



# Annual Report 2024

Promoting the conservation and responsible use of natural and agricultural resources for the people of Cheshire County by providing technical, financial, and educational resources.



CHESHIRE COUNTY  
CONSERVATION DISTRICT



11 Industrial Park Dr - Walpole NH 03608 - 603.756.2988  
[www.cheshireconservation.org](http://www.cheshireconservation.org)



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## Board of Supervisors and Staff

### Supervisors

Amy Bodwell, Vice Chair & NHACD Representative - Roxbury  
Chris Bowen, Treasurer - Swanzey  
Andy Pressman, Chair - Jaffrey  
Sara Powell - Chesterfield  
Peter Renzelman - Alstead

### Associate Supervisors

Tom Beaudry - Walpole  
Emily Daigle - Keene  
Holly and Chris Gowdy - Walpole  
Todd Horner - Keene  
Frank Hunter - Westmoreland  
Richard Mellor - Rindge  
Jenna Rich - Nelson  
Pete Throop, SCC Representative - Keene  
John Treat - Keene  
Sparky Von Plinsky - Keene

### CCCD Staff

Amanda Littleton, District Manager  
Benee Hershon, Community Engagement Director  
Ellinore Todd Long, Administrative Coordinator

### NRCS Staff, Walpole Field Office

*The District works in partnership with the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Services (NRCS) staff who supply technical conservation assistance.*

Wendy Ward - District Conservationist  
Jonathan Meadows - Resource Conservationist  
Jessica Barnes - Natural Resource Specialist  
Nick Tschlis - Soil Conservationist  
Emma Katz - Natural Resource Specialist  
Michael Jerome - Soil Conservationist  
Corie Holtz - Program Assistant

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The CCCD Board of Supervisors meet on the 4th Thursday of each month at 9am at the Hannah Grimes Center in Keene NH. These meetings are open to the public, please call the District office if you would like to attend a meeting.

## Contributed Support

A special thank you is offered to the many dedicated community members that contribute to the success of the CCCD by volunteering their time and energy!

We extend our gratitude to the individuals, organizations and businesses who have supported CCCD's conservation efforts through gifts and grants during 2024.

The Cheshire County Conservation District's programs are successful because of generous community donors like you!

Please consider making a tax-deductible donation so we can continue to make a positive difference in the lives of many of our community members through environmental education, agricultural support and community engagement.

Scan the QR code below to make a donation today:



CHESHIRE COUNTY  
CONSERVATION DISTRICT



SOIL



WATER



WILDLIFE



Donations are also welcome by checks made out to CCCD and sent to 11 Industrial Park Dr., Walpole NH 03608.

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Thank you for supporting our work  
to conserve the natural & agricultural  
resources of Cheshire County!

## Financials - 2024 Treasurer's Report

The Board of Supervisors appreciates the continued support of the District's conservation programs by the Cheshire County Commissioners and Delegation.

Also appreciated are the technical services offered by our "Partners in Conservation" the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, UNH Cooperative Extension, USDA Farm Service Agency and other cooperating agencies.



### 2023 Financials

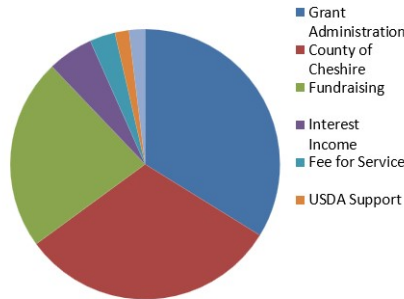
#### Grant Income in 2023 - \$757,227

in Support of Conservation Programs & Services

#### Operations Income

|                      |        |     |
|----------------------|--------|-----|
| Grant Administration | 95,437 | 34% |
| County of Cheshire   | 87,966 | 31% |
| Fundraising          | 64,675 | 23% |
| Interest Income      | 15,416 | 5%  |
| Fee for Service      | 8,652  | 3%  |
| USDA Support         | 4,768  | 2%  |
| Product Sales        | 5,424  | 2%  |

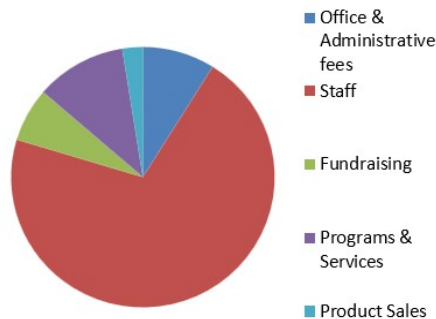
**282,338** 100%



#### Operations Expenses

|                              |         |     |
|------------------------------|---------|-----|
| Office & Administrative fees | 17,337  | 9%  |
| Staff                        | 138,019 | 71% |
| Fundraising                  | 13,054  | 7%  |
| Programs & Services          | 21,741  | 11% |
| Product Sales                | 4,890   | 3%  |

**195,041** 100%



## 2024 Cooperator of the Year

### Britton Farm of Walpole, NH

Each year the Cheshire County Conservation District honors an individual, business or organization with the "Cooperator of the Year" award. This is done to celebrate the efforts the recipient has undertaken to steward the natural resources on their land in cooperation with the Conservation District and the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). This year we are happy to announce Britton Farm of Walpole NH as our 2024 Cooperator of the Year.

Britton Farm, founded in 1948 by Lawrence and Yvonne Britton, is a multi-generational dairy farm in Walpole NH. In 2023 the Britton family celebrated 75 years of milking cows and producing milk for sale in the commercial market. Their total herd size is 200 head, including registered Holsteins who are milked along with Jerseys and other crosses. Britton Farm is a member of the Agri-Mark Cooperative



and produces 2 million lbs of milk annually. In addition to the dairy farm they have diversified to also produce Wagyu beef, pork, and maple which are for sale at their farm store on site. As Josie Britton shares, they value having a “high quality product at a reasonable cost for the local community.” They love that their neighbors are their customers, and important partners in the success of their farm business. To support their operation, they grow 300 acres of hay, 110 acres of corn, and have 100 acres of pasture and 1,500 maple taps with the potential for growth. As Larry shared “farming is a great way to live, and a tough way to make a living,” and the Britton family is committed to the future success of their business and the stewardship of their land and farming heritage.

Larry and Josie Britton are the third generation of stewards on their property in Walpole NH. They both went to Fall Mountain Highschool where Josie participated in Future Farmers of America and 4-H working with horses, cows, and sheep. Larry grew up on the farm and never wanted to miss a moment of the action on this traditional New England dairy farm he called home. Larry farmed this ground alongside his brother Andy Britton until his passing in May 2005 and took over the reins from his parents Alfred and Mary Britton in 2015. Larry serves as the Farm Manager dedicated to managing daily operations and Josie does the bookkeeping, helps as needed on all tasks, and also works full-time off the farm as a histology technician.

The farming tradition is maintained strong today with their three adult children who will be the fourth generation of the Britton family to care for their land. Their daughter Josephine is living on the farm and raising her daughter River, as the fifth generation to be doing chores in support of the family business. Their daughter Emily is a veterinarian offering valuable services and advice, and their son Wyatt is full-time on the farm serving as the herd manager, farm mechanic, and does the daily milking. Wyatt is the co-owner of Britton Farm and as Larry shared is the “heart-beat of the farm, the driving force and without him we couldn’t keep it going.” Wyatt, like his father Larry, is innovative and open to learning new methods and practices to improve farm operations and stewardship. They have a drive to invest in the future of the farm and modernize incrementally as opportunities arise. Larry and Josie both welcome the next generation to be the leadership on the farm.

There are also countless family members, including cousins, uncles, aunts, and in-laws who have pitched in when help is needed. Larry and Josie are grateful for all the support as Josie said “the whole family enjoys the farm and supports the farm.” As Larry shared “The farm is always part of you, extended family value the land and always take time to lend a helping hand during harvest or whenever needs arise. They appreciate how the land has shaped them and recognize the significant role the farm continues to play in the community.” The strength of their family’s dedication to the land is strong.

The Brittons own 550 acres and lease hundreds more through over a dozen lease agreements with neighbors in Walpole. They work hard to improve soil health, pro-



and improving/maintaining quantity and quality of forage for the animals' health and productivity.

10. **Early Successional Habitat Development and Management** – delayed mow of fields for grassland bird breeding success or to create young forest habitat for declining species of wildlife dependent upon young forest habitat for part of their life cycle.
11. **Stream Habitat Improvement and Management** - improved, restored, or maintained the ecological functions of a stream and its adjacent floodplain and riparian area. The goal of this work is to restore a natural level of large wood to the channel without forcing the stream to cut a new channel. This will make fish habitat and improve water quality.
12. **Grazing management that protects sensitive areas -surface or ground water from nutrients** - managing the harvest of vegetation with grazing and/or browsing animals to improve or maintain quantity and/or quality of forage for grazing and browsing animals’ health and productivity, improve or maintain surface and/or subsurface water quality and/or quantity, improve or maintain riparian and/or watershed function, reduce soil erosion, and maintain or improve soil health, improve or maintain the quantity, quality, or connectivity of food and/or cover available for wildlife.
13. **Low Tunnel Systems** - installed an enclosed polyethylene, polycarbonate, plastic, or fabric covered structure that is used to cover and protect crops from sun, wind, excessive rainfall, or cold, and to extend the growing season or to reduce pest pressure.
14. **Irrigation Pipeline** - installed a pipeline and appurtenances to convey water for storage or application as part of an irrigation water system. This practice is used to accomplish one or more of the following purposes: Convey water from a supply source to an irrigation system, storage pond, or reservoir, reduce irrigation conveyance water losses by converting from open channel to pipeline, and/or reduce energy use

**Respectfully Submitted,**

**Wendy Ward**

**District Conservationist, Cheshire and Sullivan Counties NH**

## NRCS 2024 Report continued

### Top Practices Applied in Cheshire County in 2024

1. **Cover Crop** - annual cover crops to reduce erosion, including adequate fall cover on highly erodible land (HEL) soils. To improve overall soil health (*e.g.*, compaction, microbial diversity, water holding capacity and soil organic matter), and remove excess nutrients (through plant uptake)
2. **Conservation Crop Rotation**— annual crop inserted into a crop rotation including grasses, legumes, and forbs for seasonal cover and other conservation purposes. To establish annuals on pastures to address sacrifice areas or to address seasonal feed imbalances (*i.e.*, summer slump with warm season annuals.) Provide pollinator or another beneficial insect habitat.
3. **Residue and Tillage Management. Reduced Tillage** - residue and tillage management, reduced till, and mulching
4. **Forest Management Plans Written** – Plans written to increase forest stewardship in New Hampshire by providing professional guidance for commercial and non-commercial forest activities.
5. **Pasture & Hayland Planting** – seeded to perennial forage including rejuvenate to add lime, macro nutrients and legumes such as clover.
6. **Prescribed Rotational Grazing** – adoption of prescribed (rotational) grazing by. Two key principles for prescribed grazing are: (i) subdividing pastures to provide adequate rest periods for forage regrowth and (ii) moving animals to new paddocks once a target minimum grazing height has been reached.
7. **Brush Management** - management or removal of woody plants including those that are invasive and noxious to restore or release desired vegetative cover to protect soils, control erosion, reduce sediment, improve water quality, or enhance hydrology, maintain, modify, or enhance fish and wildlife habitat or improve forage accessibility, quality, and quantity for livestock and wildlife.
9. **Maintaining quantity and quality of forage for animal health and productivity** - managing the harvest of vegetation with grazing and/or browsing animals for the purposes of maintaining desired pasture composition/plant vigor



tect water quality, and invest in the energy efficiency of their operation. During the past decade they have worked hand in hand with the USDA NRCS through seven separate Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) contracts to help them accomplish their goals to protect natural resources.

For soil health they plant cover crops using the Conservation District's no-till seed drill to prevent erosion and nutrient loss in the shoulder season. They do crop rotations and have significantly reduced tillage on their farm through a partnership with the Conservation District to retrofit their corn planter to a no-till set-up. A no-till system results in minimized soil disturbance from erosion and minimizes the loss of soil organisms and nutrients.

To protect water quality, they have opted to seed some sensitive fields near water sources into permanent hay ground and they worked with USDA NRCS to create a nutrient management plan for their farm. They've implemented manure storage, heavy use areas, and other structural practices with USDA NRCS to try to minimize runoff and keep surface waters clean. Other conservation work they've done with NRCS includes invasive plant control, field seedings to improve pasture and hay ground, and delayed mowing for grassland birds such as bobolinks.

Energy conservation is a large focus for the farm in 2024. They have worked with the Conservation District to secure a Climate Resilience grant and an energy efficiency grant through the Northeast Dairy Business Innovation Center to replace their aging and inefficient bulk tank. They completed an energy audit with NRCS and are now excited to be prioritizing future energy conservation investments for cooling milk and heating hot water. They are also evaluating solar options on the farm for generating renewable energy.

Jon Meadows, Resource Conservationist with the NRCS and planner working with Britton Farm, shared "We are actively working together towards solutions one step at a time. Larry, Josie, and Wyatt have all been very engaged and forward thinking when planning to solve resource concerns and are often asking me what more they can do. They've been a pleasure to work with by getting practices done on time, to our specs, and with a great attitude. They understand the role they have in the community and that farming in New England needs to be both environmentally sensitive and economically viable to prevent a loss to heritage." As Larry explained "The legacy of my grandfather, father, and family is to make the farm sustainable for future generations. You need the water to be clean, the soil to be healthy, and to use as little energy as possible to meet your goals."

We are thankful to call Britton Farm our partners and it is with great honor that the Cheshire County Conservation District presents them with the 2024 Cooperator of the Year Award. We invite you to please join us in offering congratulations and show support by visiting them up at their farmstand on Watkins Hill Road in Walpole!

## 2024 Educator of the Year

### *Laura White of the Chesterfield School*

Each year, the Cheshire County Conservation District (CCCD) honors an individual or organization with the “Educator of the Year” award. This is done to celebrate the efforts the recipient has undertaken to steward a conservation ethic and awareness through their personal and professional work, in any form of education that takes. This year we are happy to announce Laura White as our 2024 Educator of the Year.

On the snowiest days of the year, to warm sunshine filled-days, one can often find Laura White outside, engaging her students in an outdoor classroom!

From an early age, Laura had a curiosity about the natural world. Growing up in Delaware, she spent much of her time outside and climbing trees. College deepened her awareness of environmental activism, and she began to see and understand the connection between environmental challenges and social justice issues. Following her graduation from college, she served in AmeriCorps in San Francisco, working with the National Park Service as a field trip leader, facilitating beach clean ups and invasive species mitigation. Following her service term with AmeriCorps, she worked for several months conducting a farmworker health survey. While conducting surveys, she had the opportunity to interact with the children of the farmworkers. It was the



*The Natural Resources Conservation Service is a core partner of the Cheshire County Conservation District. The partnership between the NRCS and Conservation Districts is one that was carefully designed to foster a unique and productive relationship to get conservation on the ground and provide federal resources at a local level.*

practice replaces existing low efficiency equipment with new high efficiency equipment in sugar houses, greenhouses and high tunnels including replacing heaters, fans and ventilation, installing ridge vents and automatic control systems regulates the energy consumption and increase efficiency.

- **Energy Efficient Building Envelope** - An energy efficient building envelope is a boundary between a conditioned space and an unconditioned space that meets or exceeds best practices for energy efficiency. Loss of the conditioned air due to infiltration like drafts may represent a significant energy loss. Sealing the air gaps between walls, gables, ceiling, etc. in an ag building or greenhouse. Sealing these gaps and holes is the first step to improving energy use efficiency.





## USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service District Conservationist Fiscal Year 2024 Report for Cheshire County

The Walpole United States Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) office saw several staff changes in fiscal year 2024. We welcomed a new programs assistant Corrie Holts and two new conservation planners Emma Katz and Michael Jerome. NRCS obligated a record amount of conservation plans and dollars in Cheshire County in 2024. Over seventy new contracts, totaling more than \$1,800,000 for the county, were obligated. Of this, the increased funding through the inflation reduction act brought in over \$950,000 to fund climate smart practices.

While NRCS offers a broad suite of voluntary conservation activities, the agency identifies a sub-set as critical to climate change mitigation. When applied appropriately, these activities are expected to reduce greenhouse gas emissions or increase carbon sequestration. Many offer additional benefits that help operations build climate change resilience while addressing other natural resource concerns.

NRCS Continues to Expand Inflation Reduction Act Opportunities for Science-Based Approaches for Climate-Smart Agriculture and Forestry Mitigation Activities. In 2024 NH NRCS expanded the opportunities to address Energy, Combustion, and Electricity Efficiency practices offered in Farm Bill and IRA funding. Here in Cheshire County, farmers worked with the Walpole NRCS office to plan conservation practices that can reduce emissions through improved energy or fuel efficiency and use within their agricultural systems, infrastructure, or operations. These practices may also improve ambient air quality and lower input costs. Planned practices for Cheshire County include

- **Energy Efficient Agricultural Operation** - An energy efficient agricultural operation includes the on-farm facilities, equipment, and management strategies that provide increased energy efficiency. This

children of the farm workers who inspired Laura to pursue a career in teaching. After this role, Laura spent a season working as an apprentice on an organic farm in California. She notes that this was one of her most formative experiences, and one that she feels would be valuable for all to experience. She notes the importance of understanding where one's food comes from, as well as the labor involved behind that food. This experience provided Laura with the skills to launch a life-long hobby of home gardening, and to bring her love and passion of gardening into her work in schools.

Laura moved to the Monadnock Region to pursue a degree in teaching at Antioch University New England. After reading *Earth in Mind* by David Orr, she was inspired to direct her energy to developing public schools which integrated environmental aspects of the school experience from facilities to curriculum.

Laura has worked as an educator throughout this region: in Greenfield, MA, Brattleboro, VT, Spofford, NH, and currently teaches the 5th grade at the Chesterfield School in Chesterfield, NH.

Laura has integrated outdoor education throughout her career. While teaching at Green Street School in Brattleboro, she started a school garden and developed a 4th grade curriculum around soil. Students had the opportunity to visit farms throughout the school year and produce their own local food dinner. Laura also engaged students through wood recess, a weekly opportunity for students to explore and play in the nearby woods.

Laura has truly gone above and beyond at every school she has taught at. She draws inspiration from the environment around her to develop her curriculum. Her place-based curriculum focuses on a variety of topics, from farm tools to climate change phenology to fungi. Laura has also worked with the Harris Center to further engage her students on topics such as native bees and pollinators.

In addition to developing impactful curriculum and partnerships, she also has secured grants to develop school gardens and has been at the forefront of starting environmental education programs at the schools at which she teaches. The most recent success has been the development of the Outdoor Classroom curriculum at Chesterfield School, where Laura began teaching in 2015.

Laura is the coordinator of the Outdoor Education Committee of the Chesterfield School. In 2016, when discussion of purchasing 23 acres of land behind the school began, Laura was determined to shape this land into an opportunity to create an exciting, engaging, and accessible outdoor classroom. Voters eventually approved the purchase of the land at the Chesterfield School Budget Meeting in March 2017. From a field and forest, the outdoor classroom has blossomed. Today, there are easily accessed trails to several classroom spaces, benches built by parents and community members, as well as an outdoor pavilion.

Laura utilizes the classroom year-round with her students, rain or shine.

Laura is committed to creating accessible outdoor experiences, for example, over the years she has collected outdoor gear for students use to ensure that all students have a meaningful experience in the outdoor classroom.

She has also worked with faculty to encourage utilization of the outdoor classroom spaces. Laura has been mindful to work with her colleagues in promoting the space and is inspired by colleagues who have learned how to weave their curriculum in an outdoor setting.

Laura has been fortunate to work in many outdoor spaces already, while for some colleagues this was initially a step out of their comfort zone. Through Laura's encouragement and enthusiasm, she has inspired many of her colleagues to embrace this resource. Teachers from kindergarten to the fifth grade of all subjects use the space weekly, and now a schedule is implemented for outdoor classroom use due to popularity of the spaces.

Throughout her teaching career, Laura has become a master navigator of the educational system and has utilized her creativity to weave teaching standards into outdoor settings. She also notes the creativity of fellow faculty members in integrating standards in the outdoor classroom and provides teaching counting with pinecones as a creative example of students learning math.

Her love of nature as well as the importance of spending time in the outdoors for youth development has served as a compass to her work.

In addition to the importance of spending time outdoors for both teachers and students, she notes the critical importance of creating a relationship between youth and nature. In conversation, Laura noted the power of mycelium in the health of the forest ecosystem, bridging the forest network together. Much like mycelium, Laura has linked students, fellow teachers, and community members to nature for the broader benefit of her community.

When the community is invested in the outdoors, and there is a strong relationship between youth and nature, we all benefit: socially, emotionally, and health-wise. Not only do we benefit from this, but so does the planet.

Laura feels passionate that the work she does in the classroom goes beyond learning curriculum materials; it's about inspiring awe and changing a world view from a young age. She adds, "In terms of connecting youth with nature, to me it's about helping inform that relationship with nature, that sense of reciprocity, and that hopefully will help them grow up to be ethical decision makers, and make decisions that are going to help the earth and help humankind, in whatever position they are... Everyone, as an adult, has to make decisions that affect the world in some way, and building that worldview with a child is powerful... Education is really powerful, and it steers people to what they do with their lives and how they live their lives".

What students learn in Laura's classroom are lessons that they will carry their entire lives. This impact in the classroom (both indoors and outdoors) is critical in creating broader systemic change and building environmental awareness among the next generation.

The Cheshire County Conservation District is immensely grateful for Laura's enthusiasm and commitment to inspiring and educating the next generation of environmental stewards. It is with great pleasure that CCCD presents Laura White with the 2024 Educator of the Year Award. Congratulations, Laura!

## *Monadnock Farm Share*

Six Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) produce farms in the Monadnock Region came together in 2024 to work with the CCCD to ensure that farm fresh CSA vegetable shares are affordable for all interested community members.

The Farm Share Program provides limited-income Monadnock Region residents with the opportunity to support their local CSA farmer and receive reliable high-quality produce on a regular basis all season long. The prices are discounted through an innovative cost-share model. Participating families and individuals end up receiving a discounted vegetable share at 50% of its value. Farmers raise funds to cover 15% of the program costs and 35% of costs are provided by the Cheshire Medical Center's Center for Population Health through its Healthy Monadnock Alliance. Thirty-four households participated in 2024 and we look forward to continuing to grow the program in 2025.



## *Radically Rural*

The 7th annual summit brought together over 400 people from 40 states who are passionate about creating vibrant, robust, rural communities. CCCD hosted the Land and Community Track. This track included two workshops on conservation and land use. Session topics included supporting farmland access and cooperative land management. Hannah Grimes Center and Keene Sentinel are the lead organizers.

## *Locally Led Conservation*

Cheshire and Sullivan County Conservation Districts work in partnership to offer an annual Local Work Group meeting to encourage the community to discuss conservation priorities for the region. This community input is formed into recommendations that are forwarded to the State Technical Committee of the USDA NRCS to provide guidance on Farm Bill program implementation. Conservation Districts offer an important avenue for your voice to make an impact on funding and allocation decisions for New Hampshire NRCS programs.

**The Cheshire County Conservation District welcomes your input on future programming and services that we can make available to landowners and communities. Please contact us with your ideas!**



## Granite State Market Match

In 2024 we strengthened our Cheshire County network of farms and farmers markets to double Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP/food stamps) benefits with Granite State Market Match (GSMM). There are now ten farm locations in Cheshire County that accept SNAP and offer GSMM. These locations include Dog Days Farm, Farmers Market of Keene, Green Wagon Farm, Hillside Springs Farm, Pete’s Stand, Picadilly Farm, Stonewall Farm, Whittaker’s Homestead, Hinsdale Farmers Market and Team Jaffrey Farmers Market.

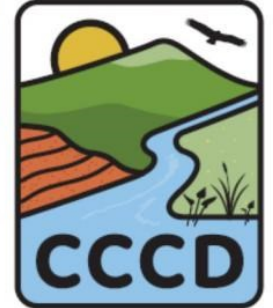
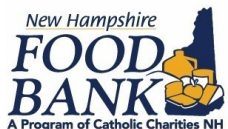


Through September 2024 over \$13,000 has been distributed this year. We continued our work with a statewide network of incentive providers lead by the NH Food Bank to share resources and best practices. Funding is made available through the USDA Food Insecurity Nutrition Incentive Program and Cheshire Medical Center’s Center for Population Health.

## Veterans Appreciation Month



The Farmers’ Markets in Hinsdale, Jaffrey, Keene, and Winchester worked with the CCCD to offer a Veterans Appreciation Month program during September 2024. 490 Veterans participated and \$20,160 was distributed. Each market day Cheshire County Veterans were invited to the market and provided a \$20 Voucher to purchase food from area farmers. The goal of this program is to show our gratitude and appreciation to service members for protecting our freedoms and to expand markets for farmers. Funding was provided through Cheshire Medical Center’s Center for Population Health to increase community members access to healthy foods, an effort which is aligned with the goals of the Healthy Monadnock Alliance.



SOIL



WATER



WILDLIFE



FARM VIABILITY

Thank you for your support as we celebrate 79 years of Conservation in NH!



## Organizational Membership

- Antioch Community Garden Connections - Advisory Committee
- Conservation District Employee Association of New Hampshire
- Monadnock Farm and Community Coalition - Board of Directors
- Monadnock Economic Development Corporation - Board of Directors
- National Association of Conservation Districts
- New Hampshire Association of Conservation Districts
- New Hampshire Food Alliance
- New Hampshire Nutrition Incentive Network - Regional Lead
- Southwest Region Planning Commission - Natural Resources Advisory Committee

## Fiscal Sponsorship & Fundraising

The CCCD serves as the fiscal sponsor for the Monadnock Farm and Community Coalition and the Monadnock View Community Garden.

The CCCD Board of Supervisors conducted an annual appeal and offered a seed sale fundraiser during 2024 to provide additional funds for CCCD programs. We would like to offer many thanks to the community members who participated!



## Planning & Communications

The CCCD developed and adopted a five year Strategic Plan in 2022

This plan sets the organization up with refined priorities and measurable outcomes. We continually seek an open dialogue with stakeholders in our community and welcome your feedback.

**The Cheshire County Conservation District was created in 1945. It is a political subdivision of the State of New Hampshire, RSA 432:12, with a 170 C 1 non-profit status under the IRS tax code. As a subdivision of the State of New Hampshire, conservation districts foster partnerships between federal, state and local agencies interested in the wise use of natural resources.**



SOIL



WATER



WILDLIFE

## NH Farm Future Fund



The mission of the NH Farm Future Fund is to provide funding for farm viability planning in concert with the conservation of important agricultural soils. This program will leverage the singular opportunity of putting a conservation easement on farmland to also invest in the future viability of the farm business. The goal of this fund is to ensure that farmland is conserved, productive, and available for future generations. Funding was provided by the You Have Our Trust Fund and the Madison Fund of the NH Charitable Foundation, \$20,000 was awarded during the fifth grant round in 2024 and the RFP for the 2025 grant round will be available in February 2025. This program is a partnership with the NH Community Loan Fund, Land For Good, and the ten County Conservation Districts and is an integrated approach to funding farm viability, farmland conservation, and farmland access and fills an important niche in building the capacity of agricultural service providers in the state.

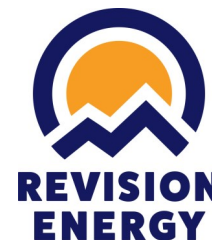
## Investing in Energy Efficiency & Renewable Energy

CCCD provided twenty Cheshire County farms with stipends of \$2,000 each to invest in energy improvements to conserve energy and lower operating costs.

In 2024 CCCD worked with partners to complete a series of ten on-farm workshops focused on energy efficiency and renewable energy efforts farms in our region have taken. This work is funded by the NH Department of Agriculture Markets and Foods through a USDA Specialty Crop Block Grant.

## Community Supported Solar for NH Farms

CCCD has worked with Sun Moon Farm of Rindge, NH and ReVision Energy to launch a Community Supported Solar installation in cooperation with farms in the region. In 2021 a 100kw Solar Array became fully operational. In 2023 membership became fully subscribed with nine farms from Cheshire County. CCCD manages the farmer LLC that will take ownership of the arrays in 2026.





## Initiatives to Improve Farm Profitability, Expand Markets, & Increase Food Access

### FARM VIABILITY

#### *Monadnock Food Co-op Farm Fund*

The Monadnock Food Co-op Farm Fund's mission is to support local farmers in increasing sustainable food production and wholesale sales to contribute to a thriving local farm economy. This grant opportunity for local farmers is made possible through a partnership with the CCCD who serves as the fiscal sponsor and managing partner. Six grant awards totaling \$41,400 were made in 2024. Four for emergency relief; two for infrastructure improvements and equipment to Five Sigma Farm and Picadilly Farm.



Now in it's eighth year the fund has awarded over \$188,000 to 20 area farms. We owe a great deal of gratitude to Co-op customers who round up their change at the register to contribute to this fund. Additional funding is provided by the You Have Our Trust Fund and the Monadnock Food Co-op.

#### *Jeffrey P. Smith Farm Scholarships*

In 2024, 20 scholarships were offered to Cheshire County youth to attend summer farm camp through the Jeffrey P. Smith Farm Scholarship program.

This is made possible through funding from the You Have Our Trust Fund, Cheshire County Farm Bureau, Elm City Rotary Club, and generous local donors. Partners include Stonewall Farm, The Orchard School, UMass 4H Camps, Kroka, and Keene Housing.



## 2024 Highlights

The CCCD engaged over 4,500 individuals in 2024 with programs regarding resource conservation & farm viability. If you are interested in learning more or have suggestions for future programming please don't hesitate to contact the CCCD office.



### *NRCS Farm Bill Program Workshops & Demonstration Projects*

Each year the conservation district works along side their partner the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) to assist landowners on the voluntary conservation of natural resources on their land. This is accomplished by providing administration of the technical and financial assistance that enables good stewardship of the soil, water, air, wildlife, and related natural resources. This year workshops were offered on how landowners can apply for financial and technical assistance from NRCS through the 2018 Farm Bill, workshops included: **Energy Efficiency, No Till Farming, Soil Health Equipment Demonstrations, and Wildlife Habitat.** Educators from Cheshire County UNH Cooperative Extension (UNHCE) are key partners in these workshops.

### *Services of CCCD*

Offered historical **aerial photography** of Cheshire County and provided soil information to Cheshire County landowners, particularly the **Soil Potential Index** (SPI) assessment for landowners in the Current Use program. Provided **talks as well as educational displays** at community events through out the year. Worked with landowners on an individual basis to assist them in better understanding the resources on their property and how to conserve them. The CCCD also offers **outreach on behalf of NRCS** to make landowners aware of the conservation programs available to them.



**All programs are offered on a non-discriminatory basis without regard to race, color, national origin, religion, sex, age, marital status, disability or political beliefs.**



**SOIL**

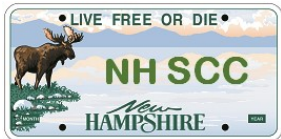
## Supporting Healthy Productive Soil through Education and Equipment Rentals



In 2024 the Conservation District further developed its Soil Health Education and Equipment Rental program to help producers meet their soil health goals while improving farm efficiencies.

The following implements are now available: no-till seeder (7' & 12'), wood ash/lime spreader, aerway aerator, roller-crimper, no-till vegetable transplanter, soil steamer, BCS walk behind tractor with six implements, single shank sub-soiler, and penetrometer. Our total equipment value of the 16 implements is approximately \$180,000.

We worked with UNH Cooperative Extension, NCAT, and USDA NRCS to offer workshops, demonstrations, and equipment field days.



## Conservation Opportunity Grant Program

CCCD offers a Conservation Opportunity Grant program for landowners and stewards of small tracts of land in Cheshire County interested in improving the wildlife habitat on their property. Eligible activities include creating installing riparian buffers, planting pollinator habitat, installing rain gardens, and creating and maintaining early successional habitat. In 2024 the CCCD awarded \$11,113 to the following nine awardees: Eileen Casey, Edgewood Neighborhood, Gemmo Forest, Albie Mason and Phylicia Roberts, Jake Pipp, Eli Rivera, Laura Shim, James Sullivan, and Lynn Zimmerman.

This is an annual opportunity to support the ecological integrity and stewardship of wildlife habitat in Cheshire County NH. The next request for proposals will be announced in November 2024.



## Birding on the Farm

An annual series of quarterly workshops designed to increase community understanding of the unique role farms play in providing wildlife habitat. Community members are invited to improve their birding skills, learn more about farm management practices, and build their understanding of seasonal changes and the ecology of our region. Farms visited in 2024 included Five Sigma Farm and Hillside Springs Farm in Cheshire County NH as well as Scott Farm Orchard and Wild Carrot Farm in Windham County VT.

This series is a partnership between the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, Windham County Natural Resources Conservation District, Cheshire County Conservation District, Southeastern Vermont Audubon Society, and the Antioch Bird Club.



**WILDLIFE**

## Improving Wildlife Habitat for the Health of Our Ecosystems & Fostering Stewardship of our Landscapes

### *Pollinator & Turtle Conservation Education*

Pollinator Palooza, a family friendly afternoon with over 200 community members learning and celebrating pollinators was hosted by CCCD and community partners in June. In November the NH Association of Conservation Commissions and NH Fish and Game will partner with CCCD to offer Turtle Conservation Education at our annual Conservation Commission Potluck.

### *Monadnock Outdoors - Connecting with Nature*

Monadnock Outdoors has a mission to foster connections to nature and holistic community well-being through education and the promotion of active living by means of physical activity, active transportation, and recreation in the outdoors. Monadnock Outdoors is a work group of the Healthy Monadnock Alliance with a vision that Monadnock region residents are equipped with the knowledge, confidence, and motivation to get active, connect with nature and community, and improve well-being. The CCCD provides staff support to this work group. We understand that strong natural resources stewardship starts with making a connection to and caring about the place where you live. In 2024 Monadnock Outdoors - Launched a Gear Library in partnership with the Keene Public Library - Improved the online Outdoor Recreation Resource Map to highlight recreation opportunities and resources available for community members to connect with nature; - Held a round table discussion on adaptive recreation and will continue to explore opportunities to support adaptive recreation in the Monadnock Region in 2025.



### *Climate Resilience Grant Program for Farms*

The NH County Conservation Districts have launched a farm viability program to improve the resilience of NH farms in the face of extreme weather events and a changing climate. Direct grants to farms to invest in on-farm infrastructure, equipment, and innovative practices will support farm profitability and the long-term viability for NH's agricultural sector.

The mission of the NH Conservation Districts Climate Resilience Grant is to support and empower local farmers to build climate resilience throughout the granite state. This will be done through reducing the impact of agriculture on climate change (mitigation) through greenhouse gas emissions reduction and carbon sequestration, and through increasing the resiliency of New Hampshire Farms in a changing climate (adaptation), while meeting farm's conservation goals and needs. This grant through the NH County Conservation Districts seeks to support farmers in soil health improvement, water management, integrated pest management, and energy conservation.

Since 2022, the NH Conservation Districts Climate Resilience Grant has distributed 95 grant awards for a total of \$714,000 invested in New Hampshire farms. 2024 Cheshire County awardees include Abenaki Springs Farm, Britton Farm, Brookfield Farm, Five Sigma Farm, Foggy Hill Farm, Lucky 13 Farm, Partners Gardens, Stonewall Farm, and Windyhurst Farm.

The 2025 grant round opens in November 2024 and there will be over \$300,000 available to NH Farms.





**WATER**

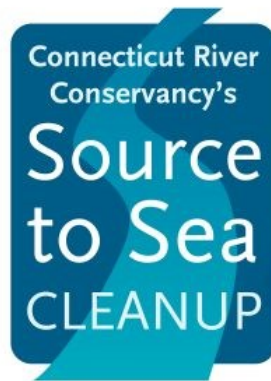
## Improving Water Quality Through River Clean Ups and Farm Partnerships

### *Source to Sea River Clean Up*



On September 20-21st a group of enthusiastic volunteers pitched in to help clean up the Ashuelot River in Keene and Swanzey, and Beaver Brook in Keene as part of the Connecticut River Conservancy’s “Source to Sea Cleanup”. Volunteers pulled over 2,450 lbs of trash from the two water bodies! All while soaking in the beautiful fall colors and catching glimpses of great blue herons, kingfishers, and more.

We would like to thank the amazing group of volunteers who turned out with such great attitudes! There was a contingent of students and staff from the Keene High School, Keene State College Eco-Reps, and volunteers from the Keene Unitarian Universalist Church Outdoors. They were joined by individuals and families from throughout the region for a total of 56 volunteers. This event is made possible by the partnership of the Ashuelot River Local Advisory Committee (ARLAC), City of Keene, Moosewood Ecological, Harris Center for Conservation Education, Keene State College, and the Cheshire County Conservation District.



### *CT River Watershed Best Management Practices*

CCCD is partnering with Windham Natural Resources Conservation District and other Conservation Districts and partners in the CT River Valley of NH and VT to identify best management practices (BMPs) for reducing nitrogen runoff in the CT River Watershed. The focus of this project has been the creation and implementation of a survey for farmers to identify practices they are most willing to adopt. This is a multi-year project that will lead to on the ground projects.



### *Forestry Stewardship Series*

The CCCD partnered with Distant Hill Gardens, UNH Cooperative Extension, the Monadnock Conservancy, and the USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service to offer a Forest Stewardship Workshop Series hosted monthly through the Summer and Fall of 2024. This series of educational events focused on private forest management and conservation. We aimed to facilitate communication among forest owners, practitioners, and educators, to strengthen an ethic of forest stewardship in the region. Topics included:

- Snags and downed woody material: the wildlife benefits of dead trees
- Small-scale forest products: extracting and processing trees for personal use
- Forest trails & roads: BMPs to protect water resources & prevent soil erosion
- Restoring Fish Habitat - in-stream wood additions for habitat & water quality
- Regenerating oak in stands where beech is present
- Forest Stewards Social

### *Monadnock View Community Garden*

The Monadnock View Community Garden, located on the west side of Keene NH, has partnered with the CCCD to improve water supply infrastructure, create pollinator habitat, and improve access to needed equipment and supplies for gardeners to adopt practices to improve soil health, manage pests, and conserve water. Funding is provided by the NH Association of Conservation Districts (NHACD) and USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS).