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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

One Year of Lakeshore & Watershed Restoration *OCNRCD Celebrates First Anniversary of Lake Watershed Program Specialist Will Marlier*

Orleans County, VT – The Orleans County Natural Resources Conservation District (OCNRCD) is marking one year of expanding progress in lakeshore and watershed restoration with Lake Watershed Program Specialist Will Marlier, who joined the District in February 2025.

In his first year, Marlier has leveraged nearly **\$200,000 in grant funding** to design and implement 16 clean water restoration projects across **four watersheds and five lakes**, strengthening local capacity to protect water quality, wildlife habitat, and flood resilience.

“Healthy lakes begin far beyond the shoreline,” said Marlier. “Everything in the watershed, from driveways to forests, affects lake health. This year has been about laying the groundwork for long-term stewardship and restoration.”

Highlights from Year One

- **31 Lake Wise assessments** completed during the growing season, helping landowners manage shoreland properties to benefit water quality and wildlife habitat.
- **Eight active restoration projects** underway, with additional projects in planning.
- **Lake Parker Septic Pilot Program**, supporting inspections, pumping, and education in partnership with Taplin Septic.
- **Driveway and Stormwater Restoration Project** addressing erosion and runoff at high-priority lakeshore sites.
- **Stream surveys, workshops, newsletters, and technical assistance** for landowners and lake associations.

Looking Ahead

Major restoration projects are planned for the coming year, including the **Cemetery Brook project**, which will restore **11 acres of floodplain and wetland**, plant **4,000+ trees**, and install **50+ beaver dam analogs** to improve water storage and downstream water quality.

OCNRCD will also conduct an **assessment of nearly two miles of lakeshore along the Beebe Spur Rail Trail in partnership with the Vermont Agency of Transportation**, identifying opportunities to strengthen shoreline stewardship and long-term resilience along this highly visible public corridor.

Additional stormwater and infrastructure resilience projects are planned for Shadow Lake, Echo Lake, and other priority sites as the District continues implementing Lake Watershed Action Plan priorities and expanding watershed-scale restoration efforts.

OCNRCD's long-term watershed goals include reducing phosphorus inputs to local lakes, implementing Lake Watershed Action Plan projects and priorities, and empowering landowners throughout entire watersheds—not just along shorelines—to make informed stewardship decisions.

“Natural shorelines are resilient shorelines,” Marlier added. “Sometimes the best management is letting nature do the work. Our role is to help people understand how their land connects to lake health, and how they can be a part of the solution.”

About Orleans County Natural Resources Conservation District

The OCNRCD is a local, non-regulatory organization with 6 staff and 7 board members and an annual operating budget of \$500k, providing technical assistance, education, and partnerships to conserve natural resources and build resilient landscapes across Orleans County.

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