



# Conservation Connection

Sharing the latest news from the New Hampshire Natural Resources Conservation Service



## Composting in the State Office

2013 is a new year full of infinite possibilities for our work, lives and health. When Ryan Dubois suggested composting in the Durham State Office as a way to minimize waste, it seemed obvious. What a great way to support our mission on a daily basis.

Vermicomposting is the process of using worms and micro-organisms to turn kitchen waste into a nutrient-rich humus. This humus will eventually make it's way to the People's Garden just outside the office; adding nutrients and improving the structure of the soil. Compared to ordinary soil, the worm castings contain five times more nitrogen, seven times more phosphorus and 11 times more potassium.



There is little rest for U.S. farmers and ranchers this winter as many rush to submit their 2012 Census of Agriculture forms. Knowing that information from the Census is used to shape local, state and national farm services, programs and policies, many producers have already answered the call to respond to the Census and share their story. USDA's National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) thanks those producers for completing their Census – ensuring their voice is heard and their farm is represented for the future of agriculture – and reminds others to respond now.

Have you responded yet? Although the deadline to submit Census forms recently passed, NASS stresses that it is not too late for producers to respond. YES, farmers can still send in their forms to be counted.

Farmers can return their forms by mail or online by visiting a secure website, [www.agcensus.usda.gov](http://www.agcensus.usda.gov). Federal law requires all agricultural producers to participate in the Census and requires NASS to keep all individual information confidential.

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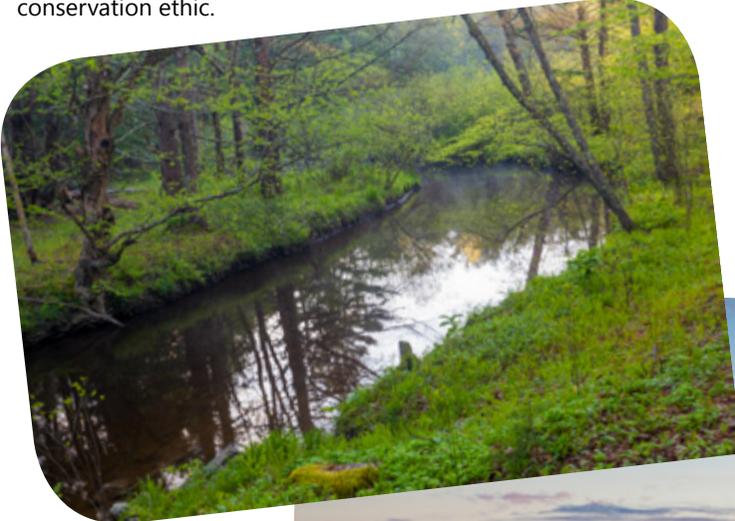
## Stories from the Field: Conserving Natural Resources in Durham

New Hampshire prides itself on our scenic vistas and working landscapes. These open spaces provide residents with direct economic and recreational benefits, along with clean air, drinking water, and many other ecological services. Our working lands generate a sustainable flow of food and forest products to our region and beyond. Tourism, our state's leading industry, owes its existence to the wise use and stewardship of these shared natural resources. At New Hampshire NRCS, we recognize the connection between a healthy environment and sustainable economy, and we aim to protect these resources for future generations.

Nothing illustrates this commitment better than a recent conservation project in Durham, New Hampshire where three adjoining properties were protected by NRCS. Utilizing funding from the Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program (FRPP) and the Wetland Reserve Program (WRP), NRCS placed an easement on 210 acres, buffering nearly a mile of the Oyster River under imminent threat of development. As a major tributary to the Great Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve, the Oyster River provides drinking water to both the Town of Durham and the University of New Hampshire. Great Bay is home to more than 150 rare species and 55 exemplary natural communities. Even more, this key link will join together more than 2,200 acres of conserved land, including a National Natural Landmark immediately to the west known as Spruce Hole Bog.

Early on, NRCS and its local partners recognized the importance of utilizing two different easement programs as a way to protect specific resource targets. Under Farm and Ranch Land Protection Program, precious agricultural soils will remain dedicated to growing healthy foods. Across the river, Wetland Reserve Program will restore and enhance critical wildlife habitat, where biologists are specifically excited about improving 25 acres of early successional habitat for the New England Cottontail, a candidate on the federal endangered species list.

Working together with partners such as The Trust for Public Land and Southeast Land Trust, NH NRCS ensures that communities like Durham can maintain a sustainable supply of clean drinking water, abundant recreational opportunities, fresh local foods, and unique wildlife habitat. A strong local economy demands a balance between open space and development, and here in New Hampshire, we respect that balance with a robust conservation ethic.



Photos courtesy of Jerry Monkman at Ecophotography

**To date, NH NRCS easement programs have protected:**  
10,374 acres under the Wetlands Reserve Program  
8,082 acres under the Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program  
478 acres under the Grasslands Reserve Program  
....for a statewide total of 18,934 acres!





## Biodiversity increases the success of most agricultural systems.

Managing for soil health is one of the most effective ways for farmers to increase crop productivity and profitability while improving the environment. Positive results are often realized within the first year, and last well into the future.

Biodiversity helps to prevent disease and pest problems associated with monocultures. Using cover crops and increasing diversity within crop rotations improves soil health and soil function, reduces costs, and increases profitability. Diversity above ground improves diversity below ground, which helps create healthy productive soils.

Farmers who manage their land in ways that improve and sustain soil health benefit from optimized inputs, sustainable outputs and increased resiliency. Healthy soils benefit all producers – managers of large, row crop operations to people with small, organic vegetable gardens. Healthy soils provide financial benefits for farmers, ranchers and gardeners, and environmental benefits that affect everyone.

### Healthy soils lead to:

**Increased Production** – Healthy soils typically have more organic matter and soil organisms which improve soil structure, aeration, water retention, drainage and nutrient availability. Organic matter holds more nutrients in the soil until the plants need them.

**Increased Profits** – Healthy soils may require fewer passes over fields because they are only minimally tilled and they aren't over-reliant upon excessive nutrient inputs to grow crops. Healthy soils can increase farmers' profit margins by reducing labor and expenses for fuel, and optimizing inputs.

**Natural Resource Protection** – Healthy soils hold more available water. The soil's water-holding capacity reduces runoff that can cause flooding, and increases the availability of water to plants during droughts. Good infiltration and less need for fertilizers and pesticides keep nutrients and sediment from loading into lakes, rivers, and streams. Groundwater is also protected because there is less leaching from healthy soils. Additionally, fewer trips across fields with farm machinery mean fewer emissions and better air quality.

## Notice to Hispanic and/or Women Farmers: COMPENSATION AVAILABLE FOR CLAIMS OF DISCRIMINATION

If you believe that the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) improperly denied farm loan benefits to you between 1981 and 2000 because you are Hispanic, or because you are female, you may be eligible to apply for compensation.

**Deadline to file a claim is March 25, 2013.**

Read more at: <https://www.farmerclaims.gov/>

New Hampshire NRCS employees are requested to report outreach activities for Hispanic and/or Women Farmers weekly to Jewel McKenzie at [jewel.mckenzie@nh.usda.gov](mailto:jewel.mckenzie@nh.usda.gov)

NRCS New Hampshire web site has a new, improved look. It is a huge task to convert all the NRCS web sites, and New Hampshire is proud to be among the first 10 states to make this change. You should find it easier to locate information about us and our programs, but if you don't, please feel free to contact Betty Anderson at any time: [betty.anderson@nh.usda.gov](mailto:betty.anderson@nh.usda.gov) or 603-868-9931 x136

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## Upcoming Events:

- February 21:** Technical Service Providers Workshop at Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forest in Concord, NH.
- February 21:** Making the Most of your High Tunnel at the McLance Center in Concord, NH.
- February 23:** Intermediate Maple Sugaring Workshop at the Rock Estate in Bethlehem, NH.
- February 25:** Dairy Forage Crop Meeting at Makris Lobster & Steak House in Concord, NH.
- February 27 & 28:** 2013 Harvest New England Agricultural Marketing Conference and Trade Show at Sturbridge Host Hotel in Sturbridge, MA.
- March 1 & 2:** Northeast Organic Farming Association's 2013 Winter Conference at Laconia Middle School in Laconia, NH.
- March 5:** Soil Health: Being a good Soil Steward at Grafton County UNHCE Office in North Haverhill, NH.
- March 7:** Northern New England Nursery Conference at the Ubran Forestry Center in Portsmouth, NH.
- March 9:** New Hampshire Vegetable & Berry Growers' Annual Meeting at Alan's Restaurant in Boscawen, NH.
- March 5:** University of New Hampshire Career and Internship Fair at the Whittemore Center in Durham, NH.
- March 12:** Non-Native, Invasive Plant Species; Identification and Control at Gay-Kimball Library in Troy, NH.
- March 13:** 28th Annual North Country Dairy Seminar & Trade Show at Mountain View Grand in Whitefield, NH.
- March 14:** 37th Annual Dairy Management Conference at the Holiday Inn in Concord, NH.
- March 20:** Easements Beyond the Basics at Pease Tradeport in Portsmouth, NH.
- March 22 & 23:** New England Meat Conference at the Grappone Conference Center in Concord, NH.
- April 6:** Saving Special Places Annual Land Conservation Conference at John Stark Regional High School in Weare, NH.

### Helping People Help the Land

NRCS New Hampshire State Office: 2 Madbury Road, Durham, NH 03824 | 603-868-7581 | fax 603-868-5301 | [www.nh.nrcs.usda.gov](http://www.nh.nrcs.usda.gov)  
Richard P. Ellsmore, State Conservationist

NRCS field offices are located at USDA Service Centers in Concord, Conway, Epping, Lancaster, Milford, Orford, and Walpole.  
Visit [www.nh.nrcs.usda.gov](http://www.nh.nrcs.usda.gov) for addresses and phone numbers.  
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