



# Conservation News

Newsletter of the Merrimack County Conservation District — Spring 2011

## NRCS & MCCD Go Green



NRCS-Merrimack/Belknap County District Conservationist Lee Green tries a new sport on for size.

Merrimack County Conservation District welcomed Lee Green as District Conservationist with dim sum, a traditional Chinese brunch in early February. Green, who is replacing long term DC (now Resource Conservationist) Mike Lynch, counts authentic dim sum as only one of many changes in his life these days.

Green is adjusting to the New Hampshire weather; New England's famously arm's-length culture; unfamiliar foods, music and attitudes; a noticeably higher cost of living; an office with very different staffing and demands from his last workplace and, oh yes, a new and highly demanding

job.

"I'm looking forward to providing technical and financial assistance to Merrimack County landowners to help them address their resource concerns," said Green recently as he settled into his new office.

Green grew up in Jackson, Mississippi—a subtropical city four and a half times the size of Concord. Instead of running into moose in the woods, Green grew up looking out for alligators in the local ponds.

A talented trumpeter, Green garnered a musical scholarship to Lorman, MS's Alcorn State University, a small, rural liberal

*(Continued on page 3)*

## Ag Round Table Bears Fruit

The District's Local Foods Initiative continued its focus on the need for improved agricultural infrastructure on December 7 with a Round Table Discussion attended by over forty farmers and service providers.

The facilitated discussion gave farmers an opportunity to connect with their peers and to tell service providers what they need to increase productivity.

Key themes that emerged, often repeatedly, included:

- ◆ the need for institutional (wholesale) customers
- ◆ a long-term need for more (and better) USDA slaughterhouses, preferably small ones every 30-50 miles
- ◆ larger pool of customers who want to buy local foods
- ◆ education about how to select and cook local foods,

especially less familiar items ("the stuff they're not buying")

- ◆ legal issues, such as local zoning and increasing rules and regulations regarding production and processing of ag products
- ◆ taxation (e.g. towns wanting to tax temporary high tunnels and removal of land from current use when animal housing or storage buildings are added)
- ◆ high initial financial investment required to get into farming
- ◆ lack of health care
- ◆ possible equipment sharing arrangements
- ◆ high land costs.

As a result of the discussion MCCD is exploring purchase of a no-till seed drill (*see story, right*). □

## No-till Seed Drill

MCCD is considering the purchase of a no-till seed drill to rent to Merrimack County farmers. The District needs to know if and how county farmers will use this equipment before approaching grantors. We need your input on the following questions:

- ◆ Would you use a no-till seed drill if the District purchased one?
- ◆ What would you use it for?
- ◆ How many days would you use it? During what time periods?
- ◆ As the seeder would have to be maintained and stored, what would be a reasonable per day rental fee?

Please contact District Manager Stacy Luke (223-6023 or [info@merrimackccd.org](mailto:info@merrimackccd.org)) to let her know what you think. We need to hear from you! □

# District News Round Up

## Conservation Sale Tree & Shrub Orders Due April 8th

There's still time to order some high quality trees, shrubs, perennials, books, conservation tools and equipment or trout for your pond (see story, below) from the District's annual sale. The fundraiser features attractively priced native and locally grown plants suitable for Merrimack County's growing conditions.

Native plants improve water quality, enhance fish and wildlife habitat, reduce wind and soil erosion, help clean the air, reduce energy costs and beautify your property.

This year's sale expands our offerings of trees and shrubs useful for shore-land and stream bank stabilization, in addition to plants useful for fruit production, forestation, landscape beautification, wildlife habitat and wetlands conservation. The sale includes composters and rain barrels.

You can view an online catalog at [www.merrimackccd.org](http://www.merrimackccd.org) or contact the office (223-6023 or [info@merrimackccd.org](mailto:info@merrimackccd.org)) for a hard copy. □

## Trout for Pond Stocking

You don't need to feed trout in an established pond if your goal is recreational fishing. But just

as many people grow garden vegetables or raise their own meat, pond owners also can use their water resource to put dinner on the table. A 1/4-acre, 8-foot deep pond may support up to 100 fish. Stocking 6" to 8" trout or larger in early spring and feeding them throughout the growing season provides many delicious meals in a season.

If you'd like to try your hand at aquaculture—or just take the kids fishing—contact the District office ([info@merrimackccd.org](mailto:info@merrimackccd.org) or 223-6023) for details. Order deadline is Monday, May 2. Pick up for 6-8" trout is at The Concord Center Sunday May 15, 1 to 1:30 pm *only*. 10-12" fish will be delivered to your pond later that day. □

## Local Foods Guide Listing Deadline April 15

There's still time to get your listing into the 2011 MCCD *Local Food Guide*. The *Guide* went into 18,000 homes last year. 2011 distribution is being expanded to 30,000.

If you would like to have your farm, CSA, farmers' market or other locally produced (human only) food business listed in the *Guide*, call Becca Dole at the District office (223-6023). □

**Pollinator Workshop**  
UNH Co-operative Extension entomologist Alan Eaton will speak about native pollinators and how to encourage them April 11 at 6:30 at Pillsbury Free Library in Warner. The workshop is co-sponsored by the District and Kearsarge Beekeepers Association as part of a Specialty Crop grant. Participants will receive free plans for building a mason bee box. The event is free, donations accepted. Registration is helpful, but not required. □

**No-till and Cover Crop Ag**  
The District welcomed about 50 farmers to a daylong event February 23. Participants heard Agronomists Joel Myers and Dave Wilson talk about using no-till agriculture and cover cropping to increase crop yields and reduce soil erosion and labor, fuel, irrigation and machinery costs. NH organic farmer and agronomist Dorn Cox followed up with a discussion of his research into using organic techniques to implement no-till agriculture. □

## CONSERVATION NEWS



Quarterly Newsletter of The Merrimack County Conservation District

Distributed free to Merrimack County residents and others interested in conservation of natural resources.

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Presenters Dorn Cox (center) and Joel Myers (right) speak with Guy Steucek at the recent No-till/Cover Crop workshop.



## Springtime Activity for NRCS and the District: Rapid Assessment of Soil Carbon in NH

USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and the Merrimack County Conservation District will be busy this spring conducting a baseline inventory of the level of carbon and organic matter in our county's soils. The inventory will encompass all lands and include all major ecosystems.

Knowing how much carbon is currently in our soils is vital information. Organic matter is



*Soil scientists will be digging sample holes like this one this spring as part of a baseline inventory of Merrimack County soils.*

significantly correlated with soil productivity and quality, including such benefits as:

- ◆ storage and release of plant nutrients
- ◆ improved soil structure and reduced erosion & compaction
- ◆ increased water infiltration and retention
- ◆ buffered changes in soil pH.
- ◆ increased chemical and biological activity.

This carbon data will be used to evaluate the effects of conservation practices on soil carbon stocks for global carbon accounting.

Using this new data, we will be able to improve maps and knowledge about US soil carbon stocks; make better land use and management decisions; and have a publically accessible soil carbon database for model development and validation.

*Carbon and other organic matter is significantly correlated with soil productivity and quality.*



NRCS has randomly selected several Merrimack County sampling sites using NRCS soil maps and land use data. The District will be working with NRCS to contact the owners of these sample sites for permission and to schedule a time for a soil scientist to come out and take a soil sample. Landowners names and site locations will be kept confidential.

If you would like to learn more about the Rapid Carbon Assessment, please contact NH NRCS State Soil Scientist Joe Homer (788-3818 Ext 101 or [joseph.homer@nh.usda.gov](mailto:joseph.homer@nh.usda.gov)). □

**MCCD Goes Green** (Continued from page 1) arts campus well ranked in *US World & News Report's* annual review. Once there, he changed majors, graduating in 2003 with a BS in Soil and Plant Science.

Two years as a Soil Conservationist in rural Aberdeen, MS was followed by a similar stint in Batesville, MS. A promotion to District Conservationist of Montgomery County (Ohio) Soil & Water Conservation District gave Green his first taste of northern winter.

Despite stepping into one of the coldest winters New Hampshire's had in years, Green manages to maintain a good frame of mind. The adjustments are never ending, from New England's exponentially higher housing costs to Ohio's greater reliance on District technicians to

get the work done, to small daily surprises like the fact that onion rings in Concord bear little resemblance to their Mississippi or Ohio cousins.

There are differences in the conservation challenges between the Midwest and New England, too. Our smaller farms mean a higher volume of administrative work. NH has less cropland and much more varied land use, with a greater emphasis on specialty crops. "Each farm we work with requires the same amount of paperwork," says Green. "The size (of an individual farm) doesn't matter because the paperwork requirements are the same."

Soil erosion and drainage are the big conservation challenges in Ohio, which translates into more community-based projects. "There's more CRP (Conservation

Reserve Program) because waterways and field buffers are more popular," Green says.

One challenge Green faces is forest-based conservation. New Hampshire, unlike Mississippi and Ohio, is heavily forested (83%). Fortunately, he has the resources of experienced NRCS staff, Resource Conservationist Mike Lynch and Merrimack and Belknap District staff to help him in this transition.

Green is used to turning to his county conservation district for assistance. "If the Conservation District didn't exist in Ohio we wouldn't have been able to do it all," he notes. □





## Conservation News

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### *Coming Events...*

- ◆ Friday April 8 *Order deadline for MCCD Tree, Shrub, Trout and More Conservation Sale.* Contact the District today (223-6023 or [info@MerrimackCCD.org](mailto:info@MerrimackCCD.org)) for a catalog or visit [www.MerrimackCCD.org](http://www.MerrimackCCD.org) for an online version. (*Story, page two*)
- ◆ Monday April 11, 6:30 pm *Encouraging Native Pollinators*, Pillsbury Free Library, Warner. No charge, but donations welcome. Registration helpful but not required. Contact MCCD (223-6023 or [info@MerrimackCCD.org](mailto:info@MerrimackCCD.org)) for details. (*See story, page two*)
- ◆ Wednesday April 27 or Thursday April 28, 9:00 to noon *Hands-on WebSoil Survey Workshop*, Pembroke Academy Computer Classroom. Approved CEUs: Wetland Scientists, Soil Scientists 1.0; Foresters: 3.0; NHDES Subsurface Bureau 3.0 Credit Hours. \$25. Info MCCD (223-6023, [info@merrimackccd.org](mailto:info@merrimackccd.org)) or visit [www.merrimackccd.org](http://www.merrimackccd.org). Get a head start—visit <http://websoilsurvey.nrcs.usda.gov>.
- ◆ Monday May 2 *Order deadline for Ordering Trout for Pond Stocking.* Contact the District today (223-6023 or e-mail us at [info@MerrimackCCD.org](mailto:info@MerrimackCCD.org)) for a catalog or visit [www.MerrimackCCD.org](http://www.MerrimackCCD.org) for an online version. (*See story, page two*)
- ◆ Tuesday May 10, 8:30 to 4:00 *2011 Drinking Water Source Protection Conference*, Concord. Topics include national trends; loss of forests; economic incentives; UNH field work results; seasonal changes; LID stormwater techniques, low cost BMPs; planning/zoning. Info and register <http://www.agwt.org/workshops.htm> □