



# Cumberland County Soil and Water Conservation District DISTRICT NEWS

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## LONG CREEK RESTORATION PROJECT: IMPERVIOUS ISN'T IMPOSSIBLE

All across the country, communities large and small are making the critical connection between environmental degradation and the manner in which they grow and operate. They are also learning how difficult it is to act alone, as one municipality, when addressing issues that know no political boundaries. As these communities try to make greener choices for a more sustainable future, many are realizing the value of coordinating their efforts to protect and restore their natural resources.



The Project aims to restore natural features of highly urbanized areas of Long Creek. Photo courtesy of Jeff Varricchone, Maine DEP.

No exception are four Maine municipalities – South Portland, Scarborough, Portland and Westbrook – all of which share the Long Creek Watershed and face a requirement under state and federal law to bring it back to health after years of intense growth have significantly impaired it. Hoping to avoid the typical top-down, command-and-control regulatory approach, these four communities are looking to grassroots collaboration and coordination to achieve their goal.

Over the past year and a half, a region-wide group of state and local officials, large and small businesses, residents, and non-profit organizations have been taking action to restore Long Creek and its watershed. The effort is being spearheaded by the City of South Portland with project management assistance from the District and federal funding from the Maine Department of Environmental Protection.

Long Creek, a meandering stream that flows from its headwaters in Westbrook, through the Maine Mall area of South Portland, into Clark's Pond, the Fore River, and ultimately into Casco Bay, was once a popular place to hike, swim, and fish. Years of surrounding urbanization have significantly impaired the stream's health, as well as its ability to support recreation or wildlife, such as brook trout. Long Creek no longer complies with state and federal water quality standards and is classified as one of 32 "urban impaired" streams in Maine.

The cause of the stream's steady degradation is stormwater runoff – polluted with oil, grease, metals, and nutrients – flowing into its waters from surrounding impervious areas such as parking lots, roadways, and rooftops. Some portions of the watershed are more than 50 percent impervious (10 percent is the threshold at which a healthy ecosystem begins to show signs of stress). (Story continued on p. 2)



## URBAN PROGRAM & WATERSHED PROTECTION

### Long Creek Restoration Project (Continued from p. 1)

While some property owners have installed state-of-the-art stormwater treatment systems, others developed their property before stormwater treatment was required or have systems that are outdated or are poorly maintained or malfunctioning.

The Project's Steering Committee believes that a collaborative plan will lead to the best, cheapest, and fairest approach to restoring water quality and managing the watershed. The Project has hired technical consultants to evaluate a range of restoration tools, including stormwater system retrofits, re-vegetation, parking lot and street maintenance, voluntary easements on open space, and other approaches to solving water quality problems. The Steering Committee has also begun to consider a range of funding options for carrying out restoration efforts and system maintenance that would be part of the stormwater management plan.

The process of developing a stormwater management plan is expected to continue through the rest of this year, with the potential that implementation of parts of the developing plan may begin as early as the summer of 2009. For more information on the Long Creek Restoration Project visit the project website: [www.restorelongcreek.org](http://www.restorelongcreek.org).



A section of the South Branch of Long Creek. Photo courtesy of Jeff Varricchione, Maine DEP.

### Urban Review Program: Voluntary Contractor Certification Program

The Voluntary Contractor Certification Program (VCCP) has been developed by the Maine Department of Environmental Protection (MDEP) as a non-regulatory, incentive-driven program to broaden the use of erosion control techniques. The primary purpose of the program is to prevent nonpoint source pollution from construction activity by creating an incentive for Maine contractors to become educated on best management practices for erosion and sedimentation control.

The VCCP is open to anyone who is involved with soil disturbance activity including filling, excavation, landscaping, and other earthwork. To become certified, a contractor must complete a basic and advanced course on Erosion Control Best Management Practices (offered by the MDEP) and successfully complete a site evaluation of one of their construction sites to demonstrate "hands on" understanding of erosion control principles. Construction site evaluations are coordinated through, and conducted by, local soil and water conservation districts.



Contractors certified through the VCCP implement best management practices such as encouraging revegetation and filtering of site runoff.

There are many benefits to hiring a certified contractor, including the assurance the excavation work will be performed in an environmentally sound manner. As well, certified contractors have been granted the ability by the MDEP to forego standard waiting periods on permit-by-rule projects and are given price discounts on erosion control materials by several area retailers.

The District encourages contractors to obtain the certification for themselves, their employees, and their companies. In fact, the recent enactment of LD 2249 An Act to Protect Lake Water Quality will require contractors involved in earth-moving activities to be certified by January 1, 2013. We also encourage those looking to hire an excavation contractor to consider certified contractors for their projects. For more information on the VCCP, or to schedule the field portion of your certification, contact Chris Baldwin at (207) 892-4700 or by email at [chris-baldwin@cumberlandswcd.org](mailto:chris-baldwin@cumberlandswcd.org).

Southern Maine Children's Water Festival Committee Recognized by EPA

For over thirty years, the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) New England regional office has honored those who have made outstanding contributions on behalf of our region's public health and natural environment. EPA's Environmental Merit Award program has honored teachers, citizen activists, business leaders, scientists, public officials, and others who have made such a contribution.

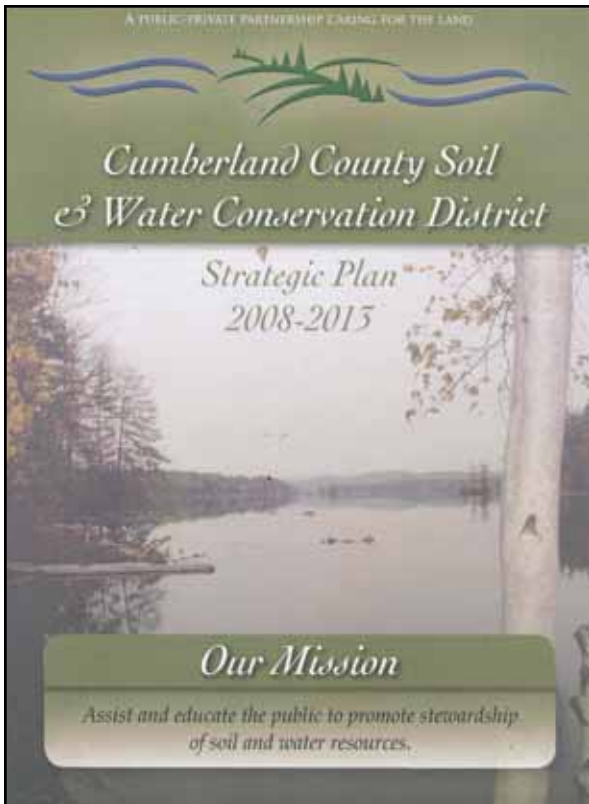
This spring, eight longstanding committee members of the Southern Maine Children's Water Festival were selected as recipients of this prestigious, once-in-a-lifetime award. Recipients included the District's Education Coordinator Sarah Plummer, Robert Sanford and Irwin Novak of the University of Southern Maine, Wendy Garland of the Maine Dept. of Environmental Protection, Beth Pratte of the Maine Drinking Water Program, Lynne Richard of the Portland Water District, Linda Woodard of Maine Audubon, and Susan Breau-Kelley of the Maine Rural Water Association. The awards were presented Earth Day, April 22<sup>nd</sup> at historic Faneuil Hall in Boston.



Water Festival Committee members receive EPA's Environmental Merit Award on Earth Day at Faneuil Hall.

The Southern Maine Children's Water Festival has taken place each spring since 1993 with the goal of educating children about water as a vital resource. Over 700 students attend the event, attending classroom activities, an exhibit hall, a game show called "Dripial Pursuit," and a musical stage show to learn about water resources and their importance.

The committee is comprised by individuals from various local environmental organizations, and works throughout the year to ensure the Festival is implemented. For more information on the Festival, visit [www.cumberlandswcd.org/education/water\\_festival](http://www.cumberlandswcd.org/education/water_festival).



Strategic Plan Completed

In 2007, the District Board of Supervisors and staff gathered to create the 2008-2013 Strategic Plan. The resulting Plan details our leadership's vision for the future of the District, as well as a plan for achieving the organization's mission through specific goals and objectives. The District's priorities over the next five years are outlined in the Plan, as are the steps we will take to address those priorities.

The new Strategic Plan is the result of a significant amount of input from many dedicated people serving on the District Board. It takes many volunteers with a variety of skills for an organization like the District to be successful. Thank you especially to our volunteer Board of Supervisors.

Through the process of creating this Plan, we recognized a universal agreement that the District's mission statement continues to resonate with everyone: To assist and educate the public to promote stewardship of soil and water resources. Our mission continues to reflect our commitment to anticipating, understanding, and responding to the critical issues affecting the soil and water resources.

To access the Strategic Plan, visit the publications page of our website.



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Benefits:

- ⊗ Provides habitat for caterpillars & butterflies! North America boasts over 760 species, with over 50 estimated in Maine
- ⊗ Can be used to teach about ecology, native plants, & insect life cycles
- ⊗ Repopulates an area with native plants
- ⊗ Assists in preserving threatened species of plants & butterflies

Fall's the perfect time to plant a  
**Butterfly Garden!**



You can plant a butterfly garden just about anywhere!  
Try incorporating:

- ⊗ Aster
- ⊗ Bee Balm
- ⊗ Black-eyed Susan
- ⊗ Butterfly bush
- ⊗ Coneflower
- ⊗ Cosmos
- ⊗ Echinacea
- ⊗ Highbush blueberry
- ⊗ Joe Pye Weed
- ⊗ Marigold
- ⊗ Milkweed (in photo)
- ⊗ Summersweet
- ⊗ Spiraea
- ⊗ Sunflower
- ⊗ Yarrow
- ⊗ Zinnia



All programs and services of the Soil and Water Conservation Districts are offered on a non-discriminatory basis without regard to race, color, national origin, sex, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, marital, or familial status.

To receive this newsletter electronically, please email [sarah-plummer@cumberlandswcd.org](mailto:sarah-plummer@cumberlandswcd.org)