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## **FISCAL YEAR 2020 ANNUAL REPORT JULY 1, 2020 - JUNE 30, 2021**

### **Background**

Berkshire Conservation District (BCD, the District) is a non-profit, tax-exempt state organization founded in 1946 as one of more than 3,000 conservation districts across the country established under state law to carry out programs for the conservation and wise management of soil, water and related resources. Guided by an elected volunteer Board of Supervisors, BCD works in partnership with the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and is dedicated to environmental education, the conservation of natural resources and best land use and agricultural practices in Berkshire County, MA. The District does not receive regular state aid for its operations and available programming is dependent year-to-year on funds provided by grant awards, fundraising sales, and private donations. Past programming has included funding of environmental scholarships for local students at Berkshire Community College and UMass Amherst, hosting educational workshops, and providing community/school programs.

### **Mission**

*“The Berkshire Conservation District helps farmers, landowners and land managers improve and protect their natural resources. In cooperation with the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), we offer assistance through education and outreach.”*

### **Fundraising Efforts**

In the past, BCD has hosted a spring plant sale and a fall bulb sale that offered flowers, trees, and shrubs to beautify our communities, promote gardening, build wildlife habitat and encourage reforestation. In FY20 and 21, our spring and fall sales were suspended in order for the District to focus on implementing the No-Till rental and nutrient management programs. The District is considering a late summer/fall 2022 event incorporating other environmental conservation organizations with an emphasis on pollinator-friendly and native plant species. The District has submitted a grant application to EEA to fund the promotion of pollinators and native plants for FY22, including hiring a plant sale coordinator.

In early 2021, the District was awarded a grant from the Massachusetts Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EOEEA) to implement Phase 2 of a Nutrient Management Initiative. Nutrient management is the process of managing the amount, source, timing and method of nutrient application with the goal of optimizing farm productivity while minimizing nutrient losses that can create unintended environmental consequences. The goal of Phase 2 is to reach out to landowners and farmers about these regulations and assist them in their efforts to reduce excess nutrients washing into neighboring wetlands through runoff from lawns, pasture, and farmland within Berkshire County.

BCD received funding in 2020 through the New England Grassroots Environmental Fund to initiate a pilot program to educate residents and implement small-scale pollinator gardens in one Berkshire town that passed a ‘Pollinator-Friendly Community’ resolution. The design, purchase of plants and planting was completed by the Board of Supervisors, District Administrator and volunteers in the spring and early summer of 2021.

The No-Till Seeder rental program continues to make a positive impact on Berkshire area farmers plant crops while saving time, fuel and money. The seeder was used on approximately 335 acres between July 1, 2020 and June 30, 2021. This program allows farmers to try the no-till method for seeding as an alternative to purchasing the equipment. The concept of no-till practices is to minimize disturbing the soil structure when planting to reduce erosion and decrease evaporation. No-till seeding methods also decrease CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, which in turn help to slow the global climate crisis. The seeder is housed by our Caretaker, a local hay farmer, and is available for rent by farmers who share the use of the machine over the growing

season. The daily rental rate and a per-acre fee contributes to maintenance of the seeder and administrative support. The District is deeply grateful to our Associate and Caretaker of the seeder, Mike Balawender, for his time and expertise in interacting with farmers and facilitating the rentals.

We also want to thank all of our friends who have supported us within the last year. We could not have done it without all of your generous support! Most especially:

- The District Board of Supervisors: Adam Galambos, Ron Kujawski, Donna Kittredge, David Ellis and Ned Kirchner.
- Natural Resources Conservation Services: Gary Blazejewski, District Conservationist; Daniel Tighe and Jake Rathbun, Soil Conservationists.
- Thomas Anderson, Executive Secretary, State Commission for Soil, Water and Related Resources, Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs.
- Michael Leff, Executive Director, Massachusetts Association of Conservation Districts
- Our fellow conservation/environmental/agricultural community partners including BEAT, Berkshire Grown, Housatonic Valley Association, Berkshire Agricultural Ventures.

### **Looking Ahead to FY 2022**

In addition to the on-going No-Till and Nutrient Management programs, the District prepared a grant proposal to EEA for a Pollinator and Native Plant Initiative. The District is considering offering a fall native plant and tree seedling sale in 2022.

The goals and objectives of the District in FY22 include:

- Promote the planting of native plants that benefit pollinators
- Increase the number of pollinator-friendly communities in Berkshire County
- Increase the acreage of no-till planting with our seeder
- Continue to work with local NRCS agents
- Attract and maintain a diverse board of supervisors
- Cultivate and leverage strategic partnerships that compliment our mission
- Regularly engage with our local, state, and national counterparts

### **Board Members(Supervisors)**

The District is currently seeking conservation-minded individuals interested in serving on our active board. Board members are essential to the success of the District as they help guide the focus of the District and volunteer for special events offered throughout the year. The District welcomes new input and ideas as they relate to conservation of natural resources of Berkshire County. If you are interested or know of someone who would be a great fit, please contact the District via email, [berkshireconservationdistrict@gmail.com](mailto:berkshireconservationdistrict@gmail.com).

#### **BCD Board of Supervisors**

Adam Galambos, Chair  
Ron Kujawski, Vice Chair  
Donna Kittredge, Secretary  
David Ellis, Treasurer  
Ned Kirchner

**Associate:** Mike Balawender

**District Administrator:** Cynthia Grippaldi