

CDEA News



The Monthly Newsletter of the NYS Conservation Districts Employees Association

December 2008

2009 NYS Fair and Empire Farm Days

Vicki Hendrix has asked me to include an article about the State Fair and Empire Farm Days Booths. The respective committees are looking to revamp the booths in regards to appearance and programs. It has been noted that that at the State Fair, farmers are not coming through nearly as much as in the past, so the committees have been discussing the possibility of making the State Fair booth oriented to more non-ag and urban conservation issues while focusing on the Empire Farm Days for agricultural issues.

Before anyone gets too fired up, remember the committees are requesting your input. I can say for a fact that the three times I've done the State Fair, I have seen more small acreage landowners and homeowners than farmers.

Since this will affect all the Districts, please provide feedback. Vicki will be happy to receive and provide feedback to the committees. As we all do in our own Districts, programs needs to grow and change to be successful, so put some thought into it and get back to Vicki.

Bah Humbug?

*"Over the river and thru the wood, To grandfather's house we go;
The horse knows the way to carry the sleigh, Thru the white and drifted
snow, oh!*

*Over the river and thru the wood, Oh, how the wind does blow!
It stings the toes and bites the nose, As over the ground we go."*

A simple holiday poem and song for Thanksgiving. This poem however is fraught with inaccuracies and misrepresentations. So over dinner at a local restaurant, four of us debated these issues and felt that they deserved to be noted in this national Grinch like mood. The poem is actually quite a bit longer, so for the essence of time we are merely looking at the first stanza.

First of all, did the individual or local municipality have all the correct stream crossing permits from the NYSDEC? Did the design criteria meet the new USACoE permit standards? Wasn't there any alternative to crossing the river? Hopefully that stream crossing did not connect to a trail that was illegally placed on NYS Forest Preserve in the Adirondack or Catskill Parks. I don't believe that a trail for sleighs would be permitted as it would likely be deemed to not be in compliance with the Stateland Master Plan.

Now you continue to Grandfather's house (grandma is mentioned later), which hopefully is not being repossessed due to lack of tax payments. This may occur from the increased icing from global warming. Because of that, Grandfather has had surgery for a broken hip he received while clearing out the sidewalk for your arrival.

You only have one horse hooked up to pull the whole family? I think that the ASPCA will be knocking at your door to check up on the horse and make sure that it is being treated with proper care. Suspicion will be aroused as you push this animal to work during the blizzard you are going through to Grandfathers.

I hope that you have any children bundled up since we know that there is no laughter and gaiety with frostbite. I guess if it nips your nose and bites your toes, then the children are not properly dressed and that Social Services will be a calling to respond to accusations.

So you see how such a simple poem can be viewed in today's world. I actually do not write this with a scowl, but I am chuckling and hope that you are too, since you are the one who is able to make a Happy Holiday out challenging times. I offer everyone peace and goodwill and look forward to seeing you next year. *Happy Holidays - Jim*

One Word - "Plastics"

The long rows of straw, silage, hay or other items that provide the farm animals with food through the winter season, needs to be protected and plastic does the job. However a major form of waste on a farm is agricultural plastic after it has been used. What the heck do you do with it? Traditionally this product has been buried, burned (50% this way) or thrown away, which we all know is not the best solution. Steve Mahoney wondered about that and decided to take the initiative and try to find a solution.

Clinton County received monies through the Champlain Watershed Improvement Coalition of NY, from a grant by Senator Betty Little. With Clinton County's share of approximately \$45,000, Steve began looking into recycling this product. Since ag plastic is "dirty" and difficult to clean, there are currently few places that will accept this type of product. Not deterred however, Steve also learned of an agricultural plastics baler that is a tow behind machine. Always looking at an issue in many ways, Steve figured that if he could at least get the plastic together, then it would be easier for that farm to manage and store. So on July 9, 2008, Clinton County SWCD took delivery of the baler and conducted two demonstrations. Since that day, Steve has been on the road to other locations in Franklin County, Essex County, St. Lawrence County, Lewis County and Jefferson County. Business is brisk, and farmers think that this has been a great program, in fact they are contacting Steve to set up appointments. One nice item is that Steve can haul this trailer mounted baler with his 1/2 ton pickup. The baler cost was \$32,000, delivery from Florida was \$1,500 with the remainder of the funds have gone to the baling ties, maintenance and upkeep and gas to haul the machine around.

Wanting to see if he was up on his facts, I asked Steve about the bales themselves, being a cardboard baler expert from my grocery store teen years. Steve said that one bale is 40"x40"x40" and weighs between 1,000-1,500 pounds. After conducting a number of visits, Steve has calculated that 1 bale is produced per month by one medium CAFO. If this plastic was not collected and compressed, it would fill a hay wagon 50-75%. Farmers can then stack the bales in areas out of the way, until they are ready for pick up.

Steve has been working with Dr. Lois Levitan from the Cornell Recycling Ag. Plastics Program. She has been active in the marketing aspect and has been connecting with people that Steve and the program needs to. She has been a wealth of knowledge and extremely vital to Steve. In fact there are now enough bales that a tractor trailer will be loaded in the near future and taken to a facility in Central NY for recycling.

Steve is extremely excited about this program and the effect that it has had on the participating farms and the environment. One story that he has related is that in the North Country, an organic farm is in jeopardy of losing it's organic certification due to the amount of waste plastic. With this baler, the farm will be able to address this need and keep its certification. That is an extremely poignant example of how this program is helping out the farms.

If you have any questions about this program, call Steve. If you just want to talk, call him, as Steve always listens and has a good story or two.

Visit: WWW.NYSCDEA.COM

District Profile: Greene County SWCD

Greene County is located just south of Albany, its eastern border is the Hudson River and its topography rises to the west culminating in the Northern Catskill Mountains. Since its inception, the District has always had a strong involvement with stream resources. With steep mountainous slopes and runoff events characterized by intense short duration rainfall, the streams throughout the county are frequently subjected to both small and large scale floods, and the damage they bring.

Because the western half of the County falls within the NYC watershed, the District's activities related to stream restoration and management have greatly increased in both number and scope, due to New York City Watershed protection issues. Whereas in the past our projects focused on the "site" level, we have now moved towards developing broader, more comprehensive stream corridor management plans with the goal of restoring natural stability to larger stream reaches.

Since 1995, 4 miles of stream channel have been restored using the principles of natural channel design. Along with the channel restoration, a major emphasis of the program has been the reestablishment of riparian buffers. To help assist in this endeavor the District has established its own plant materials center to raise the trees and shrubs used in these restoration projects.

In addition to the office's stream work, an increasing amount of time is spent on stormwater projects. These include new development projects in the Hudson Valley, as well as retrofits in the main street revitalization projects in the Schoharie Watershed. Also, in an effort to help manage the growth and natural resources in the county, the District has taken a proactive role in working with municipalities as they update their comprehensive plans to include how these resources are viewed, managed and protected.

This along with working with the agricultural community through the AEM program rounds out the major activities under taken by the District staff.

CDEA Employee Profile

Kristen O'Dell
District Technician
Orange County SWCD

I feel old now. Being a young whippersnapper, I asked Kristen what was the first song was that she really remembers. She replied with MC Hammer's "Can't Touch This". While my creaky fingers type and bad eyes hunt and peck away on this here com-pu-ter, read on about Kristen O'Dell from Orange County NY.

Kristen was born in September of 1986 in Port Jervis NY. She grew up being the middle of three children. Her family had a dairy farm in Minisink, NY and milked 50-55 Holsteins and 2 Ayshires who were on loan.

What did a young Kristen do? Well, she played with her "My Little Pony" dolls and her Breyer horses. In fact, they are all still on her shelf in her bedroom. I don't remember if Strawberry Shortcake was there as well, but I am sure that she would have been welcome. When she did venture outdoors in the winter, the family had some snowmobiles and pattered around on them.

When she was high school age, Kristen attended Minisink Valley HS and the Orange County CTEC, where she received a tech degree in Horticulture and Landscaping. Between going to two schools, she didn't have a lot of extra time for activities. However she was a dairy ambassador for two years and then took the title of Dairy Princess in 2003. She fulfilled the required duties and is proud of it. I am trying to remember if she wore the tiara out to dinner when we went at the Conservation Skills Workshop. Can you help me out with this Mister Griswold?

In 2004 Kristen graduated and headed to SUNY Cobleskill. While there she received an A.A.S. in Animal Science/Pre-Vet and a B.S. in Ag. Business Management. While at Cobleskill she was involved in the dairy cattle club, student senate and the Western Riding team (captain in her Junior year).

It was during her college years that she found about the SWCD's. From May to August 2007, she was an intern at the Orange County SWCD working on AEM plans and the website. She was also available for other duties, provided that Kevin unlocked her leg from the desk. In December of 2007, she graduated and headed to a job in a bank. If you know Kristen at all, then you know I can't print what she said about that experience, so let's just quote her as saying it was "not too awesome". Soon however, the District had an opening and she applied for it and began work. Kristen works on the Ag NPS grants program, AEM Plans, construction inspection, surveying and any other job that gets her feet wet.

Outside of work, she is on the Farm Bureau and is the Co-president of the young farmers and Ranchers, she shows cows at the NJ State Fair, rides horses (hunters/jumpers), has a Jack Russell Terrier named Shiloh who has been with her since college and she helps her dad with haying.

I like Kristen, she seems like a good and bright kid. I have encouraged her to find out more about the NYCSCDEA, since she likes to ask lots of questions. I have never received so many inquiries and follow ups on the Cons. Skills workshop classes as she asked! After her interview she sent me an email as a follow up and I wanted to end with her words: "I have always known since I was a kid that I wanted to help farmers. Originally that was becoming a vet (hence the associates in pre-vet), then I realized that wasn't for me and went into ag business management. Well then after my internship I realized that the District work was the best route for me. I can help farmers on many levels and really enjoy what I do."

Brain Basher and (faxed answers please—518.623.3519)
This Month's: How much will a 38 degree angle measure when observed under a microscope that magnifies ten times?

Last Month's:

(1) Carla has ten songs that she likes, but they are all on different CDs. It takes her 15 seconds to switch between CDs and each song is exactly 2 minutes and 48 seconds long. How many seconds will it take for Karla to finish listening to all of her favorite songs if she started with a CD in her player, and didn't take the last one out? = **1,815 seconds**

(2) Jake walked up to a woman behind a counter and handed her a book. She looked at it and said, "That'll be five dollars." He paid the woman and walked out without the book. She saw him leave without it but did not call him back. How come?

= **it was an overdue library book and a fine was paid.**

Congrats to Derek Green of Broome County SWCD for answering both correctly.

A Little Humor

Lance Lockwood led a group of friends deer hunting, they paired off in twos for the day. That night, Lance returned alone, staggering under the weight of an enormous eight-point buck.

"Where's Henry?" one of them asked. "Henry broke his leg and can't walk. He's a couple of miles back up the trail." Lance replied.

"You left Henry laying out there and carried the deer back?!"

"It was a tough call," nodded Lance, "but I figured no one is going to steal Henry."