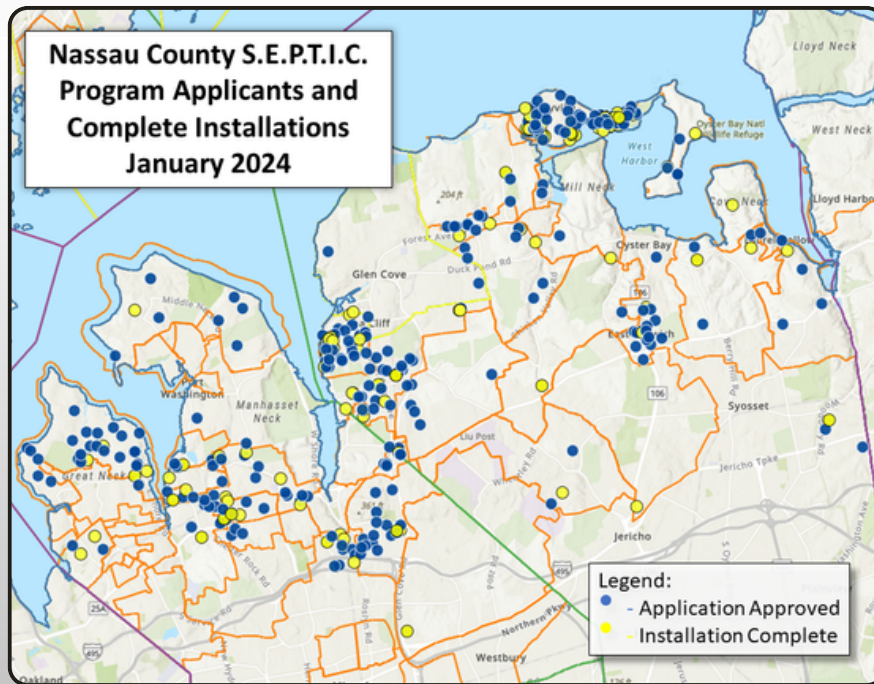


nassauswcd.org/SEPTIC

The Nassau County S.E.P.T.I.C. Replacement program aims to reduce nitrogen pollution by helping LI homeowners replace their conventional cesspools and septic systems with nitrogen-reducing septic systems. By providing up to \$20,000 in grant funding per property, this program has successfully installed over 115 nitrogen-reducing septic systems throughout Nassau County. Antiquated wastewater technology is one of the greatest threats to clean water on Long Island--we hope to continue this project for years to come!



Olivia Cunningham pictured with IA System.



District meets with elected officials in DC to discuss L.I. Sound issues and IA septic system funding.

Program funds allocated

\$2.3 Million



117 IA Septic Systems installed



IA System Install at Locust Valley Library.

INSTALLATION AT THE LOCUST VALLEY LIBRARY

The District has a strong collaborative relationship with the Locust Valley Library, and a number of District events have been hosted at their location, including a Coastal Erosion Forum and a SEPTIC Smart Week conference. In 2023, the Locust Valley Library further supported the District by becoming the first municipal property in Nassau County to participate in the Septic Replacement Program. The occasion was memorialized by a press release with former County Presiding Officer Richard Nicoletto and Legislator Mazi Pilip.



Nassau County S.E.P.T.I.C Smart Day.



JUSTIN JOBIN SPOTLIGHT

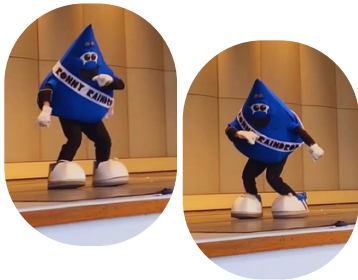
Justin Jobin of Costal Wastewater Solutions, LLC has served as the SEPTIC Program’s wastewater specialist since 2021. He has worked tirelessly to provide guidance on the safe installation of nitrogen-reducing septic systems across Nassau County, and the success of the program to-date has relied heavily on his 20+ years of experience in the industry. The District looks forward to a renewed partnership in 2024.



LONG ISLAND REGIONAL ENVIROTHON

Event Hosted April 26th, 2023 longislandenvirothon.org

The Long Island Regional Envirothon is organized jointly by the Nassau and Suffolk County Soil and Water Conservation Districts, but our success can be attributed to the countless volunteers who donate their time annually to help. Special thanks to participating environmental professionals that help keep the spirit of the Envirothon alive by inspiring students. We're looking forward to our next Envirothon to be held on April 17th, 2024!

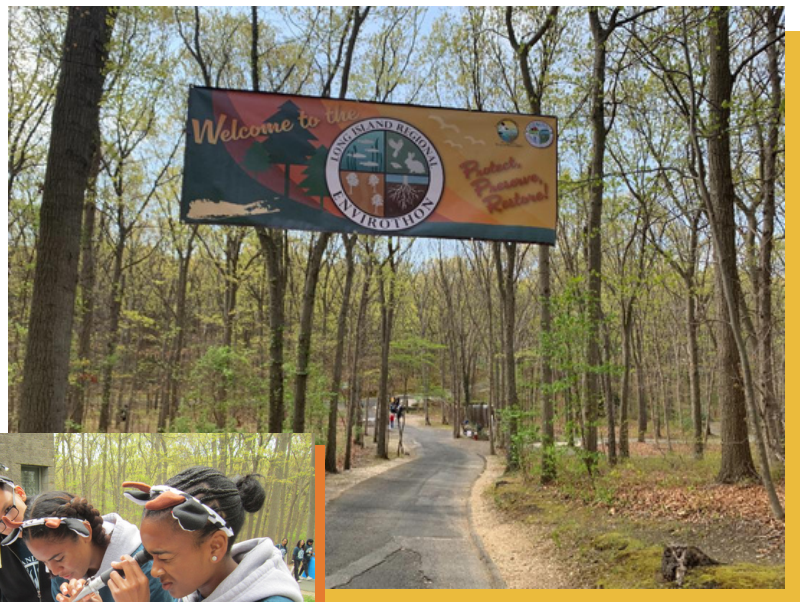


The winners of the 2023 Long Island Regional Envirothon were the Chaminade High School "Horseshoe Crabs" and the Half Hollow Hills East High School "Wild Turkeys" - Congratulations to the winning teams!

Watch out for Ronny the Raindrop!

Participating Schools

- Baldwin Senior High School
- Bellport Academic Center
- Center Moriches High School
- Chaminade High School
- Commack High School
- Division Ave High School
- Garden City High School
- Gen Douglas MacArthur HS
- Great Neck HS North
- Great Neck HS South
- Half Hollow Hills East HS
- Harborfields High School
- Longwood High School
- Wyandanch High School
- Long Beach High School
- Riverhead High School



Thank You to our Event Sponsors
If you're interested in making a contribution to future Envirothon Events, please reach out to us at (516) 364-5860 or email info@nassauswcd.org



A DAY IN THE LIFE OF AN ESTUARY

A Day in the Life is a program organized by the South Shore Estuary Reserve that focuses on environmental education, community engagement, and water-quality monitoring. Geared towards students from local middle and high schools, the main goal of the project is to run single-day field trips to sites around Long Island's South Shore where students are given the opportunity to collect water quality samples, learn about ecosystem services, monitor the tides, and engage with local flora & fauna.

Marine Nature Study Area



Thanks to Town of Hempstead Biologist Mike Farina for assisting with seine netting and species identification.



Jones Beach Boat Basin

The District hosted two ADITL events this year - one at the Marine Nature Study Area in Oceanside on November 3rd and another at the Jones Beach Boat Basin on May 31st. These events were attended by high school and college students from Westbury High School and SUNY Old Westbury College.

The students were able to learn more about local tides, currents, turbidity, water quality and study marine organisms.



nassauswcd.org/A-Day-In-The-Life

SAPLING GIVEAWAY

Arbor Day event providing free tree saplings to community members



Our annual sapling giveaway was hosted on Arbor Day, April 28th, 2023. The giveaway was sponsored by Bartlett Tree Experts, and provided over 50 saplings to the community, along with educational material on proper plant selection and planting techniques!

This event was hosted at our District offices in Nassau Hall, inside Nassau County's largest nature preserve, the Muttontown Preserve.

Monarchs and Milkweed

Monarch populations and their habitat in Nassau County have rapidly declined due to land development, pesticide spraying, and natural areas reduction. Monarch butterflies play a crucial role in our ecosystem and are an important part of the local food web. Monarch caterpillars feed exclusively on milkweed plants, making common milkweed (*Asclepias syriaca*) an essential plant for Monarch butterfly survival. One of the easiest and most effective ways to help restore and maintain the local Monarch population is to plant native Milkweed.



TOWN OF NORTH HEMPSTEAD PLANT REBATE

Part C Project run by Board Member Meagan Fastuca supporting native plantings in Town of North Hempstead



The NCSWCD provided reimbursement to Town of North Hempstead Residents who purchased native plants to create native plant gardens and raingardens. These native plants will provide food, shelter and nesting resources for a variety of wildlife species, including birds, pollinators, and small mammals.

Native plants have a multitude of environmental benefits, including but not limited to extensive root systems that absorb polluted stormwater, carbon sequestration, reduced maintenance requirements, and a reduced need for fertilizer, mowing, and irrigation.

To learn more visit northhempsteadny.gov/np

REMOVAL OF INVASIVE SPECIES AND HYDROSEEDING AT CEDARMERE PRESERVE



The seed mix used for hydroseeding:

- 20% Virginia Wildrye, 19.8% Big Bluestem,
- 18.9% Little Bluestem, 13% Switchgrass,
- 2.8% Partridge Pea, 2.5% Blackeyed Susan, 1.4% Showy Ticktrefoil,
- (>.2% Common Milkweed, Wild Bergamont),
- (>.1% Heath Aster, Roundhead Lespedeza, Mountainmint, Goldenrod)

The Friends of Cedarmere began a program for invasive species removal in 2014 which was supported in part by funding from NCSWCD. Over the years, many native trees and shrubs have been planted and established on the Cedarmere property, but excessive growth of invasive species threatens these plantings annually. To protect these native plantings, invasive trees of all sizes in natural areas have been removed.

This Project covered a total area of 20,000 ft sq. Hydroseeding with native grasses and flowers was used to help control the regrowth of invasive ground cover plants such as English ivy.

Learn more about the Cedarmere Preserve
www.friendsofcedarmere.org

THE REINTRODUCTION OF A PRESCRIBED FIRE REGIMEN AT THE HEMPSTEAD PLAINS

The NCSWCD provided funding to the Friends of Hempstead Plains for the reintroduction of prescribed fire burns at the Hempstead Plains Preserve. As the last remaining example of Long Island Tallgrass Prairie, the Preserve contains over 200 native plant species, 14 of which are rare. Prescribed burns have historically been used to help support the growth of endangered, fire-dependent species.

The Hempstead Plains Project area covered a 5-acre section of Hempstead Plains Grassland community dominated by little blue stem and goldenrods, with pockets of successional scrubland habitat and general overgrowth. It also included a 1-acre plot in which the globally endangered, fire-dependent Sandplain Gerardia grows.

Learn more at www.friendsofhp.org



Prescribed fire has not been used at the Hempstead Plains since the 1990s.

The 2023 burns were a success, and we look forward to observing the longer-term effects of the project into 2024.

MUTTONTOWN PRESERVE

Muttontown Preserve is Nassau County's largest nature preserve, and consists of over 550 acres of flowering meadows, vernal pools carved by glacial activity, and forests containing historical ruins. It also hosts a wide range of unique wildlife and one of the largest collections of pine trees in Long Island. NCSWCD has worked to develop the preserve trail system, manage invasive species, plant native species, and create a new preserve map and brochure.

Read more by visiting nassauswcd.org/Muttontown-Preserve

FLORA & FAUNA
Much of the Preserve is made up of a Hybrid Ecosystems a combination of Virginia Oakwoods and wetlands. The Rhododendrons found along the paved road West of Trail Markers 37 and 40 and the Beech Trees at Markers 24 and 34 are most likely remnants from Knollwood Estate Ornamental Plantings.

Most of the under and middle-story of the forest is made up of invasive plants: the Burning Bush, Wintercreeper, Mile-a-Minute, Mugwort, Garlic Mustard, English Ivy and Multiflora Rose. Another poisonous invasive found throughout Nassau is the Norway Maple. It introduced fast-growing species that is prone to falling due to its shallow root structure.

The cast of native animals you might see at the Preserve includes Chipmunks, groundhogs, squirrels, opossums, badgers, green frogs & spotted salamanders.

VERNAL POOLS
The Preserve is full of evidence for the early glacial activity that formed the topography of present-day Long Island. Rocky soils and uneven, glacially carved depressions create spaces for rainwater and melting snow to collect. These Vernal Pools are seasonal bodies of freshwater devoid of fish-allowing for the safe breeding of reptile and amphibian species.

These pools are mostly dry in summer and fall, wet through winter and spring and serve as important nurseries of the forest. Vernal pools create unique ecological conditions and are seen as threatened species.

Green Frog
Listed as a threatened species by the EPA.

HISTORY OF THE PRESERVE
The name found throughout the North side of the Muttontown Preserve were once the grand Knollwood Estate—a Gilded Age country-house commissioned by NYC stock magnate Charles L. Hudson. (Trail Marker 34)

King Zog, however never ended up setting foot on the Estate—instead electing to spend his remaining years sailing throughout European cities.

King Zog, however never ended up setting foot on the Estate—instead electing to spend his remaining years sailing throughout European cities.

Nassau County opted to demolish much of the estate for safety reasons, but remnants of the great house are still scattered throughout the Preserve.

The Muttontown Preserve also features The Chelsea Estate and the Bill Peterson Nature Center—both donated by Mrs. Alexandra Moore McKay in the late 1900s. Bill Peterson, who the Nature Center is named for, was its first Naturalist and Supervisor.

BRUCE A. BLAKEMAN
NASSAU COUNTY EXECUTIVE

The Muttontown Preserve
History, Ecology + Trail Map
Provided by the Nassau County Soil & Water Conservation District

1 (916) 364-5880
www.nassauswcd.org

Part C funding made it possible to purchase a UTV and shed for the district office in the Muttontown Preserve, playing a vital role in the transport of critical tools and materials.

Message center installed this year to house maps and brochures.



The future goals for the Muttontown Preserve will include performing erosion control, monitoring for new and emerging invasive species, and providing areas for environmental education.



Piebald whitetail deer photographed in the Muttontown Preserve.



Conservation Technician Sean Rooney meeting with Naturalist Al Lindberg and local volunteer Bob Chapman.



GARVIES POINT MUSEUM AND PRESERVE



This project aimed to enhance and restore soils by removing invasive species and planting approximately 750 native grassland plugs. Planting native species establishes a diverse root system that provides erosion control, improved stormwater infiltration, and increased nutrient uptake, resulting in healthier soils for insects and small mammals.

LEEDS POND PRESERVE FOREST RESTORATION



Before

After



The Invasive Plant Removal and Native Plant Revegetation of Leeds Pond Preserve was made possible with funding from NCSWCD. The Science Museum of Long Island worked with Spadefoot Design and Construction to complete this project with the goal of clearing two acres of invasive plants such as Japanese Knotweed, English Ivy and Norway Maple. The area was then replanted with resilient native species as part of an ongoing, multi-year project aimed at rehabilitating the area's native biosphere.

BUTTERFLY GARDEN & MURAL AT BAXTER'S POND

The Butterfly Garden project showcases the importance of native habitat restoration, the lifecycle of native butterfly species, and the role each individual has in sustaining biodiversity, and includes a butterfly mural that will draw pedestrians to the park for a chance at a selfie. Three key pocket areas within sight of the mural have been planted with sun-loving pollinator friendly species.

Baxter's Pond hosts an annual "Paint at the Pond for Kids" event with a focus on native butterflies and the habitat created at Baxter's Pond. This project will help visitors recognize beneficial plants and understand how native species can be supported in an attractive and enjoyable public setting.



COMMUNITY OUTREACH AND EDUCATION

Overview of Events / Volunteering / Meetings

The NCSWCD participated in local and regional forums to assist with conservation education and outreach and to better understand current environmental conditions as they relate to Nassau County.

Additional events and meetings include:

NYS Open Space Planning, Long Island Nitrogen Action Plan, Conservation District Employees Association, Re-Leaf, DEC Water Chesnut Pull, Long Island Native Plant Initiative Grasslands Symposium, National Onsite Wastewater Recycling Association Conference.



NYS ISA Certified Arborist Olivia Cunningham teaching Merrick residents proper tree care and identification. A second educational walk was also hosted in Freeport. These two events were in collaboration with Wild Ones - a nonprofit focused on promoting environmental education and conservation programs on Long Island.

- SEEKING VOLUNTEERS -

Interested in protecting your local resources? Looking for a chance to give back to your community?

The Nassau County Soil and Water Conservation District is currently seeking volunteers to help implement various environmental projects. No experience required. Weekend opportunities available.

For more information and a listing of volunteer opportunities visit nassauswcd.org

Call us at 516-364-5860 or send an email to srooney@nassauswcd.org

NYS SWCC PART C FUNDED PROJECTS

List of all Part C Projects completed in 2023

- **Butterfly Garden & Mural at Baxter's Pond** - Baxter's Pond Foundation
- **The Reintroduction of Fire at the Hempstead Plains** - Friends of Hempstead Plains
- **Garvies Point Museum and Preserve Meadow Restoration** - Garvies Point Museum and Preserve
- **Science Museum of Long Island Leeds Pond Preserve Forest Restoration** - Science Museum of Long Island
- **Scudder's Pond Invasives Control and Native Planting** - Hempstead Harbor Protection Committee
- **Removal of Invasive Species and Hydroseeding** - The Friends of Cedarmere Preserve
- **Town of North Hempstead Native Plant Residential Rebate Program 2023** - Town of North Hempstead
- **Monarchs & Milkweed at the Muttontown Preserve** - Nassau County SWCD
- **Restoration and Education at the Muttontown Preserve** - Nassau County SWCD
- **A Day in the Life of an Estuary** - Nassau County SWCD

SAYING GOODBYE

The District Staff said goodbye to valuable team member Tom Parisi this year. Tom (pictured right) spent his time as a conservation technician helping with GIS analysis, agricultural assessments, project management optimization and the creation of maps, graphics and logos for events such as the Long Island Regional Envirothon. During his time here Tom studied urban forestry and land use planning, and became FAA remote control drone certified. We wish for his success, happiness and prosperity in the future.



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