



National Association of  
Conservation Districts

## NACD Northeast Regional Meeting

### *Sound Practices: Conservation for the Future*

*Hosted by*

*The Connecticut Association of Conservation Districts*

**August 25-28, 2019**

Foxwoods Resort Casino  
GRAND PEQUOT TOWER  
350 Trolley Line Boulevard  
Mashantucket, CT 06338

#### **Sunday, August 25, 2019**

11:00 am to 5:00 pm	<b>Registration: Grand Pequot Pre-Function area</b>
12:00 pm to 4:30 pm	<b>District Employees Tour:</b> Project O (Ticketed Event)
5:00 pm to 6:00 pm	<b>Cocktail Reception</b> at the Grand Terrace (Cash Bar)
6:00 pm to 7:00 pm	<b>Dinner</b> at the Grand Terrace: New England (lobster, BBQ chicken and all the fixings).

#### **Monday, August 26, 2019**

7:00 am to noon	<b>Registration: Grand Pequot Pre-Function area</b>
7:00 am to 8:30 am	<b>Breakfast: Grand Pequot A</b>
8:00 am to 9:15 am	NACD NE Region Board Meeting
9:30 am to 10:30 am	<b>Opening and General Session: Grand Pequot A</b> <i>Denise Savageau, NE Region Chair Presiding</i> Connecticut Welcome <i>Bill Jorsz, Chair, Eastern Connecticut Conservation District</i> <i>U.S. Congressman Joe Courtney, Connecticut's 2<sup>nd</sup> District</i> <i>Tom Morgart, USDA-NRCS CT State Conservationist</i> National Association of Conservation Districts – <i>Tim Palmer, President</i>
	<b>Partner Reports</b> USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service - <i>Terrell Erickson, Northeast Regional Conservationist</i> National Association of Conservation District Employees - <i>Jeff Parker, Northeast Representative</i> CT Council on Soil and Water Conservation – <i>Lilian Ruiz, Executive Director</i>
10:30 am to 10:45 am	<b>Break</b>

10:45 am to 12:00 pm	<p><b>Plenary Session: Soil Health Champions: Grand Pequot A</b>  <i>Dorn Cox PhD, Research Director, Wolfe's Neck Center for Agriculture and the Environment and Director of Open TEAM collaborative.</i>  <i>Brandon R. Smith, Ph.D., Team Leader, National Soil Health Division, USDA-NRCS.</i></p>
12:15 pm to 1:30 pm	<p><b>Lunch: Grand Pequot A</b>  Keynote Address: <b>James Albis</b>, Senior Advisor to the Commissioner at Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP)</p>
1:30 pm to 2:45 pm	<p><b>Breakout Session 1</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A. Healthy Forest Reserve Program- Last Green Valley: <i>Room: Palm Springs</i></li> <li>B. Social Marketing for Behavior Change <i>Room: Monterey</i></li> <li>C. Living Shorelines <i>Room: Aspen</i></li> </ul>
2:45 pm to 3:00 pm	<b>Break: 10<sup>th</sup> Floor</b>
3:00 pm to 4:15 pm	<p><b>Breakout Session 2</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A. Permaculture and Pollinators <i>Room: Palm Springs</i></li> <li>B. The Little River Water Quality Consortium: Cyanobacteria <i>Room: Aspen</i></li> </ul>
<b>Evening</b>	<p><b>Dinner on your own.</b>  <b>Enjoy Foxwoods Resort and Nearby Attractions!</b></p>

**Tuesday, August 27, 2019**

7:00 am to 10:30 am	<b>Registration: Grand Pequot Pre-Function area</b>
7:00 am to 8:30 am	<b>Breakfast: Grand Pequot A</b>
8:00 am to 9:00 am	<b>District Employees Meeting: Grand Pequot A</b>
9:15 am to 10:15 am	<p><b>Breakout Sessions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A. Coastal/Urban Tour: Living Shorelines <i>Room: Palm Springs</i></li> <li>B. Agricultural Tour: The Little River <i>Room: Aspen</i></li> </ul>
10:15 am to 10:30 am	<b>Break</b>
10:30 am to 11:30 am	<p><b>Plenary Session: Source Water Protection Panel: Grand Pequot A</b>  Facilitated by Kira Jacobs, Drinking Water Program, EPA Region 1  Panelists:  Gina DeMarco, District Manager, Northern RI Conservation District.  Tom Morgart, CT State Conservationist, USDA NRCS.</p>

	Steve Vitko, Watershed Protection Specialist, South Central Connecticut Regional Water Authority.
	Lori Mathieu, Public Health Section Chief, Connecticut Department of Public Health, Drinking Water Section.
11:30 am to 11:45 am	<b>Board Buses for Tours- Boxed Lunch</b>
11:45 am to 5:00 pm	<b>Conservation Tours</b>
	A. Bus 1: Coastal/Urban
	B. Bus 2: Agricultural

**Wednesday, August 28, 2019**

8:00 am to 9:30 am	<b>Breakfast for NACD Capacity Building Attendants: Grand Pequot A</b>
8:00 am to 12:00 pm	NACD Capacity Building Session

**Monday Sessions Descriptions**

**Plenary Session: Soil Health Champions**

Engaging producers and landowners in soil health is an important part of the mission of the Conservation Partnership. Two of the top leaders in soil health, Dorn Cox and Brandon Smith, will present the latest on soil health initiatives.

OpenTEAM and measuring soil health and environmental outcomes.

OpenTEAM, or **Open Technology Ecosystem for Agricultural Management**, is a farmer-driven, interoperable platform to provide farmers around the world with the best possible knowledge to improve soil health. Currently, farmers are faced with an ever-expanding assortment of decision-making software; however, these tools often do not “communicate” with each other, making it difficult to transfer, share or use by farmers and scientists or in supply chains. Open TEAM is working to change this.

*Dorn Cox PhD, Research Director, Wolfe's Neck Center for Agriculture and the Environment and Director of Open TEAM collaborative. Dorn is a Soil Health Champion and was the inaugural recipient of the National Association of Conservation Districts' Hugh Hammond Bennett Excellence in Conservation Award.*

Technology to Promote the Next Generation of Soil Health Champions

The 2018 farm bill included several new provisions related to soil health. We will outline some of the major changes NRCS is making to improve soil health planning, such as: a new soil testing activity, in-field assessment standardization, new resource concerns, updated practice standards, a new conservation activity plan and a soil remediation practice. We will also discuss potential next steps for expanding the soil health champion network.

*Brandon R. Smith, Ph.D., Team Leader, National Soil Health Division, USDA-NRCS.*

## **Breakout Session 1**

### **A. Healthy Forest Reserve Program- Last Green Valley**

*Lois Bruinooge, Executive Director - The Last Green Valley*

The USDA-NRCS Healthy Forest Reserve Program (HFRP) is a land conservation program that was not used much in the northeast until it was incorporated into the Long Island Sound Regional Conservation Partnership Program. This session will provide discuss how the HFRP program has helped develop a forestry land protection network in the northeast highlighting the work in the Long Island Sound Watershed RCPP and Southern New England Heritage Forest RCPP.

### **B. Social Marketing for Behavior Change**

Community Based Social Marketing: Testing a Lawn Care Behavior Change Campaign in the Niantic River Watershed

*Holly Drinkuth, Director of Outreach and Watershed Programs at The Nature Conservancy and Co-chair of the Long Island Sound Citizens Advisory Committee*

Using insights from behavioral psychology and direct contact with people, Community Based Social Marketing (CBSM) can foster healthy and sustainable environmental behaviors. A pilot project was conducted in the Niantic River Watershed communities of Waterford and East Lyme, Connecticut to identify and promote healthy lawn care actions that reduce nitrogen pollution from lawn fertilizers in coordination with the Long Island Sound Study. Holly will present the results of this ongoing work that included the Eastern CT Conservation District.

### **C. Living Shorelines**

*Kim Bradley, Project Specialist at the CT Institute for Resilience and Climate Adaptation (CIRCA) and Katie Lund, Director of Engagement (CIRCA)*

Ocean warming and ice sheet loss due to global warming have contributed significantly to global sea level rise. CIRCA will provide an overview of best practices and tools emerging from the Institute's funded projects that are available to communities with a focus on the use of nature-based approaches, including living shorelines and green infrastructure. This workshop will present guidance for communities when considering the creation of a living shoreline or application of green infrastructure on their property as well as case studies of living shorelines designed for sites in Connecticut.

## **Breakout Session 2**

### **A. Permaculture and Pollinators**

#### Applying Permaculture to Designing Habitat for Pollinators and Beneficials

*Cynthia Rabinowitz, Executive Director, Northwest Conservation District, Soil Scientist and Permaculture Designer*

Permaculture is a design system rooted in ecology and based on principles and ethics which are applied to all system designs. The presentation will explore how to apply these ideas to designing habitat for pollinator insects and other beneficial insects and animals such as birds and bats which are critical for ecological health and vital for successful agriculture.

#### Introduction to Pollinator Pathways

*Mary Ellen Lemay, Facilitator, Hudson to Housatonic Regional Conservation Partnership and member of the Pollinator Pathway. Landowner Engagement Director, Aspetuck Land Trust.*

With over 75 towns in CT and NY in various stages of launching Pollinator Pathway, this landowner outreach strategy has taken the region by storm in only 2 years. By planting natives, avoiding pesticides, and reducing lawn, this very scalable initiative has the potential to create healthy, connected habitats for pollinators and wildlife as they move across the landscape. Started as an H2H Conservation Pilot project, the Pollinator Pathway has all the ingredients to help landowners restore biodiversity with simple action steps.

### **B. The Little River Water Quality Consortium: Cyanobacteria**

#### Monitoring for Harmful Algae Blooms Using Citizen Scientists

*Jean Pillo, CPESC Watershed Conservation Project Manager*

*Hilary Snook, Environmental Scientist at US EPA Region 1*

Region 1 of the US EPA has developed the Cyanobacteria Monitoring Collaborative, an approach to educating, monitoring and managing for cyanobacteria using trained volunteers. Hilary Snook will preview basic information about cyanobacteria and its impact on water quality, as well as the concerns it raises. Mr. Snook will then review tools the agency has developed for its volunteer monitoring program. Following the EPA presentation, Jean Pillo, Watershed Conservation Program Manager for the Eastern Connecticut Conservation District and Volunteer Coordinator for The Last Green Valley Volunteer Water Quality Monitoring Program, will review the outcomes of a local 2018 pilot project in Roseland Lake, Woodstock, CT. Roseland Lake is located within the Little River watershed, upstream of the intake for the Town of Putnam drinking water supply. The Little River watershed has been designated by NRCS as a priority watershed under the National Water Quality Initiative.

## Tuesday Sessions Descriptions

### Breakout Session

#### **A. Coastal/Urban Tour Presentation: Living Shorelines and Niantic Stormwater**

*Judy Rondeau, ECCD Assistant Director and Niantic River Watershed Coordinator.*

*Jacob Isleib, Resource Soil Scientist for the USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service*

The Niantic River watershed encompasses approximately 31 square miles in the towns of East Lyme, Montville, Salem and Waterford. The Niantic River has been listed as impaired for recreation, habitat and recreational shell-fishing for many years. In order to address the impairment, the Niantic River Watershed Protection Plan was prepared and approved in 2006. In 2008, the Eastern Connecticut Conservation District (ECCD) received funding from the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection to coordinate the formation of a watershed protection committee. Since that time, ECCD, the Niantic River Watershed Committee and watershed towns have steadily implemented many of the recommendations of the watershed plan. Join ECCD Assistant Director and Niantic River Watershed Coordinator Judy Rondeau on an overview of key recommendations of the watershed plan and Best Management Practices that have been installed to address water quality concerns.

Jacob Isleib, Resource Soil Scientist for the USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service will present on Coastal Zone Soil Survey and Subaqueous Soils. A Coastal Zone Soil Survey is a seamless data set of soils information that encompasses inland soils, tidal marshes, and shallow subaqueous and submerged soils. Coastal Zone Soil Survey provides valuable information for planning and managing areas with high urban populations and significant ecological values while being exposed to high hazard potentials. When coastal areas are healthy and intact, they provide valuable services — and we rely on coastal areas as places to live, work, swim, boat, fish, and transport goods. Through the Coastal Zone Soil Survey, the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is gathering valuable information to assist in predicting and explaining soil distributions and functions that can help identify healthy ecosystems, determine where to focus restoration efforts, and detect early warning signs of degradation. This vital work will assist all of us in making wise decisions concerning our coastal natural resources.

#### **B. Agricultural Tour Presentation for the Little River**

*Dan Mullins, Executive Director-Eastern Connecticut Conservation District*

The Little River watershed has been designated by NRCS as a National Water Quality Initiative watershed. The watershed provides drinking water to the Town of Putnam. As such, Eastern CT Conservation District, NRCS and the CT Department of Energy and Environmental Protection have focused efforts on the watershed, implementing projects to improve water quality in the Little River. The Little River Tour presentation will inform attendees about the watershed, its land uses and actions taken in the watershed to address nonpoint source pollution. Agriculture is a predominant feature of the landscape, so the District and its partners have been installing a variety of best management practices on local dairy farms, though stormwater BMPs have been installed

as at public spaces, as well. To prime attendees for the tour, all of these practices will be previewed.

### **Plenary Session: Source Water Protection Panel**

*Facilitated by Kira Jacobs, Drinking Water Program, EPA Region 1*

*Panelists:*

*Gina DeMarco, District Manager, Northern RI Conservation District.*

*Tom Morgart, CT State Conservationist, USDA NRCS.*

*Steve Vitko, Watershed Protection Specialist, South Central Connecticut Regional Water Authority.*

*Lori Mathieu, Public Health Section Chief, Connecticut Department of Public Health, Drinking Water Section.*

Hear from the experts! Connecticut and Rhode Island are leaders in source water protection. The 2018 Farm Bill has a focus on source water protection. Panelists will discuss their experiences collaborating with each other and will offer advice on how to work with partners to implement projects on the ground. Representing a diverse set of perspectives, the discussion will focus on success stories in CT and RI. Examples include the CT Source Water Collaborative, the recent CT National Water Quality Initiative (NWQI) Source Water Pilot Project in the Farm River watershed, and RCPP projects.

### **About the Keynote Speaker**

#### **James Albis, Senior Advisor to the Commissioner at Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP)**

James Albis is the Senior Advisor to Commissioner Katie Dykes at the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP), where he works on policy development, legislative and political affairs, and special projects. Most recently he helped facilitate the Commission on Environmental Standards, which made recommendations on environmental and commercial fisheries mitigation strategies for offshore wind development.

Prior to working at DEEP, James served eight years in the Connecticut House of Representatives representing East Haven. Having served East Haven through the devastating storms Irene and Sandy in the early 2010s led James to focus his legislative efforts on climate change. After being named Chairman of the Shoreline Preservation Task Force and Co-Chairman of the legislature's Environment Committee, James wrote and passed laws that incorporated sea level rise into state and local decision-making processes and laid the framework for the creation of the Connecticut Institute for Resilience and Climate Adaptation (CIRCA). James also worked as the Executive Director of the Connecticut Green Building Council from 2017-2019, helping the organization promote sustainable building practices across the state. James received his B.A. in Economics from New York University and a Master of Environmental Management from the Yale School of Forestry & Environmental Studies.

**NOTES:**