



# NEW YORK CITY SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

## Annual Highlights 2019

In 2019, we continued to strengthen our partnerships for all our programs, particularly under the Urban Soils Institute. We also maintained our long standing partnerships with the SWIM Coalition, NY NJ Harbor & Estuary Program, and Lower Hudson Coalition of Conservation Districts.

### GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE PROGRAM

#### Newtown Creek CSO Webcam

The District assisted the SWIM Coalition on a grant funded project to install a webcam on a CSO outfall in the Newtown Creek. The District staff worked with the Newtown Creek Alliance to identify the best CSO outfall, conducted site visits, contacted the business owners, and hired a consultant to configure the system.

Availability of electricity and internet connection, optimal camera angle, and distance to the outfall are some of the conditions that proved to be very difficult to realize. The team has identified a rooftop site that is about 200 feet from the outfall and will be installing the camera in early 2020.

#### GI Bus Tour

We incorporated the Annual GI Bust Tour as part of the Urban Soil Fest Weekend. The tour started with a soil pit and an interpreted nature walk in Floyd Bennett Field. We then visited the Bush Terminal Park, a restored former industrial site with a lagoon; Gowanus Bay Terminal, a working waterfront with composting facilities; and Lincoln Berkeley Community Garden, where we tested the soil with tour participants. The 2019 tour was particularly



*NRCS Soil Scientist Olga Vargas in the soil pit*

#### DEC Endorsed 4-Hr Construction Site Inspection Training

The District continued to receive requests for the NYSDEC endorsed 4-hr Erosion and Sediment Control Training. The District hosted one workshop in 2019 and trained approximately 35 professionals.

#### Stormwater Infrastructure Matters Coalition

Shino continued her role on the steering committee and provided administrative support.

The Program Manager coordinated efforts by Coalition member organizations in outreach, public education and information dissemination. SWIM participated in an ad hoc group of environmental organizations working to improve the Green Roof Tax Abatement. We were successful in renewing the law and continued to work together to develop consensus around further improving the abatement law.

#### Lower Hudson Coalition of Conservation Districts

The District continued to serve as the fiscal administrator of the Coalition as well as provide programmatic leadership. Shino served on the Steering Committee and worked closely with the coordinator.

Shino attended the Hudson River Estuary Management Advisory Committee meetings, representing both the LHCCD and the NYC Soil & Water Conservation District.

#### New York New Jersey Harbor & Estuary Program

Shino continued to provide support for the Citizens Advisory Committee, although she is no longer the alternate to the NY Co-Chair. She participated in various planning calls with the Co-Chairs and the program office as well as helped facilitate a breakout session at the conference. She served on the Funding Subcommittee of the CAC and worked with the program office to develop strategies for securing additional funding for the program.

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Participation in various coalitions and committees has been highly productive: it has allowed the District to leverage limited resources to accomplish tasks and to reach out to a wider audience – both in number and types of people.

## ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

### NYC Envirothon

The 2019 Envirothon was held in the Bronx Park in the Bronx. Twenty one teams from all five boroughs participated. The current event topic was “Agriculture and the Environment: Knowledge and Technology to Feed the World.” Our event partners were NYC Parks with Urban Park Rangers, Bronx River Alliance, NYC Law Department, NYS Department of Environmental Conservation Region 2, and USDA - Natural Resources Conservation Service. Con Edison provided generous funding to support the event.

Two of the borough winning teams attended the NYS Envirothon. The Manhattan team placed 20<sup>th</sup> in overall scores and 19<sup>th</sup> for the oral presentation scores.

### NYC Outdoors: Environmental Education Expo

Rebecca coordinated the 18<sup>th</sup> Annual NYC Outdoors! Expo with The River Project, NYU Wallerstein Collaborative, NYU Sustainability and Environmental Education Advisory Council.

Despite the challenge of liability insurance

requirements imposed by the venue host, we were able to feature more than 3 dozens organizations. As usual, in-service and pre-service teachers as well as non-formal educators attended the event.

### School requests

The District received several requests from educators for water quality related lessons or field trips. Shino conducted stormwater and green infrastructure activities with 4<sup>th</sup> graders from PS121 in Brooklyn, tested the Hudson River water with 7<sup>th</sup> graders from the Clinton School and 6<sup>th</sup> graders from 75 Morton School (more than 350 students for both schools combined!), and gave lectures on green infrastructure to undergraduate students at the New School and graduate students at the CUNY Graduate School. Shino participated in a few career days as well.

In addition to working with classroom teachers, Shino participated in the Citizen Science Teacher Experimentation Program, led by the NYC Dept of Education, as a resource specialist providing assistance to science teachers.

## URBAN SOILS INSTITUTE

### Soil Testing

The USI continued to serve a variety of customers with soil testing and interpretation services. Customers included home owners, community based organizations, community gardeners, urban farmers and natural resource managers. With the XRF, we were able to offer lead testing, which is of great interest to those who work with soils in NYC.

Our customer base has grown to nearly 80 customers in 2019, with more than 300 samples analyzed. We re-designed our website to make sample submission process easier and more streamlined. We have also added resources for interpretation for anyone who visits our website.

### Soils Technical Assistance

We have conducted two site visits for on-site soils investigation and 10 workshops on soil health basics and interpretation. In addition, we participated at more than 10 public events by tabling. With workshops and public events, the USI has reached over 1,000 people.

### Urban Soils Fest Weekend

In 2019 the Annual Symposium was the kick-off event for the weekend long fest that included a bus tour, soils festival, and workshops.

The symposium featured nearly 30 speakers and drew 120 attendees despite the location which was hard to reach. The format allowed for discussions between the presenters and audience, stimulating creative thinking. Presenters were selected from diverse backgrounds, including academic researchers, natural resources managers, farmers, community gardeners, composters, artists and more.

Soils festival was held outdoors and featured organizations a nature walk with the National Park Service, bird walks with the National Audubon Society, and workshops on gardening, invasives management, soil pit examination, Ground Penetrating Radar, and soil judging. Most of the workshops were suitable for children and adults. We also offered an interactive art workshop.