

## What is the Conservation District?

By: Linda K. Schneider

Emily Miller, a part time employee of NRCS, asked the hard questions while I supplied the answers. Below is what transpired.

### *What is the Ottauquechee Natural Resources Conservation District?*

The Ottauquechee Natural Resources Conservation District (ONRCD) was established in 1944 under Vermont law. There are 14 Conservation Districts in the State of Vermont. We are one of more than 3,000 Conservation Districts throughout the United States that have worked with landowners and communities for over half a century on a voluntary basis, to maintain and protect soil and water resources.

### *Who is the Conservation District?*

The District staff is made up of a District Manager and a voluntary Board of Directors. Linda K. Schneider is the District Manager, who organizes programs and does the office administration. The Board of Directors is made up of concerned citizens from a variety of towns in the District. The members of this Board include: George Miller, Ann Debevoise, Jay Van Arman, Ellen Terie, Deborah Donahue, and Susan Greenall. The Board meets once per month, on the first Wednesday of each month, to keep the District on task.

### *Who do they serve?*

We serve 19 towns, which include all towns in Windsor County and Killington in Rutland County.

### *What does the District do?*

Maybe our mission statement says it best. **OUR MISSION STATEMENT:**

The Mission of the Ottauquechee Conservation District is to advocate for environmentally sound use and protection of air, soil, water, agricultural, woodland and wildlife resources for all residents of the 19 town District by:

Fostering public awareness and appreciation of the value and necessity to conserve natural resources for current and future generations, and

Providing local leadership that advances environmental stewardship through education and non-regulatory assistance.

What we do NOT DO should be said as well. ONRCD IS NOT A REGULATORY AGENCY. Our goal is to provide wise land management conservation information, technical support and assistance to landowners. This allows them to make voluntary land management decisions for the protection and conservation of their soil and water resources.

### *What is the District's focus?*

Environmental Education is the key focus of the ONRCD at this time. Two categories fall under that key focus: Water Quality and Sustainable Agriculture. The focus changes with the needs of the local communities and priorities are ever changing.

### *How is the District funded?*

The State of Vermont starts our fiscal year in July, with a small sum to get the District started. We are responsible for fundraising through grants and donations to cover all programs and projects.

### *What are this year's programs?*

Educational programs that meet the needs of landowners, schools & communities

- Conservation tours
- Educational workshops
- Farmer Discussion Groups
- Community Discussion Groups
- Pasture Walks
- Legislative contacts
- Annual Conservation tree sale(Bare rootstock at low cost)

Discussion groups are open to the public and held quarterly. October's discussion group topic is: *Don't Burn Vermont*. What will be discussed: what to burn, what not to burn; when to burn, when not to burn; outdoor wood furnace regulations; farm recycling of agricultural plastics. South Woodstock Fire Station Oct 26 11am to 12:30pm

### *What are this year's projects?*

#### Nutrient Management Plans

All Vermont farms will soon be required to have a Nutrient Management Plan. The Districts are helping to make farmers aware of this new requirement and provide some technical assistance. Three Land Treatment Planners have been hired to help farmers with this task in Vermont. We are hoping to secure a grant to fund this project.

#### Basin Planning for Watersheds

We are hoping to secure a grant to fund this project.

#### Pomfret Brook Project

This project, in its initial stages, will partner with National Wildlife Federation and Friends of Pomfret Brook. Goal: To stop erosion on Pomfret Brook by doing a vegetation planting project and riparian corridor management.

### *Who are your Partners?*

If you can think of a group that has an environmental focus, we can partner with them. One of our key partners is NRCS. They provide the technical assistance needed to get the jobs done. The list is endless, but to name a few: UVM Extension, VINS, Montshire Museum, Vital Communities, National Wildlife Federation, The Vermont Nature Conservancy, Department of Environmental Conservation, Agency of Agriculture, Trout Unlimited.....

*How do people find you?*

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