



Waldo County  
Soil and Water  
Conservation District

# A Conservation District Land Certification Program

Aleta McKeage, Technical Director,  
Waldo County Soil and Water Conservation District, Maine

# Today's Discussion

Overview of Waldo County, Maine SWCD planning and programs :

Resource protection themes as organizers

Creating program awareness through defining and naming services

Certification as a means of synthesis, practical instruction and engagement with constituents

How our certification program is structured and implemented

## INTERACTIVE DISCUSSION

Please share your education and service delivery programs and strategies. Click on the 'raised hand' figure at the top of your screen. The facilitator will call on you if able to open your line.





# Why district land certification?

Land certification at district level is a tool for our constituents to implement diverse practices that we promote. It answers the questions “What can I do?” and “How do I improve the health of my property in a practical, doable way?”

The certification checklist process synthesizes conservation practices advocated by many organizations and groups, bringing together different focus areas in one place. It strives to be comprehensive without being unwieldy.

The certification process gives us a chance to support landowners in a close up and personal manner.





The SWCD Certification offers a local scale certification and in person guidance and support

Neighbor to neighbor outreach that creates genuine awareness and interest in conservation practices : creates community

Raises awareness of District programs and services

Teaches conservation practices and provides incentives to implement them





# Waldo County Programs

## Conservation Assistance Program “CAP”

Individual landowners  
(Small & large properties)  
Schools  
Municipalities  
Conservation Organizations/  
Non-profits



- Walk and talk
- Staff training
- Written recommendation
- Management plan
- CIG Invasive plant management plan



# Waldo County Programs

## Invasive Species Outreach and Education

Forest insect pest outreach

Forest pest monitoring

Invasive plant workshops

CIG Invasive plant management plans



Hemlock woolly adelgid monitoring: Take a Stand program



# Waldo County Programs

## Eco Landscaping

Workshops

Online resources portal

CAP

Plant sale

*Land certification*



















Oaks 518



Cherrys, plums 429



Willows 440



Birches 400







# Waldo County Programs

## Community Conservation Corps

College and university students

10 weeks each summer

Assist multiple groups and organizations



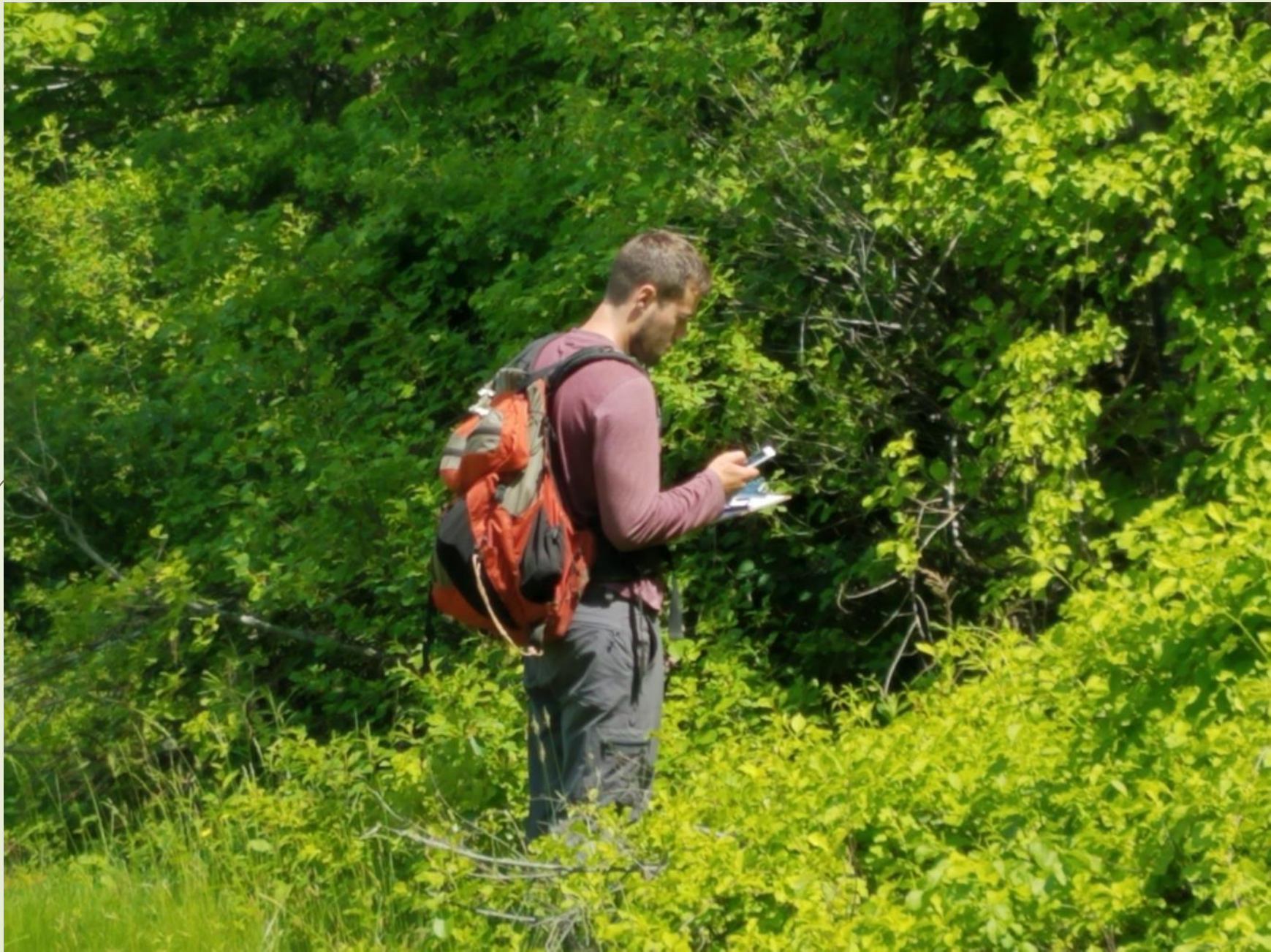
















waldocountysoilandwater



**waldocountysoilandwater** Good Morning Guys! This is a follow up from yesterday's post about the Woolly Adelgid! Here our interns are demonstrating the proper way to check for this pest. To check on your own, gently twist low hanging branches around so that the bottom of the needles face upwards. Remember, we are looking for multiple white woolly spots on the twig so keep your eyes peeled! If you find it around your home, you can reach out to your local soils and water district, or visit the state entomology department's website for further instruction!! Remember to be gentle! And thanks for all your help! 🌲🌲

53w



Liked by 98tiger\_eyes and 7 others











# Waldo County Programs

## Forests for Our Future

Woodland Stewardship  
Workshops

Forest pest outreach

Wildlife and forestry  
workshops

Forest adaptation research  
and citizen science

Land certification



























### Acknowledgements







The certification is a way to take District programming home and implement practices in a systematic, manageable manner.











# Certification Components

1. Website Page
2. Checklist document : Word document, download or pdf
3. Online fillable form
4. App for phone with checklist
5. Apply online or by mail
6. Evaluation options: Site visit by staff / Volunteer site assessors / Self Assess
7. Staff or landowner completes checklist for certification
8. Certification awarded with incentives: Certificate, Sign, Recognition



- ☐ Adjacent or nearby water source: Lake, bay, wetland, river, stream, pond
- ☐ Integrated water source: pond, wetland, woodland seeps and springs
- ☐ Other:

### ☐ 1.3. Protect vernal pools.

Optional Points \_\_\_\_\_  
(5 points for each practice)

Required: \*

- ☐ Mark and map all vernal pools (seasonal small wetlands) using Maine Vernal Pool Assessment.\*
- ☐ Do not disturb the pool depression with equipment, sediment or slash \*
- ☐ Create and mark a 100 foot buffer area around vernal pools that will not be harvested or disturbed, no soil disturbance or compaction, no chemical application, and a 400 foot zone of 50% canopy retention and other amphibian life zone BMPs. Add 3 points if these are distances are exceeded.\*
- ☐ Conserve abundant coarse woody debris in vernal pool buffer and amphibian life zone 400 buffer.\*

(Vernal pools practices continue on next page)

Conservation Forest Cert Checklist page 2

### ☐ 1.4. Provide shelter for wildlife

Optional Points \_\_\_\_\_  
(5 points for each)

Conserve:

Notes:

Required: \*

- ☐ Brush piles and/ coarse woody debris\*
- ☐ Slash left after harvest\*
- ☐ Dead trees or snags at various stages of decay. Inventory if smaller parcel. Leave all if less than 5 per acre, and at least 5 when more are present. Leave dying trees to become snags, and orient retained patches around snags. Use management practices that will foster future



## Conservation Landscape Certification Checklist 20.2 RESIDENTIAL / SMALL MIXED-USE PROPERTY

Check green boxes if you have implemented at least 3 from the list for that item for Criteria 1-5. You must re-save this document (add your name) to edit. Criteria 6 and 7 are optional.

### CORE CRITERIA 1: Provide wildlife habitat.

#### ☐ 1.1. Provide food for wildlife

##### A. Food Plants

At least three species of plants offering the following foods: Optional Points \_\_\_\_\_  
(1 point for each food plant type)

- ☐ Seeds
- ☐ Edible berries
- ☐ Foliage/Twigs
- ☐ Nuts
- ☐ Other Fruits
- ☐ Sap

Notes:

Notes: List plants providing above that are present on your property, and number of each

---

---

---

##### B. Supplemental feeders

- ☐ Suet
- ☐ Bird Feeder
- ☐ Mammal Feeder
- ☐ Hummingbird Feeder
- ☐ Butterfly Feeder

Notes:

Optional Points \_\_\_\_\_  
(1 point for each feeder type)

#### ☐ 1.2. Provide clean water source(s) for wildlife to drink and bathe

Optional Points \_\_\_\_\_  
(3 points for each source)

- ☐ Adjacent or nearby water source: Lake, bay, wetland, river, stream, pond
- ☐ Integrated water source: rain garden, pond, or backyard wetland/seasonal pool, open basin or barrel

In urban and suburban areas consider these options for adding a water source for wildlife.

- ☐ Bird baths and container water gardens.
- ☐ Maintained puddle (butterflies, other insects, wildlife)
- ☐ Other:

#### ☐ 1.3. Provide shelter for wildlife

Optional Points \_\_\_\_\_  
(1 point for each)

- ☐ Wooded area
- ☐ Bramble patch
- ☐ Ground cover other than short grass
- ☐ Rock pile or wall
- ☐ Cave
- ☐ Roosting box
- ☐ Dense shrubs or thicket
- ☐ Evergreens
- ☐ Brush or log pile
- ☐ Burrow
- ☐ Meadow or prairie
- ☐ Water garden or pond
- ☐ Amphibian house
- ☐ Leave garden plants in place over winter or long term

Notes:

Create or preserve other places for wildlife to engage in courtship behavior, mate, and then bear and raise their young:



## CORE CRITERIA 2 Practice soil and water conservation.

### ☐ 2.1. Reduce stormwater runoff

Optional Points \_\_\_\_\_  
(1 point for each practice implemented)

- ☐ Create buffers for all riparian areas and shoreline with plants and other structures
- ☐ Capture rain water from roof
- ☐ Water slowing and infiltration structures: terraces, rocks, swale plantings, wetlands, turnouts, water bars
- ☐ Mulch
- ☐ Rain garden
- ☐ Other water collection
- ☐ Permeable hardscapes
- ☐ Conserve or add tree canopy
- ☐ Green roof(s)
- ☐ Downspout mini-rain gardens
- ☐ Plants other than grass on slope or at bottom of slopes

### ☐ 2.2. Other water conservation practices

Optional Points \_\_\_\_\_  
(1 point for each practice implemented)

- ☐ Xeriscape (water-wise landscaping)
- ☐ Drip or soaker hose for Irrigation
- ☐ No lawn irrigation
- ☐ Limit water use
- ☐ Re-use grey water
- ☐ Let rain water landscape or garden plants

Notes:

Optional Points \_\_\_\_\_  
(Below: 3 points for each practice implemented)

- ☐ StreamSmart principles applied to all stream crossings
- ☐ LakeSmart certification completed

### ☐ 2.3. Build soil

Optional Points \_\_\_\_\_  
(1 point for each practice implemented)

- ☐ Avoid tilling or disturbing healthy soil layers
- ☐ Keep leaf litter in place on at least part of the property
- ☐ Mulch with yard waste
- ☐ Leave garden plant matter on soil
- ☐ Compost

### ☐ 2.4. Control soil erosion

Optional Points \_\_\_\_\_  
(1 point for each practice)

- ☐ Mulch
- ☐ Add plants to areas that need soil stabilization
- ☐ Create multi-level buffers for water bodies
- ☐ Use Maine erosion and sediment control practices during any construction
- ☐ Maintain gravel road and driveway surfaces and ensure proper drainage
- ☐ Plants other than grass on slope or at bottom of slopes

## CORE CRITERIA 3 Control invasive species.

### ☐ 3.1 General Practices

Optional Points \_\_\_\_\_  
(3 points for each practice implemented)

- ☐ Find and assess how many invasive plants or patches you have
- ☐ Have a professional invasive plant management plan created.
- ☐ Remove, contain or suppress non-native invasive plants and animals
- ☐ Monitor for invasive pests and plants and quickly eliminate new infestations
- ☐ Report uncommon or new invasive species to state or local conservation agencies

Describe invasives management activities and monitoring:

## CORE CRITERIA 4 Plant for ecosystem support.

### ☐ 4.1. Create functional plant assemblages

Optional Points \_\_\_\_\_  
(3 points for each practice)

- ☐ Replace grass lawn with sedges, mosses, other natives
- ☐ Keep lawn length to greater than 3 inches or mow every 2 weeks or less
- ☐ Allow low flowering plants to live in the lawn area, such as violets, clover, dandelions, pussy toes, spring beauties, others
- ☐ Plant native plants
- ☐ Create vertically structured plant communities that include several layers, from groundcover to large trees (you can create many layers, sometimes 5 or more)
- ☐ Create or conserve a wooded area or woodland edge
- ☐ Create a meadow, mowed to protect wildlife and provide pollinator plants



# Core Criteria

1. Provide wildlife habitat.
2. Practice soil and water conservation.
3. Control invasive species.
4. Plant for ecosystem support.
5. Implement organic and IPM practices.
6. Optional Practices, Misc.
7. Optional Practices
  1. Small/Residential: Woodland Stewardship (Forest checklist is added)
  2. Forested Lands (greater than 2 acres): Harvest practices





# Aggregates and integrates existing tools, methods and legacy programs

1. SWCD Cooperators Program
2. Programs that teach ecological land management
3. Effective local and regional certification programs





# Characteristics of the Certification Program

1. Free (signs available at cost)
2. Aggregates and refines existing criteria from multiple sources
3. Linked to helpful educational resources
4. Delivered by varied levels of technology: Paper all the way to smartphone data app
5. Includes human interaction
6. Basic core criteria are the same for all land types; sub-criteria are specific to land type
7. Certificates for different land types, scales, and uses:
  1. Urban, Residential and Smaller Multiple Use / Schools
  2. Production Lands: Farms, Forested Lands
  3. Parks and Conservation Lands
8. Promotes biodiversity conservation, sustainable use, soil, water and energy conservation, carbon sequestration, adaptive management





# Scaled implementation

## Pilot Program

Scaled introduction: Residential, Forested Lands, Agricultural Lands, Conserved Lands

CAP participants asked if they would like to participate. Over 90 % responded yes.

CAP participants complete certification as “beta testers” and provide feedback.

Varied technology is added: Smartphone app

## Rollout

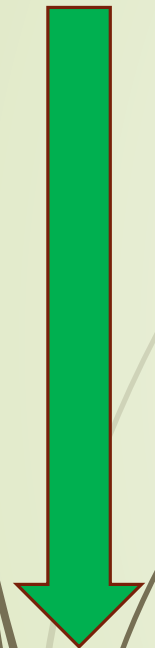
After 1 year, each type of certification is more widely promoted to county residents, including social media- YouTube channel, etc.

Additional certification type is then implemented as a pilot





# Expansion

- 
1. County wide land certification program
  2. Model that can be implemented by other Districts
  3. Ongoing role at local to state level in recognized certification; land trust use
  4. Long term role in assessing land for conservation practices: future incentive based programs utilize the certification, tax incentive





# Direct Outcomes:

## Increase in Conservation Practices Across our Area

- Soil building, erosion control
- Water management, retention, stormwater runoff filtering
- Improve quality of landscape: cover types, connectivity, reliance
- Wildlife habitat: (Wildlife=all animal organisms including insects and other invertebrates)
  - Food: provided, also through the ecological food web
  - Shelter, nesting, cover : structure
- Invasive species control
- Reduced chemical inputs



# Indirect Outcomes

- Carbon sequestration
- Air quality
- Energy conservation
- Community building
- Learning for children, families, school classes
- Human habitat – Beauty, enjoyment, sharing in nature
  - Reduced noise and light pollution







# Discussion

- ▶ Please share your District's plans and programs that help constituents implement conservation practices.
  - ▶ If you are using phone audio, click on the 'raised hand' figure at the top of your screen. The facilitator will call on you if able to open your line.
- OR
- ▶ Type your comments in the chat box for us to read if using computer audio (we will do as many as time allows).
- 
- ▶ Questions and Answers



# Contact Information



Aleta McKeage

Technical Director, Waldo County Soil and Water  
Conservation District, Maine

[Aleta.waldosoilandwater@gmail.com](mailto:Aleta.waldosoilandwater@gmail.com)

[Waldocountysoilandwater.org](http://Waldocountysoilandwater.org)