



Long Island Nitrogen Action Plan (LINAP) - Monthly Newsletter

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Long Island Nitrogen Action Plan (LINAP) - Monthly Newsletter Soil and Water Conservation District Update

In this month's issue of the LINAP newsletter, we highlight the many initiatives led by our LINAP partners at the Nassau and Suffolk County Soil and Water Conservation Districts.

Soil and Water Conservation Districts are local units of government that develop, manage, and direct natural resource programs at the local level. The Districts' diverse scope of expertise and knowledge provides critical programming and technical assistance to residents, landowners and units of government to conserve and promote healthy soils, water and wildlife.

Nassau and Suffolk County Soil and Water Conservation Districts host the 2022 Long Island Regional Envirothon on April 27, 2022

The [Long Island Regional Envirothon](#) is Long Island's leading environmental studies program for high school students. The Envirothon is an environmental competition based on five environmental subject areas: aquatics, forestry, soils, wildlife, and the current issue—which changes annually. In past years, the current issue has covered topics such as agricultural preservation, non-point source pollution, wetlands, biodiversity, and alternative and renewable energy. This year's current issue is "Waste to Resources".

The primary goal of the Envirothon is for the students to learn about the natural environment and to become stewards of the land. In preparation for the event, students develop research skills, practice team building, and gain an appreciation for consensus decision making. The Envirothon Committee has carefully developed the program's learning objectives which correlate with the New York State Department of Education's Learning Standards in the areas of Mathematics, Science & Technology, Social Studies, and English Language Arts. With the education tools provided, students aspire to an advanced level of understanding about their natural surroundings.

The winning team from each county will move on to participate in the New York State Envirothon and each member of the winning teams will receive a scholarship of \$500!



2019 Long Island Regional Envirothon Winning Team. Photo credit: LI Regional Envirothon

Nassau County Soil and Water Conservation District (NCSWCD) Initiatives

Septic Environmental Program to Improve Cleanliness

The NCSWCD administers the Septic Environmental Program to Improve Cleanliness (SEPTIC), a program which provides funding to eligible residents, small businesses, and not-for profit organizations to replace a cesspool or inadequate septic system with nitrogen reducing Innovative and Alternative Onsite Wastewater Treatment Systems (I/A OWTS).

Tens of thousands of homes and small businesses in Nassau County are currently served by cesspools and septic systems. Reversing water quality degradation will depend on replacing these existing systems with new I/A OWTS. SEPTIC will provide grants of up to \$20,000 for homeowners, small businesses, and not-for profit organizations to install these state-of-the-art systems. Eligibility criteria includes:

- Applicants must be single family, two family, not-for profit organizations, and small businesses with an existing sanitary design flow less than or equal to 1,000 gallons per day (GPD).
- The project must be a replacement of an existing septic system or cesspool with a new I/A OWTS. The I/A OWTS must have been installed after March 1, 2018, to be eligible for the SEPTIC grant funding.
- Participating properties must have a valid certificate of occupancy or existing use issued by the pertinent city, town, or village.
- Participating properties must be served by an existing septic system or cesspool and not be connected to a public or private sewer or located within an

existing or proposed sewer district. If the property is located in an existing sewer district but is unable to connect due to site constraints documented by the sewer district in question, the property may be eligible, provided the applicant meets all other eligibility requirements.

- Applicant must not have any outstanding or open real property tax liens.

Qualifying residents can contact SepticReplace@nassaucountyny.gov or 516-364-5861 for more information and instructions on how to apply. Applications can be filled out online on the [SEPTIC webpage](#).

Funding for Conservation Projects

Each year the NCSWCD funds several conservation projects that align with the District's mission under a program called, "[Part C funding](#)". Eligible applicants include local governments in Nassau County and not-for-profit organizations. Projects chosen must meet one or more of the follow criteria in Nassau County:

- Conserve or improve soils
- Improve the water quality of our groundwater and/or surface water
- Control and prevent soil erosion and/or prevent floodwater and sediment damages
- Conservation, development, utilization, and disposal of water
- Preserve, increase, or improve natural resources including trees and plants
- Control or eliminate invasive plants or wildlife
- Control and abate NPS water pollution
- Preserve wildlife

The 2022 awards are expected to be announced this month on the NCSWCD [website](#).



Stormwater Runoff Initiatives

Nassau County is among the most developed suburban areas in New York State and with that comes a great deal of paved surfaces, creating a large amount of untreated runoff. Stormwater discharges are of concern on Long Island, because of the high concentration of pollutants found in these discharges. Untreated runoff greatly impacts ecological habitat for fish, shellfish, birds, and other wildlife that depend on the clean water for their survival. Pollutants carried by the stormwater runoff need to be reduced before the remaining stormwater can be safely returned to the groundwater or discharged into the surface waters.

To address this issue, NCSWCD is working on a variety of projects related to stormwater runoff.

- **Permeable Pavement:** NCSWCD helped install permeable pavement at the Bayville Community Center in March of this year through a project that was made possible with a grant from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation. Designed to reduce stormwater runoff, permeable pavement allows for the infiltration of stormwater and helps protect the area from flooding.
- **Stormwater Pollution and Green Infrastructure Solutions:** Together with the New York Department of Environmental Conservation, the NCSWCD have produced an educational film; Stormwater Pollution and Green Infrastructure Solutions. This film highlights the harmful impacts of stormwater runoff throughout New York State and showcases several green infrastructure solutions to help mitigate the issue. The goals of this film are to educate the public, municipal officials, and developers about stormwater pollution, and to encourage the use of green infrastructure, smart growth principles, and best management practices to help curb these impacts. You can view the video here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ATNy-valPXI>
- **Rain Gardens:** NCSWCD provides advisement on the installation of raingardens and soil testing to any Nassau County resident who is interested. Raingardens are a sustainable infrastructure and are typically planted with deep-rooted native plants that provide important environmental benefits. When it rains, a raingarden fills with a few inches of water and allows that water to slowly filter into the ground rather than running off to storm drains that connect to surface water and groundwater.

For more information about this service contact 516-364-5860 or email srooney@nassauswcd.org



Photo credit: LIRPC

Suffolk County Soil and Water Conservation District (SCSWCD) Initiatives

Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP)

Suffolk County has been awarded \$1.2 million grant by the United States Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). The grant was awarded as part of the Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) and will provide funding and technical assistance to farmers in Suffolk County.

The program, administered by the SCWCD and the NRCS, provides farmers within the Peconic Estuary Watershed funding to implement best management practices including but not limited to: nutrient management, pest management, pumping plant, sprinkler systems, agriculture mixing facilities, cover crops, drip irrigation, irrigation water management, mulching, composting, agrochemical mixing pads, roof runoff management, water and sediment control basins, and the use of slow- or controlled-release fertilizers.

Interested farmers and landowners that are located within the Peconic Estuary Watershed may apply by calling the SCWCD at (631) 852-3285, Ext 3.

Agricultural Environmental Management (AEM)

AEM is a conservation planning program administered by SCSWCD through funding from the NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets. AEM provides assistance to farmers to identify environmental resource concerns on their farms. Once identified, farmers can receive help with the planning and design, and financial assistance to implement best management practices. AEM includes funding for Implementation projects to farms, testing services provided by the district (for soil, water, compost, and manure), and reimbursement in Technical Assistance. AEM is a voluntary and confidential program that helps farmers make cost effective, science-based decisions to meet business objectives while protecting and conserving Long Island natural resources.

By participating in AEM, farmers can document their environmental stewardship and further advance their positive contributions to their communities, our food systems, the economy, and the environment.



Photo Credit: SCSWCD

Agriculture in the Classroom

Since 2017, the SCSWCD has administered and facilitated the [Agriculture in the Classroom](#) grant program to develop, sustain, and expand agricultural education programs in K-12 schools throughout Suffolk County. The goal of this program is to increase the awareness and understanding of local agriculture in Suffolk County and to strengthen the connection students have with healthy, fresh, local foods, as well as to provide unique educational opportunities. Applicants can request funds ranging between \$500 - \$3,000 for their projects.

From 2017-2021, the SCSWCD has helped fund 26 school projects. Projects have ranged from constructing high tunnels and hoop houses, to creating hydroponic systems in classrooms, to building pollinator habitats and installing irrigation systems. Many of the projects incorporate

lesson plans and after school clubs and programs to engage students in the project in multiple ways.

The 2022 winning projects will be announced in May 2022 on the [SCSWCD website](#) and social media channels.

Accompsett Middle School Pollinator Habitat Planting

Last year the SCSWCD helped students and teachers from Accomsett Middle School plant a Pollinator Habitat Garden. The project was awarded by the Long Island Nitrogen Action Plan (LINAP) 2020 Long Island Water Quality STEAM Challenge, a competition which encourages students to develop projects to reduce runoff and nitrogen pollution on school grounds and incorporate those projects into ongoing educational programs.

The native plant and pollinator garden was installed near the front entrance of the school, and serves as an ongoing “classroom” for both middle school and elementary school students on how native plants and natural pollinators, such as birds and bats, can reduce the use of chemicals or overwatering.

Soil Health Testing Program

SCSWCD collaborates with Suffolk County Cornell Cooperative Extension’s (CCE) [Agriculture Stewardship Program](#), whose goal is to work with farmers to reduce nutrient and pesticide loading from agricultural lands to the ground and surface water while still maintaining a viable agricultural industry.

SCWCD and CCE work with farmers to determine what their soil health goals are by analyzing their soil, discussing their lab results, and providing suggestions on what Best Management Practices could be implemented. In the past 4 years SCSWCD has served over 80 farmers.

Stormwater Remediation of Richmond Creek

Several years ago, SCSWCD was awarded funds through the Department of Environmental Conservation’s Water Quality Improvement Project (WQIP) grant program to implement a stormwater remediation project with the Town of Southold. The project design improves the efficiency of the drainage structures. The project was successfully completed in 2021 and as a result the creek no longer receives stormwater runoff discharge from Town-owned roadways.