



ST. JOHN VALLEY SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

...Working for you to help sustain Maine's abundant natural resources since 1942

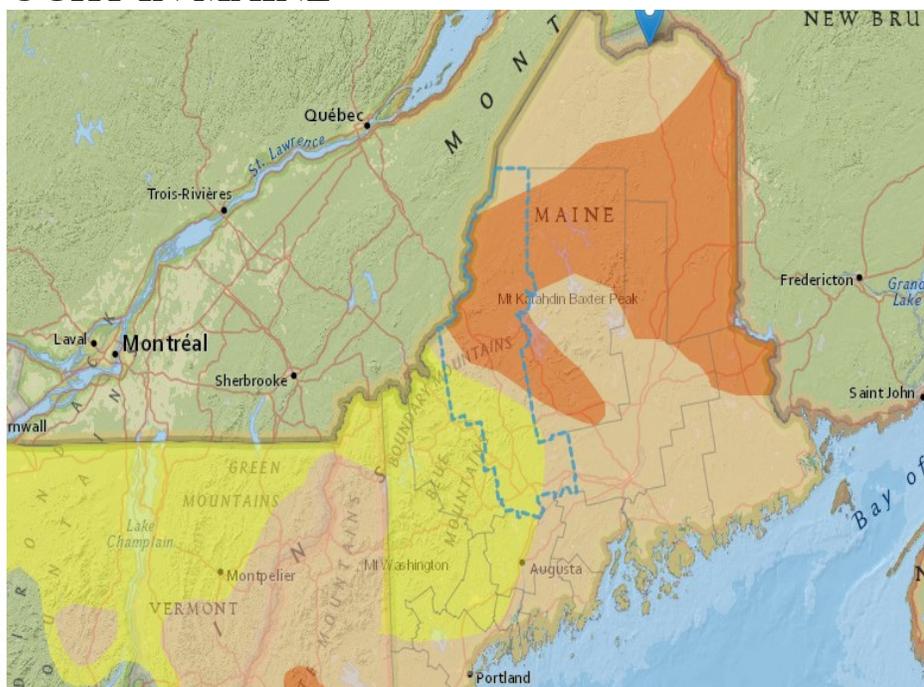
FALL 2020 NEWSLETTER

DROUGHT IN MAINE

The U.S. Drought Monitor (USDM) is a map that shows the location and intensity of drought across the country. The data is updated each Tuesday and released on Thursday. This map shows the drought conditions on September 01, 2020.

Learn more about the US Drought Monitor

	D0 - Abnormally Dry • Short-term dryness slowing planting, growth of crops • Some lingering water deficits • Pastures or crops not fully recovered	20.5% of State	100.0% D0-D4
	D1 - Moderate Drought • Some damage to crops, pastures • Some water shortages developing • Voluntary water-use restrictions requested	46.8% of State	79.5% D1-D4
	D2 - Severe Drought • Crop or pasture loss likely • Water shortages common • Water restrictions imposed	32.7% of State	32.7% D2-D4
	D3 - Extreme Drought • Major crop/pasture losses • Widespread water shortages or restrictions	0.0% of State	0.0% D3-D4



Drought Assistance for Livestock and Crops

Farmers in need of hay for their livestock can search the University of Maine Cooperative Extension's Hay Directory for sources of hay or straw. Farmers with excess hay are encouraged to post availability with the Extension Hay Directory Form.

The following FSA Farm Programs automatically trigger once the county has been at D2 drought status for eight consecutive weeks or immediately upon hitting D3 status for any length of time, as reported weekly by the U.S. Drought Monitor:

Livestock Forage Program (LFP) - provides payments to livestock producer for grazing losses

Emergency Livestock Assistance Program (ELAP) – provides financial assistance to livestock producers for losses resulting from the additional cost of transporting water to livestock due to an eligible drought

Emergency Conservation Program (ECP) – provides cost-share to provide emergency water during periods of severe drought (specifically for grazing and confined livestock and existing irrigation systems for orchards and vineyards)

The Non-insurable Crop Assistance Program (NAP) - acts like crop insurance but is for non-insurable crops and covers drought-related losses. In this case, the crop loss acts as the trigger for the program.

New Programs, Resources and Partners



The St. John Valley Soil & Water Conservation District (District) is excited to be bringing new programs and resources to our area, as well as working with an enthusiastic group of local people, the Friends of Cross Lake (FOCL).

Who is FOCL and what is their purpose? FOCL is an all-volunteer

organization (no one is paid), open to everyone, with over 130 members concerned about Cross Lake's water quality. FOCL's purpose is to improve and protect the water quality of Cross Lake, one of our local lakes and part of the important Fish River Chain.

Why Cross Lake and why is the District involved? Cross Lake has suffered for years, dating back to the 1950s, with poor water quality (algal blooms), often failing to meet Maine water quality standards. In 2018, locals came together to do something about the lake's health. First, with assistance and equipment from the University of Maine at Fort Kent (UMFK), they became involved in extensive water quality monitoring to better understand the condition of the lake. Second, they reached out to the District, whose mission is to provide land users, landowners, and other individuals and organizations with the information, education, and technical assistance they need to help protect and enhance our local soil and water resources, and to use them wisely. A perfect fit.



Really everyone who owns or uses property in the watershed might want to be involved in

this effort. "Why?", you might ask. Because Cross lake's health, as with all lakes' health, depends primarily on the quality of the water that runs off the land and feeds the lake. Rain and snow melt carry eroded soil and phosphorus, which is the main cause of poor water quality in Cross Lake and its two main tributaries, Daigle and Dickey brooks. Looking at the map of Cross Lake's watershed, it seems hard to believe that runoff from land that is far away from the lake – in Fort Kent, Frenchville, and St. Agatha – feeds Cross Lake. But Dickey Brook, which flows into Cross Lake, has branches that extend far north into all three towns, and Daigle Brook extends north into New Canada. Again, a perfect fit for the District, whose service area includes the land and landowners in these towns. At 54 square miles, this is a huge watershed!



Have the District and FOCL looked for help from other organizations and agencies? Yes, realizing the large size of the watershed, and that it includes parts of 4 towns and 4 unorganized territories, FOCL and the District reached out for help. We started with the most

obvious - our office partner, the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), and moved on to include the Lake Stewards of Maine (LSM), Maine Land Use Planning Commission (LUPC), Maine Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), Maine Forest Service (MFS), Irving Woodlands, Maine Lakes Society (MLS), New Canada, and Aroostook County government. UMFK was already involved. We looked for programs, technical assistance, and funding opportunities to reduce soil erosion and its impact on the health of the lake and its tributaries.

What did we find and what has this led to?

First, recognizing the amount of agricultural land in the watershed (over 8,000 acres, 21%), NRCS and the District explored and then were awarded a special EQIP project - the National Water Quality Initiative (NWQI).

NRCS completed their planning assessment for Cross Lake's watershed in January 2020. The NWQI project brings extra funding (\$250,000 or more/year) to the local NRCS office for conservation practices in the Cross Lake, Daigle and Dickey Brook watersheds. Farmers in these watersheds already have an additional \$323,741 available under this project, thanks to the efforts and support of the District, local and State NRCS offices, DEP and FOCL. Farmers who participate in the NWQI project are not only protecting water quality, they are improving soil health and helping their farms. A win-win for everyone. For more information about this NWQI project, contact the District or local NRCS office.

Second, FOCL, working with these partners and a consultant, completed a watershed survey in 2019 with over 35 volunteers. They looked for soil erosion sites on shorefront property, private and public roads, and forestland (with the MFS). In the meantime, the District and NRCS partnered with UMFK to survey agricultural land. Third, in partnership with the County, FOCL applied for and received a planning grant from DEP. Along with continued outreach and data gathering, and with help from the grant, partner organizations, and a consultant, FOCL is now in the process of developing that plan. This watershed-based management plan will describe the actions needed to restore Cross Lake's water quality. The plan will also provide the foundation to apply for future grants and programs that can be used to address soil erosion from all land uses, from forestry to roads, to agriculture, and residential development.

As is often pointed out, we didn't get where we are overnight and we're not going to improve the water quality of Cross Lake or Dickey and Daigle brooks overnight. Nor are we going to reduce soil erosion and improve soil health overnight. What is important is that we all work together bringing knowledge, technical expertise, and financial resources to improve and protect our St. John Valley soil and water resources, something the District is 100% behind!

If you have questions or would like to get involved, contact Anthony Tardif at the District or NRCS (207-834-3311 x 3 or sjvswcd@gmail.com) or Cheryl St. Peter at FOCL (207-834-1127 or countyee@fairpoint.net).



SJVSWCD MEMBERSHIP DUES FOR CALENDAR YEAR 2021

NAME: _____ PLEDGE AMOUNT:
ADDRESS: _____ Valley Friend.....\$25.00
Valley Steward.....\$50.00
TOWN: _____ ZIP: _____ Valley Patron.....\$100.00
Valley Visionary.....\$250.00+
EMAIL: _____ Other_____

Please return this form with your check payable to St. John Valley Soil and Water Conservation District, 139 Market Street, Suite 106, Fort Kent, ME 04743

CONTACT THE DISTRICT

Phone: 207-834-3311 x-3 Email: SJVSWCD@GMAIL.COM Website: www.sjv.me.nacdnet.org
139 Market Street, Suite 106, Fort Kent, Maine 04743

WHAT IS THE ST. JOHN VALLEY SWCD?

The St. John Valley SWCD is one of thousands of SWCD's around the country, each governed by a volunteer Board of Supervisors. Our purpose is to use and coordinate all available technical, financial, and educational resources to address the needs of local land owners and users for the conservation of soil, water and other natural resources. In addition, we work with and assist governmental agencies and non-profit organizations.

Our Mission: *“To provide local landowners, land users, and other individuals and organizations with the information, education, and technical assistance they need to help protect and enhance Maine’s natural resources and to use them wisely. The St. John Valley Soil and Water Conservation District seeks to foster and encourage the development of an enduring land stewardship ethic among residents of the St. John River Valley.”*

The St. John Valley SWCD is working for you and your community! Let us know how we can better serve you.

All programs and services of the Soil and Water Conservation Districts and the USDA are offered on a nondiscriminatory basis, without regard to race, color, national origin, sex, religion, age, disability, political belief, gender identity, sexual orientation, or marital and familial status.