

CDEA News

The Monthly Newsletter of the NYS Conservation Districts Employees Association



July 2008

Manager's Forum

At the NYACD Meeting this year, the Districts will be holding a Managers Forum for those able to attend. Mark your calendars for October 20th at the Geneva Holiday Inn, for an informative afternoon session. A group of Amanda Barber, Jeff Carmichael, Jerry Verrigni and PJ Emerick are working hard to develop a quality session. Several topics have been discussed and include: The Flexible Workplace, an Employees Handbook and Your Program Planning— Prioritization and Evaluation of Programs. If you would like to know more, contact one of the aforementioned folks and they would be glad to talk to you about this event.

2008 Conservation Skills Workshop

As announced in last month's newsletter, the 2008 Conservation Skills Workshop will be held on October 6-10 in Cortland County. Scheduled subjects/ classes will be: New Employee Orientation, Basic Surveying, AEM on-Farm Assessment (Tier 3), AEM Follow Up (from last year's class), involving Waste Water Treatment Systems, Cropland and Pastures, Hydrology, a Stream Course, an Erosion and Sediment Control Plans course (Non-Ag and Ag related), Construction Equipment course and Applied Surveying.

The committee took your suggestions from different training events and the priorities that were given to Tom DeRue to develop this year's training event. We hope that you find them informative and interesting. Registration forms will be going out in last August/Early September. Please contact Jim Lieberum for more information.



NYS CDEA Golf Tourney Reminder

Break out those clubs and dust off those shoes. The annual NYS CDEA Golf Tournament is scheduled for July 24th in Watertown at the Willow Brook Golf Club. Register by July 16th, and have checks payable to Brian Wohnsiedler (\$50 per person). Dinner will be held at the end of the event. The committee is in need of prizes, so scour your county and local golf clubs to help them out.

The proceeds of this event will benefit NYS CDEA programs. All partners are invited and encouraged to participate. If you would like more information on the tournament, contact Brian. He's the man!



NACD Northeast Meeting

The National Association of Conservation Districts will be holding its 2008 Northeast Region Meeting on August 3-5 in Portsmouth, NH. All the information and registrations are available on line at <http://www.nhacd.org>. Early bird registration ends on July 11th, so check it out and sign up!

Thank You for Your Cooperation!

- Jeff Carmichael, NYS CDEA President

One of the short-term goals of the Technical Development Training Subcommittee is to develop a formal mentoring program between Districts. I think we can all think of times when we called on a neighboring District to provide some assistance on training or helping to complete a project. That is what we should be doing, assisting each other. However, no one really knows how much this happens and maybe there are some Districts who are afraid of asking for help. One of the goals of a mentoring program is to get a better handle on how much this is happening and to formalize the process a bit. To do this, we will be working on a couple of things:

1. Who is out there to provide mentoring – currently there is a talent pool on the website (www.nyscdea.com). However, it is outdated. Therefore, the subcommittee will be reaching out to folks to determine if they still want to be listed, evaluating what other talents should be listed and adding additional folks to the list. We will be working with P.J. Emerick (Division 2 rep) to update the Talent Pool on the website.

2. How much of this sharing of services or mentoring is going on? We will be developing a short summary form for Districts to complete after they have "mentored" or "been mentored". I think it is important to try and quantify how much time is being done on this type of District to District training. The idea is to have this information tracked by CDEA Division reps.

3. Need to get buy in from Districts as well as partners (i.e. State Committee regional staff), if Districts don't utilize this program then it will fail. I don't think we can afford to fail. As NRCS technical assistance continues to dwindle, we (District's) need to fill that void. If you don't have the capabilities in house, perhaps another District can provide it or at least provide training.

Nothing beats on the ground training with an experienced person. We would hope that the regional State Committee AEA's will help to sell this and to encourage the use of a mentoring program. Since they are out at many different Districts, they have an idea on what different skills or talents one District has that another needs.

I have asked past-president, Amanda Barber (Cortland County SWCD) to share an example of how they have recently used a mentoring approach to training. In the meantime, stay tuned for further updates on the Technical Training Subcommittee. If you have ideas or suggestions on training programs, please don't hesitate to contact me.

From Cortland County SWCD (Amanda Barber and Stacy Russell)

For years Districts have talked about using mentoring as a way of training new and existing employees. Some Districts have done so successfully, usually relying on experienced staff from their own county, NRCS staff or even adjacent county staff for assistance and support. With training and support from NRCS becoming more and more difficult to schedule, our fellow Districts become our best resource.

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From front page....

The first challenge in implementing a mentoring program is accepting the fact that we need to invest the time to learn a new skill. Having accepted the need to invest our time, we need to find another employee who has the skills we need and has a supervisor willing to let them invest their time in training. Then there are the logistics of scheduling, travel and expenses, etc. But I am here to tell you it can work. Cortland County recently tapped the resources of Warren County. And you're probably wondering; what could Warren County possibly have to offer Cortland County? (*Ed. Note:* Oh Boy, let me count the ways.)

Well, it seems that Dave Wick and his side kick, Jim Lieberum, have quite an active dry hydrant program in Warren County. A few years ago Stacy Russell, Cortland County employee, heard Jim talk about that program and dry hydrant design at a Conservation Skills Workshop. So when Cortland received some funding for dry hydrants, we called Wick and company to see just how much they knew, and if they were willing to demonstrate their prowess (in dry hydrant design that is!). Never shy, Jim offered to spend some time in the field with Stacy doing site evaluation and surveying, to assist in the design work, and to teach how to design and draw dry hydrants by hand, and by using some basic CAD software. After getting approval from the boss and board, Jim spent 3 glorious days in Cortland County teaching Stacy all he knows about dry hydrants (at least enough to make her dangerous).

In the end, it cost Cortland County about \$300 and three days dedicated to one topic, but we have three designs done and are able to identify suitable sites and design on our own. Warren County is left with the satisfaction of having helped a fellow District and with the knowledge that should the need arise, they can call on Cortland County for assistance in the future.

The beauty of mentoring is that it can be an inexpensive way of getting training. It takes some coordination and sacrifices to make it work, but if we get more districts involved, the benefits will go far beyond training and skills. The interaction of employees builds bonds and a sense of unity that will strengthen districts as a whole. So think about what you can offer your fellow districts, what expertise you have, and what skills you need. If we think about mentoring on a statewide basis, and think of it as a bank of resources, Cortland has taken out a loan and needs to repay 3 days of assistance and Warren has a 3 day credit due them.

Now we do have to admit that we are a little nervous here in Cortland wondering exactly what kind of mentoring Wick and Lieberum are going to dream up. You know what they say... pay-backs a *@#*&!

Brain Basher (faxed answers please—518.623.3519)

This Month's question: Doug Kierst tells Ron Podalak that he is going to kayak over Niagara Falls this month. Ron shakes his head and merely writes the following down. What does it mean? "023456789 lives ever ever ever ever"

Last Month's: Due to budgetary concerns, Jeff Parker has Lee and Brad working at a local farm peeling potatoes. Lee began peeling a pile of 44 potatoes at the rate of 3 per minute. Four minutes later, Brad joined him, and peeled at the rate of 5 potatoes per minute. When they were finished, how many potatoes had each peeled? **Answer:** Lee—24 and Brad—20.

Congrats to Jon, Adam and Seth in Tompkins County for the first correct answer.

CDEA Employee Profile

Rob Williams
District Manager
Wayne County SWCD

Because I know that this month's victim yachts quite a bit, I can't help to think of the song "Brandy", whenever I speak to him. Lets welcome Rob Williams to the stage this month.

Little Robert was born in May of 1960 in Clifton Springs, located in Wayne County. Rob's father was a VP of Sarah Coventry Jewelry and his mother was a medical receptionist. He has two older brothers that were bad influences on him and was the main reason why little Robert got into trouble (frequently). Clifton Springs was/is a very quaint rural community on the Wayne and Ontario County border. The way that Rob described it, Barney Fife was never too far away and you could smell the fresh pies from Aunt Bea's window.

As youngster, Rob enjoyed being outside and active, and with two older brothers, they could find many adventures together. Like all innocence, that ended and school began. However Rob kept up his activity level with the "Alternative" sports such as waterskiing, hiking and scuba diving (he was SCUBA certified in Skaneateles Lake). Much to my surprise, Rob told me that he had an earring, not so surprising was that he had long hair and was a "cool dude" at Sodus Central HS. Ah, how time flies. In 1979, Rob graduated and took off for an education at the Finger Lakes Community College. He received an A.A.S. in Natural Resources and then decided to continue his education with a B.S. in Environmental Science and Biology from SUNY Brockport. When his head was not buried in the books, he was at the bar. Actually he was bartending. Rob had a lot of fun meeting all of the folks and the atmosphere of laughter, and mirth was one that I could tell he thinks of fondly. Rob is also a first in this newsletter in saying that another job that he had to get money for college was scrounging under vending machines for change. I am sure that he is not the first District Employee to do this, however he is the first to admit it.

A collage accomplishment that I got out of Rob was research that he was a part of involving the salmonid fisheries in Lake Ontario. Before the late 1980's the fishery was a spring/fall venture, as no one knew where the salmon moved off to in the summer. One of Rob's jobs was to tag and locate the fish and follow them around and find out where they were going. This was important as they were then able to encourage local charter fishermen to begin fishing in the summer season. This helped to extend the season, bring in more dollars and expand the local economies. Pretty neat when you think about it.

Upon graduating Brockport and all grew up in 1986, Rob relocated to Onondaga County SWCD. He had learned of a position at the District from a District Manager at Ontario (no, it wasn't DeRue). After a little over a year, a vacancy opened up in Wayne County and he moved back to become the District manager of the District. Wayne County SWCD has about 24 distinct programs that the manage/oversee/work on and Rob tries to keep it all together. Most days he loves the job, but as we all know there are sometimes....

Just recently he was married to another District employee, Cindy from Oswego County. They were married July 7, 2007. They knew of each other from the Districts and started hanging out together. They have three children from previous marriages, Kiersten, Nicole and Abbey, whom they have a blast with.

The family loves to be on the 31' express cruiser (their yacht), and they head there on Friday and goes home on Sunday. V As Rob puts it, "tubing by day and cocktails by evening". They have a variety of pets (dogs, fish and a lizard) and besides being on the boat they enjoy camping. Rob spent a number of years on the CDEA Board and recently stepped down for some relaxation. He was instrumental in developing the NYS CDEA website and the commercial. At the 2009 Water Quality Symposium, ask him for a "Sodus Bay Soda" and see if he steps up behind the bar, it sounds good.