

FREEHOLD SOIL CONSERVATION DISTRICT

Serving Middlesex & Monmouth Counties Since 1938

2017 ANNUAL REPORT



2017 Freehold SCD Photo Contest

First Place Winner

“Great Egret”

By Warren (Doug) Oley, of Matawan

Freehold Soil Conservation District

is a special purpose subdivision of the New Jersey Department of Agriculture serving Middlesex and Monmouth Counties. Freehold SCD is one of 15 New Jersey soil conservation districts empowered to conserve and manage soil and water resources in cooperation with the State Soil Conservation Committee. We address stormwater, soil erosion and sedimentation problems that result from land disturbance activities. We also provide environmental education outreach programs within the two counties.

In response to growing concern for water quality, the District has become the primary local agency responsible for controlling nonpoint sources of pollution associated with construction, agriculture and mining. Technical services of the USDA – Natural Resources Conservation Service are made available through the District.

With ongoing cooperation between residents, contractors, developers, educators, landowners, farmers, municipalities and engineers, Freehold Soil Conservation District personnel continue to work to help to ensure environmental resource quality for years to come.



*Award Winning
Shot*

Second Place Winner "Fall Moon Rises"
By Raymond Salani III of Tinton Falls

Manager's Message

In 2017 the Freehold Soil Conservation District took on many new challenges.

The District continues to work on two conservation grants that will diversify habitat in Monmouth and Middlesex Counties. The District, along with county, municipal, and other local partners have been working on projects to benefit the Manalapan River and Lake watershed. Additional plants have been added to the planting buffer at Thompson Park. This planting buffer addresses shoreline erosion and goose damage that has impacted the water quality in the lake. Floating wetland islands are installed in the lake to help mitigate the impact of pollutants that can harm water quality.

Also, in 2017 the District was able to contract with experts in forestry, wildlife and pollinator habitats. Several plans are being written to enhance open space parcels in three counties. Work has started at the Davidsons Mill Park in Middlesex County. Almost 23 acres of fallow land was brush hogged and prepared for a spring planting of warm season grasses. Tree planting and pollinator strips are also proposed. The District, created the Open Space Conservation Cooperative to focus on the issues of managing public open space. The forestry plan for the Jamesburg County Park is also underway. The plan contains recommendations to enhance existing tree stands and allows for the addition of more species. The goal is to expand the opportunities for birdlife and offer fire suppression.

As we are able, the Freehold Soil Conservation District looks to offer assistance wherever possible. We offered a plant stipend to Middlesex County Parks in fall of 2017. They were able to use our plant grant from Pinelands Nursery to add native plant species throughout the park properties.

The goal for 2018 is to implement many of these plans and look for new ways to collaborate with our partners. It is a very exciting time for the District and look to share these successes in years to come.

Ines Zimmerman— District Manager

Freehold Soil Conservation District Staff



(l-r) Tim Thomas, Brian Governale, Paul Califano, Courtney Davidson, Stacy Brady, Michael Infanti, Holly Reynolds, Michael Hill, Stephen Grosch and Ben Shotland



In 2017, the District hired a new site inspector, Joseph Serio



(l-r) Donna Cramer, Andrea Farparan, Christina LaBianca, Michael Hill, Ines Zimmerman, Sharon Robertson

Chapter 251 Report

As the Freehold Soil Conservation District entered its 41st year of enforcing the Soil Erosion and Sediment Control Act (Chapter 251), there was no slowing down for District Staff. Expanding upon the previous year, the District received 951 applications for proposed construction projects, issued 53 illegal land disturbance letters and answered 575 exemption determination requests. More than 3,500 hours have been spent by District Staff reviewing, certifying, issuing correspondence and maintaining both physical and electronic records of all current projects.

The jurisdiction of the District extends to land disturbance activities in excess of 5000 square feet. Land disturbance is defined as any activity involving clearing, excavating, storing, grading, filling or transporting of soil or any other activity which causes soil to be exposed to the dangers of erosion. Applicants are required to submit Soil Erosion and Sediment Control plans to the District for review and certification, should their proposed project exceed that threshold. It is the applicant's responsibility to follow the provisions of the certified Soil Erosion and Sediment Control plan and the District conducts inspections to ensure compliance. With over 2500 current projects, over Monmouth and Middlesex Counties, District technical staff has logged 10,625 hours of inspection time to achieve this goal.

The trend in 2017 is similar to the previous year in terms of the type of project received. Of the 951 applications received:

Single Family Residential	531
Commercial	307
Road Project	47
Utility Project	27
Multi-Unit Residential	21
Clearing/Grading	18

With decades of intense land development, the availability of large tracts of developable land has been depleted. In 2017, of the 951 applications received:

704 = < 1 acre
184 = 1-5 acres
63 = > 5 acres

The single largest application received proposes to disturb 122.05 acres.

2017 also saw the end of the almost decade long Permit Extension Act. The purpose of the Act was to revive and extend State, county, and local government approvals in an effort to provide the regulated community, developers, property owners, and the real estate sector with relief in recognition of the ongoing economic downturn. In 2010, 2012, and 2014 the Act was amended to further extend some approvals. As a result, projects that were once extended under this Act are now subject to being expired. Once expired, a new application will need to be submitted to the District for proposed land disturbances.

Stephen Grosch— Resource Conservationist II



Photo Entry
"Eagles Nest"
By Robin Muller of Freehold

FSCD 2017 Financial Report

Sources of Income (approximate)	Amount
Interest & previous fees	50%
Erosion control fees	49.5%
Monmouth County grant	.5%

Expenses (approximate)	Amount
Salaries, taxes & benefits	74%
Rent, utilities & insurance	12%
Materials, supplies & postage	4%
Professional services	3%
Vehicles expenses	2%
Training & conferences	2%
Scholarships, awards & education	2%
Capital expenditure	1%

The Freehold SCD Board of Supervisors meetings are held the 2nd Wednesday of the month at the District office.
April — November at 7:30 pm
December — March at 1:30 pm

Conservation Education

In our twelfth year involved with the Trout in the Classroom (TIC) program, we have 24 schools and one environmental center raising rainbow trout. In May, over 120 students and teachers attended the Trout in the Classroom Field Day to release the trout they raised, from eggs to 3-4 inch fingerlings, into the Toms River at the Forest Resource Education Center. Students also participated in programs in soil, forestry, water and trout life. It is estimated that over 1000 trout have been released into NJDEP permitted waters this past year through the District's TIC tanks.

This year we have 27 returning schools and 6 new schools joining the Plants for Pollinators in the Classroom (PPIC) program for a total of 33 schools participating in this unique, hands-on learning experience where students discover the important role pollinators play in our food supply.

"Healthy Soils Are Full of Life" was the theme for Stewardship Week and for the Conservation Poster Contest. District prizes were awarded in four grade divisions. All first place winning posters were submitted to the State level contest and we had a 1st place and 3rd place winner at the state level. Our 1st place state winner also placed 1st at the national level.

The 2017 NJ Envirothon, was held at Schooley's Mountain Park in Morris County in May. The 24th annual event tested

29 teams of high school students from throughout NJ in aquatics, forestry, soils, wildlife and the current environmental issue of "Agricultural Soil and Water Conservation stewardship." Cedar Creek High School Team #2 won the event. MATES Team #1 (Marine Academy of Technology and Environmental Science) won second place for the event and third place went to West Windsor-Plainsboro HS North.

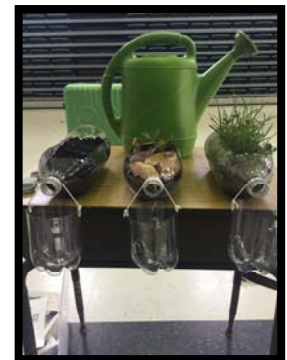
The NJ Conservation Partnership display at the 2017 NJ Flower & Garden Show promoted the different ways we can protect our natural resources. "Conservationfest" was very popular and was viewed by over 25,000 show visitors. The garden earned awards for "Most Educational," "Best Environmental Focus," "Most Colorful Display," "Best Plant Material," "Best Interpretation of Theme" and third place by The Association of Professional Landscape Designers.

Our Board of Supervisors awarded three \$2,000 scholarships in 2017. Allyson Murray, Old Bridge, received the Neal W. Munch Scholarship, Robert Emmet Brennan, Highland Park, received the Mac Clark Scholarship, and Christine Schwartz, Manasquan, received the Bill Schauer Scholarship. This was the 38th consecutive year awards have been provided by the District. Students majoring in conservation related fields from Middlesex or Monmouth County are awarded these scholarships.

Holly Reynolds — Public Information Specialist



In 2017, the District incorporated a new summer program called "A Soil Summer," using different activities about soil at local libraries and summer camps.



The NJ Conservation Partnership's "Conservationfest" display at the 2017 Flower & Garden Show was viewed by over 25,000 attendees.



Freehold Service Center—Farm Programs

USDA Farm Service Agency—New Jersey

2017

Freehold Service Center

PO Box 5033

4000 Kozloski Road

Freehold, NJ 07728

(732) 462-0075

CED:

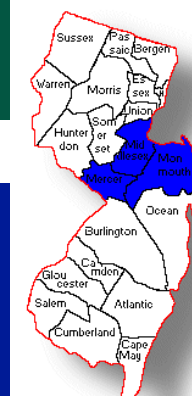
Gabi Grunstein

Program Technicians:

Beth Pine

Katelyn Haggart

Mercer, Monmouth and
Middlesex Counties



Disaster Assistance Programs

- **Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honeybees & Farm-Raised Fish Program (ELAP)** This office has the most ELAP activity in the state, all of it for honeybee losses due to colony collapse disorder.
- **Livestock Indemnity Program (LIP)** Losses of sheep and goats due to extreme cold weather in Monmouth County is all the LIP activity that has occurred since 2015.
- **Non-Insured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP)** Claims are frequently processed for a number of growers with small acreage of a variety of crops in Middlesex and Monmouth counties. A large spinach operation has also had a number of claims.
- **Tree Assistance Program (TAP)** Cost share payments for replacement, site preparation and replanting of wine grapes lost due to freeze were made in 2015 and 2016 in Monmouth County.

Freehold Service Center

Fast Facts - 2017:

- 3,111 active Farms consisting of 4,140 Tracts
- Around 2,600 Producers
- Just under 4,500 Owners

Major Freehold crops in addition to Statewide Top 5

- Greens
- Flowers
- Pumpkins
- Sorghum
- Nursery
- Tomatoes

Conservation Reserve Program

(CRP) Riparian buffers and field windbreaks funded through Continuous agreements are the most common practices. All three counties have had activity in CRP.

CRP Payments

2015	\$2,845
2016	\$2,724
2017	\$2,845

Year	Total Payments	Total Payments	Total Payments	Total Payments
2015	\$142,961	\$1,508	\$90	\$4,532
2016	\$36,332	\$0	\$116,179	\$13,053
2017	\$41,994	\$0	\$1,997	\$0

Commodity Programs

Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC) and Price Loss Coverage (PLC) Programs

Mercer and Middlesex were two of very few counties that had high payment rates in 2015. All three counties in the service center made large payments for all crops in 2016 and 2017.

Year	Contracts Approved	TOTAL Payments
2015	188	\$263,902
2016	184	\$563,465
2017	201	\$453,239

Forest Resource Education Center



Interpretive Programs: The staff at the Forest Resource Education Center (FREC) hosted 49 interpretive programs on site with a total of 1,248 attendees in 2017. A new sawmill was purchased in 2017 and is used in our most popular program, Forest Products.

The 23rd annual Fall Forestry Festival was held on October 7, 2017. Over 30 organizations and approximately 600 staff, volunteers and attendees participated. The annual festival offers free exhibits, demonstrations and interpretive hikes showcasing forestry, forest resources and related fields. Hundreds of people attended.

Cooperative Programming:

The monthly evening program series entitled 'Backyard Forestry in 90 Minutes' continued to be a success in 2017. 303 people attended the eleven programs. The free series provides educational programs for adults with an interest in backyard forest management. The FREC is the host location and is co-sponsored with the Rutgers Cooperative Extension and the NJ Forestry Association.

In conjunction with the Jackson Pathfinders, FREC naturalists offered two full moon hikes and a National Trails Day hike at the Forest Resource Education Center in 2017. FREC naturalists also continue to work with girl and boy scouts on various programs.

Outreach Programs: FREC staff lent their expertise at several outreach events including the Duke Farms Maple Sugaring Festival; Monmouth County Park's Environmental Summit; Earth Day Celebration at Joint Base McGuire Dix Lakehurst; NJ DEP's State Arbor Day Event; NJ Department of Agriculture's Envirothon; Barnegat Light State Park's 60th Anniversary; the NJ Division of Fish & Wildlife's Wild Outdoor Expo; and the Ocean County Parks' Pine Barrens Jamboree. These events were attended by approximately 10,000 people.

Trail Work: In 2017 FREC staff and volunteers continued to maintain over twelve miles on eight trails at the property. The new Sensory Awareness Trail guide was published.

Meeting Room: The FREC provides a centrally located facility for governmental and non-profit organizations to hold meetings. In 2017, 63 meetings and programs were held by over 19 different organizations with over 826 attendees.

Volunteers in Forestry: Numerous hours were logged by volunteers from the following organizations: the Jackson Pathfinders, Woodland Stewardship program, Girl and Boy Scouts, Ocean County Vocational & Technical School, Ocean County and Monmouth County Master Gardeners who assisted with programs and projects including tree grading and trail maintenance. Dr. Laura Stone continued to monitor the eastern bluebird nest boxes at our facility with the help of various volunteers. There were 19 nest attempts, 91 eggs laid and 79 fledglings in 2017. Three Eagle Scouts completed their projects at the FREC in 2017: Liam Callahan constructed benches and table at a learning station along the Swamp Life Trail; Chris Lentini completed a wildlife observation platform near the pond on the Swamp Life Trail; and Parth Patel renovated the seating at the Pergola behind the Interpretive Center.

Barnegat Bay Themed Programs and Events:

The FREC continued to support the work of the NJ AmeriCorps Watershed Ambassadors Program during the Rain Barrel *train the trainer* workshop and biological assessment training workshops hosted at FREC. FREC staff also provided the educational component of the Barnegat Bay Blitz with guided tours of the maritime forest at Barnegat Light State Park. FREC staff were part of the NJTV video recording of Barnegat Light State Park and filmed a snippet on the maritime forest at the park in August of 2017.

Trout in the Classroom: In cooperation with the Freehold and Ocean County Soil Conservation Districts, Jersey Shore Trout Unlimited, and NJ Division of Fish and Wildlife, FREC staff hosted the annual Trout in the Classroom Field Day. A total of 106 students and their teachers from 5 local schools participated in a day of interpretive programs and trout releases into the Toms River. An additional 125 students and teachers from 6 schools released their trout at the FREC on separate occasions, as part of FREC led interpretive programs.

New Projects in 2018: Two maple sugaring events are scheduled for late winter. A Greenland-style kayak paddle making workshop and a build your own Native American drum workshop are planned for the spring. Our new Swamp Life Trail brochure will be published by the summer.

Events in 2018: We will continue to host the popular Backyard Forestry in 90 Minutes series that is held every second Thursday starting at 7:00 p.m. and the 24th Annual Fall Forestry Festival on Saturday, October 6, 2018.

Rick Dutko – Facility Manager

495 Don Connor Boulevard
Jackson, NJ 08527
732-928-0987
www.forestrycenter.nj.gov



South Jersey RC&D

South Jersey Resource Conservation & Development Council area includes:

Atlantic, Burlington, Camden, Cape May, Cumberland, Gloucester, Mercer, Middlesex, Monmouth, Ocean and Salem Counties.

The South Jersey RC&D mission to accelerate the conservation, development and utilization of natural resources, to improve the general level of economic activity, and to enhance the environment and standard of living in our designated RC&D areas is ongoing.

In 2017, the RC&D Council's organized participation at various events has broadened the audience of the information the group provides. SJRC&D continues to plan, develop and carry out many programs for resource conservation and development. See us on Facebook for updates too. As a member of the Mid-Atlantic Regional Association, the council works with other RC&D councils to enhance our efforts throughout the region in such projects as:

Wildlife Habitat: "Team Habitat" planning for the ongoing jobs of providing a valued resource to the area, such as wildlife habitat rehabilitation. The new Team Habitat manager attended several events and coordinated the projects throughout the South Jersey RC&D area. The work has been ongoing with grant money for some pilot projects. Brochures for the work able to be done by the Team are available. Visit the website for further information.

Tour des Farms: The eleventh annual Tour des Farms bike ride in Burlington County had another successful year, the SJRC&D event went well. Over 260 riders cycled from farm to farm with "Farm Bucks" (coupons) redeemable at the local farm markets along the route. Tour des Farms educates residents on agricultural topics and practices. We intend to increase ridership and sponsors in 2018. The look for new farms to participate on the tour in the future is ongoing.

Soil Health: The Council promotes soil health through the Soil Health website at www.njsoilhealth.org and the work through the Team Habitat seeding program. The Council also promotes soil health on farms by renting out a roller/crimper. This tool allows vegetable crops to be planted directly into crimped cover crops. This method reduces soil erosion, pesticide use, and creates a cleaner pumpkin crop. The roller/crimper is available to farmers and is located at the Burlington Soil Conservation District office, which houses the South Jersey RC&D.

Delaware Estuary Levee Organization: The inventory of 70 aging levees along the Delaware Bay shoreline was completed in 2010 and potential partnerships are being pursued for restoration work on the identified levees, with submittals to the DEP and Army Corp for action. More work needs to be done to provide enhancements to the system.

Water Conservation: The Council wants area people to visit the lawn watering program at Rutgers University climatology program. Newspapers are alerted by email and a website is updated each day during the summer to provide homeowners with accurate information on how much irrigation their lawn needs that day. This is based on an area's soils; evapotranspiration and rainfall measured at local weather stations. The Council, through its partnership with the State Climatologist from Rutgers, has promoted this program to all New Jersey municipalities.

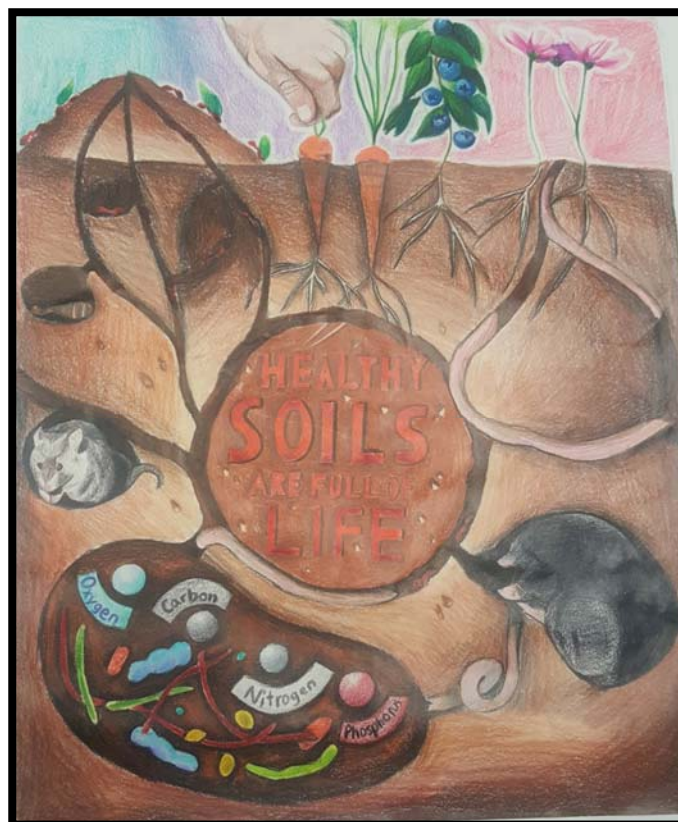
Council

Jack Sworaski— Chairperson
Dan Pace —1st Vice Chairperson
Robert Reitmeyer —Secretary
Craig McGee — 2nd Vice Chairperson
Michael Hill — Treasurer

South Jersey RC&D

Columbus USDA Service Center
1971 Jacksonville-Jobstown Road
Columbus, NJ 08022
609-267-1639 www.sjrcd.org
Email: Coordinator <coordinator@sjrcd.org>

NJ Conservation Poster Contest



This 1st Place Poster Contest entry earned a \$100 prize for Xinyi Christine Zhang, of Kendall Park, in the Grades 4-6 Division. She also won 1st place at both the State level and National level for 2017.

Rutgers Cooperative Extension of Monmouth County

Agriculture & Natural Resources - Department Head Bill Sciarappa, Horticulturalist Diane Larson and Ag Associate Dennis McNamara provided technical and educational programs on a local and state basis for vegetable, agronomic, fruit, nursery and greenhouse production. Soil health projects focused on 66 farms involving vegetables, turf, blueberry and soybean-corn rotations; again supported by the NJ Soybean Board. The fifth year of our newest county fair was another success – The Open Space Pace for farmland preservation. A Festival of Horses parade through downtown Freehold helped attract 6,000 people to the Raceway.

The Grown in Monmouth program led by Freeholders Tom Arnone and Lillian Burry has increased economic development for local agri-business. GIM team Coordinators John Ciufo and Susan Folta held grower meetings at our Ag Extension Building and introduced the new website and additional branding. At RU Cream Ridge Research Farm, our new crop demonstrations included commercial field plantings of the Rutgers Scarlet Strawberry, new Rutgers cultivars and new blueberry varieties. Our outreach programs in crop science, agrichemical education, water allocation and storm water runoff continue to expand. The Shark River channels were again dredged and a new design for a living shoreline to prevent erosion and sediment was created with our partners. Our total number of public rain garden demonstrations increased to 78 and over 600 private rain gardens. Work continues with the Maritime Forest restoration to enhance shoreline protection and improve water quality. Our extension faculty team constructed a new research and teaching greenhouse bay on campus and began its first undergraduate course called “**Innovations with Indoor Cultivation**”. High value crops like leafy greens and herbs are grown by students for hands-on experience in aeroponics, hydroponics and geaponics; then provided to the University Cafeteria. (see photo)

Rutgers Master Gardener program - Twenty-two Monmouth County residents successfully completed this in 2017, which entailed 60 hours of formal training, followed by at least 60 hours each of community volunteer service. Monmouth County has trained a total of **533 Master Gardeners** since its inception in 1999, retaining 220 active Master Gardeners. Master Gardeners provided **23,012 hours of volunteer service** in 2017, and responded to over **2,532 gardening inquiries** from the public through the RCE office as well as at 34 off site events throughout the county. Of the total hours of volunteer time, **2,810 hours** were spent performing consultation and diagnostic duties at Helpline events, **13,909 hours** were spent performing **Community Outreach** where the public was educated on horticulture on an informal basis, and **3,095 hours** were spent formally teaching the public through the **Speakers Bureau**. **Master Gardeners presented 81 lectures** to over 1,850 residents of Monmouth County on Composting, and Rain Barrel committees. These **19,815 hours**, according to the Independent Sector's value of volunteer time for New Jersey, calculates into a cost factor of **\$529,060**.

Community Projects

Second Annual Spring Garden Symposium was held March 25, attracting over 110 residents to this free educational event.

- A Community Garden educational series was held over 3 evenings throughout the late winter. Talks on Starting a Community Garden, Harvesting and Food Safety, Composting, and Pests in the Garden were given to 100 residents.

- Over **25,000 pounds of produce** were grown and donated by Master Gardeners to 13 food pantries throughout the county. This food was grown in the **Plant a Row for the Hungry** and **Junior Master Gardener Garden** as well as the other **25 Community Gardens** supported throughout the county
- **11th Class of the Junior Master Gardener** program was held, 190 Youth trained to date
- **13 Horticultural Enrichment** programs were given at 6 different facilities in Monmouth County, impacting 205 residents.

4-H Youth Development Program - In 2017, the 4-H Department of Monmouth County continued to grow and expand the youth development program. There are 24 Clubs, 305 Members, 88 Volunteers/Leaders, and 44 Active Alumni Association Members.

Clubs – Monmouth County 4-H clubs cover a wide range of topics, including but not limited to: yoga, robotics, cooking, shooting sports, and of course small animals, livestock, and horses.

Members – 4-H club members fall under two categories, Cloverbud and standard. Cloverbud members are between the grades kindergarten – 3rd. Standard 4-H members are youth in grades 4th – 13th (one year out of high school) and are enrolled in many different 4-H project areas. Members of this age may exhibit their completed work to be judged for awards. Older 4-H members also have special opportunities, such as serving on a county-wide 4-H Teen Council as well as attending state and national leadership events

Volunteers/Leaders – In our county 4-H program, 22 new 4-H volunteers joined the program by going through the Rutgers Volunteer Appointment Process. 4-H volunteers are the backbone of the program, connecting with 4-H'ers, they share their talents and knowledge with a spirit of generosity.

Alumni – Monmouth County is unique among the county 4-H programs in New Jersey in that we are the only county program to have an active and engaged 4-H Alumni Association. With over 40 registered members, the Alumni Association provides support as judges, project area specialist, workshop leaders and funding scholarships for 4-H youth members.

Partnerships – Monmouth 4-H continued to gain new community partners, adding Howell Memorial School and Barnside Veterinarian Hospital as new allies in promoting positive youth development. Through work with Open Space Pace, the 4-H program demonstrated its continued dedication to horses and equine science. The longest and most successful partnership is with the Monmouth County Parks System. The Monmouth County Fair is the most visible collaboration between these two county agencies. This event gives 4-H members the opportunity to showcase their achievements to the community, with one of the main draws being the many 4-H animal science projects on display educating the general public. With over 70,000 visitors to this five day agricultural experience in the summer of 2017.

At the New Jersey Agricultural Convention, Monmouth 4-H was represented by two 4-H Ambassadors. Hannah Valdes, Monmouth 4-H's S.E.T. (Science Engineering and Technology) Ambassador and Colin Roach, who is both a 4-H Food & Fitness Ambassador as well as one of the county 4-H Fair Ambassadors. Monmouth's other 4-H Fair Ambassador, Brooke Donzelli, created the GROWN IN MONMOUTH tri-fold which highlighted many of the buy local opportunities that exist in Monmouth County, bringing special attention to many of the local JERSEY FRESH farm stands that provide our community with locally grown, healthy, produce.

Rutgers Cooperative Extension of Middlesex County

Rutgers Cooperative Extension of Middlesex County can be found at the EARTH Center, in Davidson's Mill Pond Park, 42 Riva Avenue, South Brunswick.

Agricultural & Natural Resource Management

Our Extension Director and County Agricultural Agent Bill Hlubik continues his research which aims to keep our local farmers on the cutting edge of productivity while offering new valued products.

RESEARCH

Extension Director and County Agricultural Agent Bill Hlubik continues to work on specialty crops for local growers.

- Professor Hlubik is finalizing the release of a second strawberry variety for local farmers that has better flavor and greater disease resistance than current varieties. The work is highlighted in a national PBS film called "The Flavored Strawberry" which is now being circulated nationwide.
- In 2017, Mr. Hlubik in cooperation with a local grower began evaluating elderberry cultivars/varieties looking at fruit and flower production. There is increased local demand for this product and established trials at the EARTH Center will examine production practices to enhance fruit and flower characteristics.
- Mr. Hlubik is also involved with the Rutgers Hazelnut Project, another potential crop for Middlesex County and growers throughout New Jersey. This collaboration of Rutgers with universities nationwide will look at new selections, and set up trials at New Jersey research stations and local farms.

OUTREACH

The Agricultural Department conducts workshops and programs throughout the year.

- Beginner Farmer training sessions had over 100 participants including students, industry professionals, and farmers. The training included an overview of farming practices, regulations, resources, and visits to local farms.
- Sustainable Agriculture training was held for over 50 students. The sessions included classroom and hands-on demonstrations
- Over 150 nursery and landscape professionals received pesticide certification training
- There were over 100 field visits made to growers, local businesses, community projects, and associations for guidance and expertise on issues related to plant/pest problems, production practices, and garden establishment
- Over 75 samples (plant, animal, insect, tick, etc.) were submitted to our office for examination
- Tours of research and demonstration gardens were given to visiting delegations from other countries including professionals from China and Korea.
- Promotional efforts to thousands of County residents through Community and Extension events including: Rutgers Day, Community/Environmental Events, EARTH Center's Open House, the Middlesex County Fair, and the Raritan River Fest
- In a cooperative workshop, Eric Gehring, County Open Space Coordinator, provided training to 15 Rutgers students on

invasive plant species which included hands-on examination and removal of invasive species from Davidson's Mill Pond Park.

- Bill Hlubik and Michele Bakacs will be working with Eric Gehring, County Open Space Coordinator, in 2018 on an NRCS conservation project within Davidson's Mill Pond Park. This will include the preparation and planting of wildflowers at two locations

Our Rutgers Environmental Agent for Middlesex County, Michele Bakacs, continues to cooperate with the Freehold Soil Conservation District and the Township of Monroe by educating residents through videos explaining the methods implemented, and value of, protecting the shoreline of Manalapan Lake in Thompson Park as well as other parts of the Manalapan Brook Watershed.

In addition, Michele has partnered with the Rutgers Water Resources Program to help implement storm water management practices in the Raritan River Watershed. At least 2 new rain garden projects have been identified including at the Greater Brunswick Charter School and Spotswood Memorial Middle School to be built in the spring, 2018.

The Rutgers Environmental Steward program graduated over 70 new Stewards this fall including 9 from Middlesex County at the November program commencement. The Rutgers Environmental Steward program trains volunteers on important environmental issues in New Jersey such as climate change, habitat conservation, alternative energy, and environmental policy, and helps them make a difference in their own communities.

On Saturday June 24, 2017 a Volunteer Maintenance day was held in cooperation with Middlesex County Office of Parks and Recreation, it's Conservation Corps, and Rutgers Cooperative Extension. Approximately 20 volunteers performed maintenance on existing restoration projects on the banks of Manalapan lake. Close to 250 new plants went in the ground in Thompson Park, Monroe Township in an effort to control soil erosion, reduce rainwater runoff, and improve habitat in the park.

Our E.A.R.T.H. Center staff and various Rutgers agents are currently training a class of 35 Master Gardener interns, while 30 from past classes graduated in February of 2018 to become certified Master Gardeners. From here, they will continue volunteering to help educate residents in the areas of home horticulture and the environment.

Two of Middlesex County's Master Gardeners have received statewide recognition at the October New Jersey Master Gardener conference. Vivian Morris and Kathy Starzer-Farrell, (Class of 2013), have volunteered over 1,000 hours each in the program. Starting as interns volunteering in the greenhouse, Vivian and Kathy are now the two main coordinators in our Greenhouse Project. The project involves growing over 20,000 plants for the EARTH Center and other county gardens including a variety of herbs, flowers, vegetables and fruit. In addition, the project teaches important production techniques like seeding, transplanting, and proper watering.

Through the hard work of Master Gardener volunteers and others approximately 1,000 pounds of EARTH Center grown produce were donated to local food banks.

Extension staff and Master Gardener volunteers began developing the Edward Antill Heirloom Garden at East Jersey Old Town in early 2017 named after an early 18th century Piscataway landowner who won the Royal Society of Arts award for planting over 500 grape vines. In April 2017, draft horses and plow (provided courtesy of the Howell Living History Farm), broke ground, then were followed by the planting of heirloom corn varieties (yellow and red dent) and sorghum. Students from the County's Vo-Tech High School (East Brunswick campus) assisted in the maintenance of the garden, along with other volunteers. The corn stalks decorated Old Town and corn was donated to the Johnson Park zoo for animal feed. The goal of the Antill Garden is to display the importance of heirloom fruit and vegetables varieties to colonists for sustenance whether grown on farms or in home gardens.

The 4-H Youth Development Department:

New 4-H clubs were created in 2017 covering such program areas as robotics and 3-D printing, hiking and genealogy. This brings the total number of 4-H clubs in Middlesex County to 32. Annual programs open to 4-H members as well as the general public, such as Explorations Week and Eco-Ventures were successful as always, bringing youth together to foster team building skills, increased self-esteem, and further discovery into interest areas such as the arts or science. These programs are also a good recruitment tool for the 4-H program.

Our 4-H Teen council once again held their Haunted House fundraiser during the month of October in which 65 teens participated to raise over \$7000 in support of Project Gift, a holiday charitable event that since its debut in 1997 has spread holiday joy to over 5,000 children

Family and Community Health Sciences (FCHS):

FCHS promotes health and wellness through education, research and collaboration with outreach in food, nutrition, and healthy lifestyles.

Shailja Mathur, Senior Program Coordinator and Registered Dietitian, has focused primarily on chronic disease prevention. In 2017, she worked closely with the Middlesex Office of Health Services, RWJ Barnabas Health and Rutgers Medical School – South Asian Total Health Initiative (SATHI) and New Jersey Department of Health. Multiple lesson series were held at various Middlesex County libraries, RWJ Wellness centers, and houses of worship for Chronic Disease Self-Management, Diabetes Self-Management, Stroke Prevention, Worksite Wellness and Functional Foods reaching over 361 adults.

In collaboration with SATHI and Diabetes Sisters, a national non-profit, Shailja organized a forum for South Asian Women Living with Diabetes. 62 participants attended this event at the Old Bridge Library on November 18th. Welcome remarks were given by Shanti Narra, Middlesex County Freeholder. Shailja also was invited by the Middlesex Department of Health Services to lead the "Walk with the Doc" National Program event in Roosevelt Park on November 17th.

Middlesex County's Extension office, the E.A.R.T.H. Center in Davidson's Mill Pond Park offered a full schedule of home horticulture and environmental stewardship programming for interested residents throughout the year. Workshop and seminars

ranging from topics like Growing Garlic, Backyard Composting and Native Plant species were well attended and plans are underway for a full schedule in 2018.

Upcoming for 2018

Keep an eye out for EARTH Center 2018 spring workshop schedule that will include time tested favorites like Backyard Beekeeping and Compost workshops as well as newer topics like Suburban Chicken Raising or A Tour of Middlesex County's Rain Gardens.

Save the Date: Our 2018 EARTH Center Open House and Garden Field Day will take place in late August and will have a Folk Festival theme. Contact Dave Smela at 732-398-5268 for details.



Volunteers assist with lakeshore restoration maintenance in Middlesex County's Thompson Park

Master Gardeners plant a row for the hungry at the EARTH Center



2017 ANNUAL REPORT

Freehold Soil Conservation District

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Editor: Holly Reynolds

Primary Photographer: Paul Califano

New Jersey Soil Conservation Districts consist of paid staff plus a volunteer Board of Supervisors. The operation of the Freehold Soil Conservation District is supported by the collection of plan review and project inspection fees paid by developers for construction projects.

FREEHOLD SOIL CONSERVATION DISTRICT

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

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Robert Dreyer	Vice Chairman
Donald Patterson	Treasurer
Roger Gravatt	Member
Wayne Van Hise	Member

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Michael Hill	Assistant District Manager
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Timothy Thomas	Resource Conservationist
Ben Shotland	Resource Conservationist II
Paul Califano	Resource Conservationist II
Michael Infanti	Resource Conservationist II
Steve Grosch	Resource Conservationist II
Courtney Davidson	Resource Conservationist II
Brian Governale	Resource Conservationist II
Joseph Serio	Site Inspector
Holly Reynolds	Public Information Specialist
Christina LaBianca	Administrative Services Mgr.
Sharon Robertson	Receptionist — Secretary
Andrea Farparan	Secretary— Application Processor

Douglas Widman, Esq.	District Attorney
Suplee, Clooney & Co.	District Accountant

NJ DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Douglas Fisher	Secretary of Agriculture
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STATE SOIL CONSERVATION COMMITTEE

NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE

Clare Flanagan	District Conservationist
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Deepak Matadha PhD	Mosquito Commission Supt.
Richard Wallner	County Engineer, P.E.
George Ververides	Planning Board Office Director
Rick Lear	Parks Department Head

MONMOUTH COUNTY ADMINISTRATION

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Victoria Thompson	Mosquito Commission Supt.
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Edward Sampson	Planning Director
James Truncer	Parks Department Secretary-Director

COOPERATING AGENCIES

USDA Farm Service Agency

Gabor Grunstein	County Executive Director
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Rutgers Cooperative Extension Monmouth

William Sciarappa	County Agent
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Rutgers Cooperative Extension Middlesex

William Hlubik	County Agent
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NJ Division Parks & Forestry

Forest Resource Education Center

NJ Department of Environmental Protection