

Eastern Rhode Island Conservation District

Annual Report
July 1, 2007-June 30, 2008



The Eastern District... Progressive Preservation, Stewardship, Conservation of Farmland and Open Spaces

Our Mission:

To provide information and technical assistance in order to encourage the people of Newport and Bristol Counties to conserve their natural resources and foster farm viability.

Directors:

Emerson Wildes Acting Chairman
Little Compton

Richard Hart Treasurer
Tiverton

Walter Elwell
Little Compton

Suzanne Hourihan
Portsmouth

David Brown
Newport

Associate Directors:

Norma Elwell
Little Compton

Ron Mucci
Tiverton

District Staff:

Tom Sandham District Manager

Linda Wildes Office Assistant

Our Focus:

The Eastern RI Conservation District (ERICD) is dedicated to helping the local residents of Jamestown, Newport, Middletown, Portsmouth, Tiverton, Little Compton, Bristol, Warren and Barrington with their natural resource concerns. Land, water, air, plants and animals; and the way they interact with our culture, create a legacy for future generations. ERICD works to create a relationship between our natural resource and our personal, community, and economic needs. Preserving our past, enjoying our present, and planning for our future must foster interactions that balanced all aspects of our surroundings for the benefit of our local communities.

ERICD will address any natural resource concern, no matter how large or small. We place emphasis on protecting and enhancing our open spaces, encouraging agricultural enterprises, and improving our precious water- in both our inland watersheds and our marine bay system (yes-for us in Eastern RI that includes the Sakonnet River). The ERICD is a non regulatory agency whose purpose is to HELP individuals achieve their goals for enhancing their living and natural surroundings.



Jean Helger Bento

Conservation Farmer of 2007-08

Jean Helger Bento, owner of Patchet Brook Farm in Tiverton, recently was named the ERICD Farmer of the Year. The award was presented for the improvements made on her farm. These include installing drainage ditches and detention ponds and planting cover crops to control erosion, install deer fencing around her younger Christmas trees and working to control invasive plants that reduce farm productivity. Jean worked with District Manager, Tom Sandham and NRCS technician Peter Bonome, who helped her obtain technical guidance, as well as with obtaining some financial assistance from the state office of NRCS. In addition to Christmas trees, Jean also has pumpkins for sale and gives hayrides on her farm in the fall.

Great District Doings

January started the planning for the Sakonnet Growers Market at Pardon Gray Preserve. There were 16 full time and over 10 part time participants. It was very well received and successful in its first season. –The District voted to support “No Child Left Inside” to encourage children to go outside and explore the environment. –The District continues to serve as a technical service provider for individuals that are not part of an NRCS EQUIP or WHIP Program. This year 68 clients were assisted. Some of the areas assistance was given in are: organic gardens, organic hay-fields, irrigation, development rights, FFOS, animal heavy use areas, hay/pasture, invasive plants, natural resources/wildlife, wetlands, agricultural business, dairy, beef, free range poultry, pond maintenance, farm/animal trails, brush management, nutrient management, fences, composting, buffers, stream crossing, wells, farm design, vegetable gardens, and erosion. The District was also involved in assisting NRCS with 16 EQUIP and WHIP projects. –The District sponsored a GAP (Good Agricultural Practice) training for 6 individuals that were direct marketing produce. The URI Extension Service provided the trainers. –The District not only supports landowners and agriculturists but also supports youth agriculture groups like 4-H, FFA, RI Envirothon and Garden Clubs. –The Board members still feel that a no-till seeder would be a positive piece of equipment for farmers to have access to in our District. After much research and looking for grant money, the project is on hold. –As in the past, the Eastern Conservation District was at the Agriculture Day, May 6, at the State House with a good display and with District Manager Tom answering many questions. –With the increase of area residents, the Eastern District voted to become a member of the RI Ag. Council, as this will help in working with other organizations. –The District voted to take on the “Aquatic Invasives Contract”. This program will help clean the water in our lakes and ponds. –ERICD is working with RI Potato Growers to market their potatoes under the name “Rhody Royal” and to control their own distribution.

A new word for your dictionary

Locavore- [loh-kuh-vawr]-noun A person whose diet focuses on foods grown and produced nearby, typically 100 miles. Robin wanted to be a locavore, so he only bought food that was grown on local farms.



Canada Geese

Canada geese have been raising havoc up and down the Eastern seaboard. Eastern's Director, Dick Hart, took a personal interest in the problem by trying to find a cover crop that the geese didn't like. One crop of interest turned out to be peas. His trials are still on going. Also the District assisted NRCS State Technical Team initiate a program to review the damage caused by the geese. The "Cropland Protection from Canada Geese" committee was chaired by the District manager.



Rye and peas planted, only peas remain

Annual Meeting

The Annual Meeting of ERICD was held Oct. 30, 2008 at the Portsmouth Senior Center and was catered by the Newport County Pomona Grange #4. The speakers for the evening were Bob Chew of SolarWrights in Bristol, RI and Chuck Dubuc from USDA. Bob gave a presentation of some of the solar applications his

Company has done and then Chuck spoke about how USDA could help finance those projects.

District Helping District

In the spring, the Southern District realized they were in financial trouble. They requested the Eastern Manager look over their finances. It became clear that there was a definite problem. In July Southern District asked that the Eastern Manager also manage the Southern District in an Agreement with the Eastern District. Tom worked in the Eastern office his regular 3 days a week and then an additional day or two, as needed, for Southern. The Southern office in Wakefield was closed and moved to Tom's barn office. All Southern employees were let go. Southern estimated that they would again be able to hire a District Manager of its own in a few months. During this time the yearly legislative funding for 2008-2009 was set for \$20,781.66. This is not enough to carry on the activity of the Districts as has been done in the past. Also during this time gas prices hit over \$4.00 a gallon. When the Southern District advertised for a new District Manager, the Eastern Manager, who actually lives in the Southern District, decided he needed to apply for the Southern Manager job. Tom was hired by Southern. With so little money in the budget, Eastern Directors decided to ask Southern District Directors if they could hire Tom for up to seven hours per week to work for the Eastern District. This is the arrangement we are currently working with. It is hoped that Eastern will be able to hire it's own Manager again in the future.



Bob Chew of SolarWrights spoke with Sean and Sarah after the meeting.

ERICD Financial Statement 2007-2008

Expenses

Administration Expenses	840.00
Consulting & Engineering	909.00
Contributions	960.00
Depreciation	362.00
Insurance	1,027.82
Meetings & Conferences	601.25
Mileage	729.15
Office Supplies	1,740.96
Payroll	29,749.97
Program Expenses	1,719.81
Rent	6,600.00
Utilities	2,817.99
Total Expenses	48,133.94

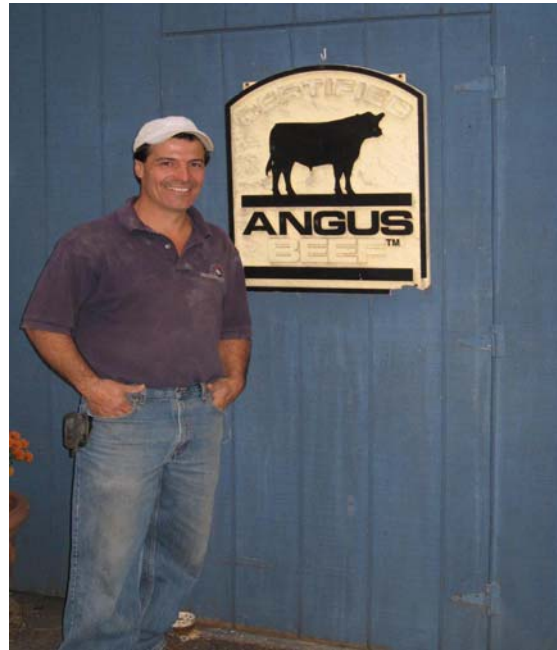
Income

FFOS Mapping Fees	70.00
Grants and Contracts	8,566.11
Interest Income	240.00
Legislative Funding	38,125.00
Office Space Rental	2,820.00
Program Fees	0
Total Income	49,821.11

This year the District also received a \$1000.00 grant through the RI Foundation. The grant is to be used for special opportunities/needs as they arise. The grant was from the Conservation Stewardship Collaborative in memory of William H. Brown.

Office Hours

Due to our financial difficulties, our office assistant is working one day a week (usually Mondays) and our borrowed District Manager up to 7 hours a week as needed. Hopefully we will be able to go on in this manner until additional monies can be counted on to help us continue. If you have to wait for a reply to your call for longer than before, this is the reason. We are sorry for the inconveniences. The best way to reach us is to call our answering machine, 624-7490, and leave a message. We will get back to you as soon as we can. Thanks for your understanding. It wouldn't hurt to let your Congressmen know how much you value your District Office.



David Rodriques is a District member of the RI Raised Livestock Association.

In another of the Districts great projects this year, David Rodriques, under took to improve the management of the livestock on his property. He is erecting a covered feeding area to better handle the manure and erosion issues he encountered. He also has an improved feed bunker for less waste and more efficient handling.

