

# CDEA News

The Newsletter of the New York State  
Conservation District Employees Association



March 2015



## Suffolk County Soil & Water Conservation Recognized BY NYS DEC

Sharon Frost, Soil District Technician, Suffolk County Soil and Water Conservation District



Sharon Frost, Suffolk County Soil and Water Conservation District and Commission Joe Marten, NYS Department of Environmental Conservation.

In Albany, on January 14th the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) recognized Suffolk County Soil and Water Conservation District for their Fuel Tank Replacement Program at the 11th Annual New York State Environmental Excellence Awards celebration.

"This year's awards recognize innovative programs, smart business decisions and unique collaborative initiatives that improve New York's environment and contribute to a stronger economy," said DEC Commissioner Joe Martens. "These organizations are models of excellence. They are having a

positive impact on our economy and their voluntary, innovative and sustainable actions address the environmental challenges facing our communities, state, nation and the world."

The DEC established the awards program in 2004 to recognize those who improve and protect New York's environment and contribute to a more healthy economy by advancing sustainable practices and forming creative partnerships. To date, DEC has recognized 60 award winners.

A statewide review committee, made up of 25 representatives from the public and private sectors, provided DEC advice in selecting the award winners from an array of competitive applications received in May, 2014.

Suffolk County Soil and Water Conservation District's Fuel Tank Replacement Program is a model of excellence as it demonstrates an acceptable solution to aging agricultural fuel tanks atop Long Island's sole source aquifer. Through a unique partnership, farmers were able to install new tanks that met

regulatory requirements at a reduced cost. The farmers are participating in this proactive program are leaders in the agricultural industry and are setting a precedent for others to become good stewards of the environment.

In August 2011 the Suffolk County Department of Health Services (SCDHS) began implementing the "Agricultural Compliance Educational Program." It was created with the assistance of the Suffolk County Soil and Water Conservation District (District), Cornell Cooperative Extension, USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service, and the Long Island Farm Bureau. This five-year amnesty program was designed to assist farmers with fuel tank compliance issues.

The District began assisting with the program by applying to the NYS Agricultural Nonpoint Source Abatement & Control Grant Program to assist farmers with funding their fuel tank replacements. The District has obtained \$955,000 in federal and state funds to date, replacing 234 fuel tanks on 127 farms. The new fuel tanks meet the county, state and federal requirements and have safeguarded over 82,000 gallons of on-farm fuel.

"It's was awesome to have the opportunity to accept the award on behalf of the program," said Sharon Frost the coordinator of the fuel tank replacement program.

# The First Ever 2015 Northeast Contract Grazing Summit

Troy Bishopp, Grazing Program Specialist, Madison County Soil and Water Conservation District

***“Real opportunities and perspectives from real grazing practitioners and customers”***

Saturday March 28<sup>th</sup>, 2015 9am - 5pm

Weaver Family Farm 4933 Peterboro Road Morrisville, NY 13408

Do you want to start a new grazing business, or grow and diversify an existing one? Are you interested in adding value to grazing land without buying animals? Ever consider placing your dairy and beef animals with a grazing professional to increase profitability or to expand milk/meat sales? Do you want to explore the decisions and considerations to running a contract grazing business?

Have we got an exciting, practical event for you to **“Grow More Cash from your Grass.”**

The Nationally-Acclaimed Madison County Soil and Water Conservation District Grazing Program and The Central New York Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D) Council, Inc. presents:

A day of learning led by current contract graziers, grazing clients, local grass-fed meat and dairy companies, land aggregators and Ag business professionals will delve into the matrix of decisions for considering a contract grazing business arrangement. Robust Topics include: What are the opportunities, what does a client want, pricing strategies, leasing land, grazing

management, land/animal people logistics, liability, simple contracts, conflict resolution, real farm profiles and how to build a network of grazing professionals to name a few.

Speakers include: Meg Grzeskiewicz, Custom Grazier from Rhinestone Cattle Co. in Colden, NY, Roy Brubaker from Blue Rooster Farm in East Waterford, PA, Richard Winter, Owner of Chaljeri Meats in Callicoon, NY, Troy Bishopp from Bishopp Family Farm in Deansboro, NY, Dwight Stoltzfoos from Springwood Organic Dairy Farm Kinzers, PA, Mark Justh & Ryan Fibiger from Fleisher’s Pasture-Raised Meats in Brooklyn, NY, Ken Jaffe from Slope Farms, LLC Meredith, NY, Morgan Hartman from Black Queen Angus Farm, LLC Berlin, NY, Brett Chedzoy from Angus Glen Farm and Schuyler County Cornell Cooperative Extension, Mike Baker Cornell Beef Cattle Extension Specialist, Scott Jeffers of Sauquoit Valley Insurance, Attorney Jim Stokes of Cazenovia, N.Y. Brian Reaser from On the Rail Farm, LLC in Kirkville, NY, Fay Benson Benterra Farm and Small

Farm Educator with Cortland County CCE, ABC Farm in Wampsville, NY and the Steven Weaver and John Hershberger Family Farms Peterboro, NY.

A homemade lunch made by the Peterboro Amish Community Church will be available on-site for a donation in support of the community’s school.

Pre-registration admission is \$70 per person or \$120 for two from the same farm. Space is limited so get signed up early.

For information, lodging choices and to register, please call Troy Bishopp at the Madison Co SWCD at (315) 824-9849 Ext. 110 [Troy-Bishopp@verizon.net](mailto:Troy-Bishopp@verizon.net) or send in your registration to Madison Co. Soil and Water Conservation District 6503 Wes Rd. Hamilton, N.Y. 13346

*See Summit, Page 4*



## Summit (from page 3)



Ongoing sponsors for this event are the Madison Co. SWCD, CNY RC&D Council, Upper Susquehanna Coalition, Finger

Lakes-Lake Ontario Watershed Protection Alliance, Cornell Small Farms Program, USDA's Risk Management Agency, Bishopp Family Farm, Madison County Grazer's Group.

### Basic AGENDA

\* 9:00am to 9:30: Delving into

the contract grazing concept and why there is cash in the grass. Troy Bishopp

\* 9:30 to 11:30: What are the opportunities? What does a grazing client want? (Roy Brubaker, Ken Jaffe, Mike Baker, Richard Winters, Dwight Stoltzfoos, Mark Justh, Ryan Fibiger, Rich Carrier)

\* 11:30 to 12:15: Landowners, Leasing land, Locating customers and Logistics. Meg Grzeskiewicz

\* LUNCH Donation to Peterboro Community School Fund

\* 1:15 to 2:45: A visit with beef

and dairy contract graziers: (Steven & Michael Weaver, Morgan Hartman, John & Jesse Hershberger, Brian Reaser, Meg Grzeskiewicz, Troy Bishopp, Fay Benson)

\* 2:45 to 3:15: Insurance, Liability and Contracting (Scott Jeffers, Jim Stokes)

\* 3:15 to 4:00: The economics and discussion of implementing a business case study and budgeting software (Troy Bishopp, Mike Baker, Brett Chedozy)

\* 4:00 to 5:00: Q & A with presenters

## Cover Crop and Soil Health Workshop a Success

Michael Coryat, Conservation Technician, Otsego County Soil & Water Conservation District

**F**armers, landowners and environmental agency staff gathered Wednesday, February 11 to attend the 2015 Cover Crop and Soil Health Workshop at the Otsego County Meadows Office Complex. The workshop was put on by Otsego County Soil & Water Conservation District and the Upper Susquehanna Coalition as part of an initiative to improve soil health and reduce nonpoint source pollution to the Chesapeake Bay.

Speakers included local Farmers Josh Johnson, Luke Pullis and Phil Hodgins; Soil Scientist Olga Vargas, Extension Associate Aaron Ristow, Conservation Technician Michael Coryat; Quirine Ketterings, professor of nutrient management, and Kevin Ganoë, field crops specialist. Presentations emphasized the importance of keeping soil covered, building organic matter, and fostering a soil environment that microbes can thrive in. Nutrient cycle

dynamics, soil sampling, and effective cover crop implementation were also important points of discussion. Highlights included Olga Vargas' demonstrations that showed improved rain infiltration in high organic content soils and enhanced aggregation in soil with healthy microbe populations. The workshop culminated in a lively round table discussion by Farmers Josh Johnson, Luke Pullis and Phil Hodgins on their own distinctive experiences cover cropping in Otsego County.



Olga Vargas demonstrates the benefits of healthy soil. Photo by Jeanine Harter.

This was the second Cover Crop & Soil Health Workshop hosted by Otsego County Soil & Water as part of a push to encourage cover crop use throughout the region. Soil & Water District Manager Jordan Clements remarked "soil health and cover crop use are among our foremost concerns at the district and they're topics we hope to draw more attention to in the future." The district hopes to host another workshop this summer.

# 2014 Soil Health Seminar, Cuddeback Farms, Cayuga County

Jason Cuddeback, Conservation Grazing Specialist, Cayuga County Soil and Water Conservation District

The Cayuga County Soil and Water Conservation District hosted a soil health seminar this past August 2014 at the Cuddeback Farm in the Dutch Hollow Watershed. Around 50 farmers attended the seminar showcasing soil health, cover crops, tillage demos and unmanned aerial drones. On display were several tillage tools utilized for soil health, all were demoed throughout the day showing off their conservation abilities. Speakers: Dr. Russell Hahn— How to manage cover crops with herbicides; Frank Gibbs— Biological cities; Jim Halbeisen— Soil Health with Calcium; and Erick Haas, Ron Porter— Utilizing technology for crops.



Eben Wier introduces the airway implement.



Steve Cuddeback talks to the crowd about his zone builder.



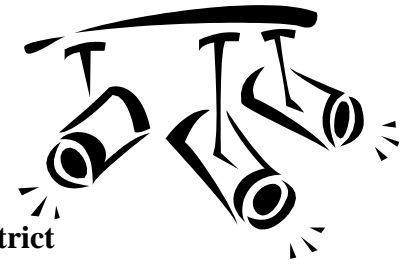
Zone builder in action.



Frank Gibbs talks about micro-organisms in cover crops.

## Wise Words from Our District Family

*Interviewing seasoned District employees who share some words of wisdom*



**Mark Watts**  
**Chemung County Soil and Water Conservation District**  
**31 years**

*How long have you been working at the Chemung County SWCD?*

A. 31 years.

*Q. What have you accomplished over the years with your District that you are most proud of?*

A. The development of our strong working relationship with our local municipalities. When we work together there is nothing we can not do.

*Q. Why have you continued to work at your Soil and Water Conservation District?*

A. I have been lucky and do not consider it work. I tell people all the time I am "LIVING THE DREAM." I have great people to work with and all enjoy the job by having FUN.

*Q. How have you seen District programs, or their focuses, change over the years?*



Hotaling and Ron Podolak (retired Cayuga County SWCD employees) who gave it to me when I was starting out. Build your local support and programs first if you can utilize the State funding to do it; go ahead but always take care of your local needs first. I have lived by this and it has worked. Also, do not worry about getting rich. The pleasure you will get from successful programs and the friendships you will build are

more important than the paycheck.

A. Districts are very good at adjusting to the needs and priorities of their local folks. Districts have also been able to hire hardworking and caring staff. In my 30+ years I have seen District staff go from simple help to NRCS (formerly the SCS) to leaders who now use NRCS as the help.

*Q. What words of wisdom do you have for a newly hired District employee?*

A. This comes straight from Jim

*Q. When did you first learn or hear about Soil and Water Conservation Districts?*

A. Growing up I knew about Districts through the SCS technicians building diversions and laying out strips on our farm.

*Q. What made you decide to apply for a job with your*

*See Wise, page 2.*



*Q. Please share with us a humorous moment from your time at your District.*

A. The meeting when our stormwater Engineer was given his birthday present, a shirt tailored by Jessica Verrigni which was requested by the crews working with him on jobs (hint it would be appropriate attire for a plumber). We have pictures!

*Q. If you were snowed in at your District office for a week with no hope of evacuating, who would you want to be snowed in with and what would be your top 3 survival items?*

A. Since my wife knows I am doing this I will say my wife Brenda and I would need the full season of Seinfeld DVDs and if it is 3 days some earplugs.

*Q. Do you have a hidden talent?*

A. I am very good at getting other people (just ask Jerry Verrigni and Karen) to do my work and make ME look very good for it.

*Q. Tell us about what you will miss when you retire.*

A. The people and the fun that we have at the office doing good conservation work.

*The pleasure you will get from successful programs and the friendships you will build are more important than the paycheck.*

*District?*

A. As stated above, I was lucky. I never applied but was asked by a neighbor (who was on the ASCS Committee) if I would coordinate the District's new pilot no-till program. I did this summers between my college years. After my final year they asked if I would stay on and did. We joke around here because I have never been to a job interview or prepared a resume.

*Q. Did your education prepare you for your job as a District employee?*

A. Somewhat. I took Natural Resources at Cobleskill College, but definitely learned more using on the job training.

*Q. Please share with us a memorable conservation moment while working for your District.*

A. Being the County Coordinator working with our local Highway DPW and local contractors to build "SPERR MEMORIAL NATURE PARK." This park was built as a tribute to a State Trooper Andy Sperr who lost his life in the line of duty in the area of the park. Working with everyone and meeting his family is something I will never forget.

*Q. What is your most epic memory from a Water Quality Symposium?*

A. Going to the training sessions held then at Keuka College and playing pick up softball games against the College's girls team. The "Rounder Sisters," Bear and his bear song, Bob Brower and his Harley imitations, and finally Phil Griswold as MC for banquet.

## Onondaga County Soil & Water Conservation District announces three employees' earned certifications

Mark Burger, Executive Director, Onondaga County Soil and Water Conservation District

Eva Sztecmiler met her credit requirements and completed enough field work in order to upgrade to NYS DEC Certified Pesticide Applicator status. Her work as a Certified Pesticide Applicator focuses primarily on the preservation of ash trees in Onondaga County in an effort to mitigate the effects of the Emerald Ash Borer, an invasive and highly destructive pest.



Eric Renfer recently attained Commercial Pesticide Applicator status from the New York State DEC. This will allow him to administer Tree-Age pesticide in a continuing effort to protect ash trees against Emerald Ash Borer infestation in Onondaga County.



Aaron Buchta of the Onondaga County Soil & Water Conservation District has recently become a Certified Crop Advisor (CCA). The CCA program is a nationally recognized certification process for agricultural consulting professionals.



Celebrate good times (come on!)



Lindsey Gerstenslager, District Manager of Wayne County Soil and Water Conservation District welcomed a new addition to her family. Chase Allen Weller was born in 40 minutes or less on February 8<sup>th</sup>, 2015 at 4:32 pm. 8lbs ½ oz, 21 inches long with a full head of hair and completely healthy.



Amelia Kelly was born to proud parents of Ewen and Jennifer Kelly on February 8, 2015. Jennifer is the District Technician at Chenango County Soil and Water Conservation District.





**SWCD Training Calendar**  
[https://www.google.com/calendar/embed?src=lauren.prezorski%40agriculture.ny.gov&ctz=America/New\\_York](https://www.google.com/calendar/embed?src=lauren.prezorski%40agriculture.ny.gov&ctz=America/New_York)

CDEA News needs **YOUR** news!  
Send your articles, save the dates,  
special recognitions, or photos to:  
hcsxcd@frontiernet.net.  
Next deadline: March 6 by 4:30 PM.

# Conservation District Employees Association

*“Your local Soil and Water Conservation District provides ongoing programs and services to conserve, enhance and protect soil and water resources in your community.”*

## **Executive Committee**

### ***President***

Nichelle Billhardt - Lewis County

### ***Vice President***

P.J. Emerick - Ontario County

### ***Secretary***

Velynda Parker - Steuben County

### ***Treasurer***

Kristin White - Seneca County

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Doug Kierst - Cayuga County

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Judy Bennett - Orleans County

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### ***Division IV***

Jordan Clements - Otsego County

### ***Division V***

Lenny Croote - Hamilton County

### ***Division VI***

Ben Luskin - Rensselaer County

### ***Division VII***

Kristen Brown - Orange County

### ***Division VIII***

Ann Marie Calabro - Suffolk County

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