Chastity Miller, District Manager of the Franklin County SWCD took this month’s cover photo.

Since 2010, Sr. District Technician Erica Schreiner of the Oswego County Soil and Water Conservation District and her high school friend have taken trips together because they both like traveling and adventure. Erica said, “Lately we have been alternating between domestic and international destinations. Last summer we spent time in South Africa and this summer we ended up in Idaho. Why Idaho? Because when I asked her “Have you ever heard anyone say they are going on vacation to Idaho?” she said “Nope.” We decided to go and see what was there. Wow…beautiful state. Desert-like in the southern part with a woodsy landscape to the north. My friend is a science teacher and I have an interest in agriculture so I made prior arrangements with Connie Tharp, DC at the Mountain Home, Idaho USDA-NRCS service center, to learn about agriculture in Idaho, and specifically, about potatoes. What a great time it was! Connie spent about 3 very informative hours with us, and she introduced us to Trent Cummins of Flying H Farms which grows potatoes, corn, wheat and alfalfa. Trent told us all about potato farming and as per our request, took us right out into the field to dig potatoes, which yes, we hauled home in our suitcases. Mountain Home is in the greater Boise area where they receive 12 inches of rain per year. In a WHOLE YEAR! Needless to say, irrigation is key in that area. Part of our quest was to eat potatoes as many ways as possible while in Idaho. While our trip also took us to Utah, Oregon, Washington, and Montana, in order for it to “count” on the list, the potato had to be consumed in Idaho. Here’s what we had: chocolate milk thickened with potato flakes (really quite tasty), potato soup, baked potatoes, potato skins, curly French fries, potato chips, chili cheese fries, mashed potatoes, twice baked potatoes, and tater tots. Can’t forget the tots, and not too shabby of a list for 4 days in Idaho…”
Caitlin Stewart, Conservation Educator of the Hamilton County Soil and Water Conservation District and her husband Matt adopted an 80 pound lab mix from the Stevens Swan Humane Society. Artemis enjoys outdoor adventures including winter hikes on the Adirondack Ecotrail behind the District office, skijoring on Lake Pleasant, and daily walks sniffing out Adirondack wildlife. His lazy Saturday morning ritual consists of sleeping in with Matt while Caitlin practices yoga. This fur baby brings joy, laughter, and full hearts to his humans.

Jim Greenfield Honored
Mark Burger, Executive Director, Skaneateles Lake Watershed Agricultural Program

Jim Greenfield received a **Distinguished Service Award** at this week’s Annual Meeting in Skaneateles, NY. Jim was recognized for 25 years of dedication to the City of Syracuse’s Skaneateles Lake Watershed Agricultural Program. Mike McMahon, Chair of the program’s review committee presented the award with these words, “He [Jim] is a man of conviction in his care and concern for the quality of our lake. His concern for the environment is evident in his agricultural practices as well as his involvement on the many boards he has served on.” Jim and his brothers own and operate the family crop farm on the west side of Skaneateles Lake. In 1992, Jim who is one of the founding members of the Watershed Agricultural Program Review Committee, helped promote a new partnership between the City of Syracuse and farmers in the watershed. It was a grassroots effort - some of those early farmer meetings were held at Jim’s farm and together the program was launched, offering sound environmental practices onto farms, voluntary and 100% City funded. Fast-forward 25 years, 95% of farms are signed onto the program. Thank you Jim for your service, vision, support and dedication!
Madison County SWCD Delivers Solutions when Flooding Hits
Madison County Soil and Water Conservation District

The Town of Eaton requested assistance from the Madison County SWCD team for the permit process and design of a culvert in a road that had been closed since a flood event July 1, 2017. The district researched the possibilities. Economics, longevity of the structure, meeting permit requirements for a trout stream, and improved aquatic organism passage were all considered. The previous structure was an 8’ dia circular corrugated metal pipe. This structure had inadequate capacity for the periodic floods from this watershed, and had a similar failure 4 years previous. The road was overtopped with flood water and severe scouring caused the road to fail. An aluminum structural plate box culvert was chosen with a 19’10” span and a 7’8” rise. This was designed to be installed on concrete footers pinned to the bedrock stream bottom. The natural stream bed was now restored and the capacity for water and debris passage dramatically increased. The District provided an engineer stamped design and oversaw construction of the project. The project was bid out to private contractors and the final cost was in the projected budget.

Roberts Road before.

Roberts Road during.

Roberts Road after.

Madison County SWCD technician Jerry Boyd helped design and oversee this crucial job.
The New York State Grown and Certified program launched in 2016 to help meet the growing consumer demand for high quality foods grown or produced to a higher standard within New York State. To be a part of the New York State Grown and Certified program, participating farmers and processors, must meet food safety standards that pertain to specific commodities, such as GAP (Good Agricultural Practices), while also meeting the required environmental standard by participating in an AEM (Agricultural Environmental Management) assessment. Commodities that are currently accepted into the NYS Grown and Certified Program include produce, dairy, eggs, beef, poultry, pork, oysters, Christmas trees and maple products.

Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCDs) lead in the implementation of the AEM program. AEM is a voluntary, confidential, locally-led, and comprehensive approach that further advances environmental management on New York’s farms, across all sizes and commodities. This program delivers technical support and financial incentives needed to help farmers to implement conservation practices critical to the protection of water quality and other natural resources. AEM helps to ensure that New York’s farms remain viable and continue to meet their business objectives in an everchanging market place. Over the last two decades, over 12,000 farms across New York State have participated in AEM by working with local SWCDs and partnering with resource professionals, to develop and implement comprehensive, farm-specific plans using AEM’s 5-Tier approach.

- Tier 1: Inventory current activities, and future plans of the farm business.
- Tier 2: Assess current environmental stewardship and opportunities for improvement.
- Tier 3: Develop conservation plans addressing concerns and opportunities tailored to farm goals.
- Tier 4: Implement plans utilizing available financial, educational, and technical assistance.
- Tier 5: Evaluate practices and plans to ensure the protection of farm viability and the environment.

The New York State Grown & Certified program requires an AEM Tier 2 assessment. Completing this step provides farms the opportunity to become more engaged with the AEM program, often leading to further work through the Tiers to address farm and natural resource needs. Advancing through the AEM Tiers, opens doors for farms to apply for cost-share funding to implement priority practices, by advancing to the Tier 3 planning process. AEM takes a whole farm view to address not only nutrient management, but also addresses farmstead water supplies; pasture management; pesticide mixing, loading and storage; erosion control; stream and floodplain management; irrigation water management; and soil health to name a few. AEM can also address farm-to-neighbor relations and agriculture in the community.

In today’s climate of environmental awareness, AEM’s technical and financial resources are valuable to assist farmers in maintaining their commitment to conservation. Proactively advancing conservation practices is central to economic viability on today’s farms. All farms that are in enrolled in the NYS Grown and Certified Program are encouraged to partner with their local SWCD to work further through the AEM Tiers, if they’ve not already done so. Any farm can participate in AEM, without necessarily participating in the New York State Grown and Certified program.

Soil and Water Conservation Districts continue their long record of leading and implementing AEM with farmers at the county level, supported by statewide leadership from the Department of Agriculture and Markets and the NYS Soil and Water Conservation Committee. To learn more about AEM, contact your local SWCD, or visit www.nyssoilandwater.org. For more information about the NYS Grown and Certified program, visit https://certified.ny.gov.
Wise Words from Our District Family
Interviewing seasoned District employees who share some words of wisdom

Amanda A. Barber
Cortland County Soil & Water Conservation District
29 years

Q. How long have you been working at your SWCD? If you have worked for more than one District, please let us know the counties, positions, and years worked.

A. I've worked for Districts since June 1989. I was the first District manager in Tompkins County for about a year in 1994 before returning to Cortland as the District Manager in January 1995.

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

A. Our staff has doubled, and funding from the county and grants has grown exponentially. We've built a diverse program that offers a variety of services and assistance to our county landowners and communities.

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

A. The District is a perfect place for me to utilize my agricultural and natural resources background and training to help people. It has been a perfect fit for me and I especially enjoy making a difference in the lives of people, in the environment, and in the community that I call home.

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

A. The best way for me to describe the change I have seen is to say that those around us have acknowledged and embraced the true essence of District Law. Districts are not the same thing to everyone, but can be many things to many people. Soil and water conservation involves other natural resources like air, plants and animals. Conservation practices don't just occur on agricultural, rural land, or private land. Conservation occurs in communities and by communities. Conservation is accomplished through the efforts of adults and children, churches, lake associations, lots of different types of groups and people. Conservation is about relationships, and ethics, and the general health and welfare of the places we live.

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

A. Conservation isn't just work that we do; and if you truly believe in the importance of what we do, others will believe in it too.

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

A. My sister-in-law Sallee, who worked for USDA-ASCS at the time, told me about the District.

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

A. I was graduating, getting married, and needed a real job! It sounded like a great place to work.

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

A. Absolutely! The job has been a perfect fit for me in many ways. The Ranger School is an amazing educational institution!

See Wise, page 7.
Wise (from page 6)

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

A. Going into labor for my second child while in the field with the guys. Once we got back to the office and I fessed up, they couldn't get me out of there fast enough!

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

A. "What happens at the Symposium, stays at the Symposium!" To share my most epic memory would be breaking the code of honor! I will say though that Warren County was most likely involved...!

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

A. No humor allowed - this is a government office! But watching Shawn try not to wretch over the smell from a tank full of minnows that died over the weekend was humorous, as were the chocolate mouse droppings on desks.

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. If it had to be with a District employee, then I'd take any of them because they'd all be resourceful and good company. I would want a sleeping bag and pillow for comfort and warmth, and the latest Jack Reacher novel for when the conversation waned. Wait - Do we each get 3 items? I'm not sharing my sleeping bag, so if we have to share then make that 2 sleeping bags and a deck of cards! There's enough food and drink stashed around this place to easily keep a couple people fed for a week. It actually might be a restful experience!

Q. Do you have a hidden talent?

A. Actually Phil Griswold and I share a rare and unique water spitting talent!

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

A. Who's retiring? Are you trying to get rid of me? Actually when I think about retiring, I think what I will miss is the challenge. I will miss trying to fix things, solve problems, and implement change.

Q. Any concluding remarks?

A. If you know me, then you know that my remarks never conclude! I always have something to say and never give up, and so that's what I will add to this piece. If you have something to say, just say it! There are so many of you out there thinking things, smart people with good ideas, young and educated people with new and fresh perspectives. Get involved, plan and prepare, share your thoughts. Be prepared to have those ideas shot down, but don't be a victim of your own silence. Don't be afraid of debate and discussion. Rejection should be an invitation to refine an idea and try again. Be patient, but be persistent and don't give up. When I was a kid, my family had a saying and I heard it time and again when I was disappointed about something that didn't go the way I planned. It's become my mantra, like "I think I can" for the Little Engine That Could; So I will leave you with this thought, "If at first you don't succeed, try and try again!" God bless!
Grass Farmer and Agency Professional Garners National Recognition for Grassland Advocacy

Deansboro, NY—American essayist and philosopher, Henry David Thoreau waxed poetic about life by saying “Pursue some path, however narrow and crooked, in which you can walk with love and reverence.” Grass Farmer Troy Bishopp, aka “The Grass Whisperer” has been following Thoreau’s reverent path, but it happens to be lined with fencerows, cattle, wildlife, healthy soil, clean streams and a carpet of green pastures.

This journey of management-intensive grass farming, teaching, advising, writing, speaking and photographing in the hamlet of Deansboro, NY on the family’s multi-generational; 100 acre organic grass farm has once again brought the farmer accolades on a national scale. Bishopp was surprised at the 2017 National Grassfed Exchange Conference in front of 500 farmers and ranchers in Albany, NY with a coveted Service Award for his over 30 years of grassland advocacy, leadership and dedication to expanding grass-fed livestock enterprises and mentoring grassland stewardship throughout New York and the Northeast.

In addition to farming, Bishopp takes this passion and work ethic to the Madison County Soil and Water Conservation District and the Upper Susquehanna Coalition and directs grazing assistance and

See Recognition, Page 9.
practical holistic land management concepts to hundreds of area farmers. He’s also a freelance writer/photographer for Lee Newspapers, OnPasture.com, and other regional and national media outlets. “He practices what he preaches, said District Manager, Steve Lorraine. It makes him an effective leader and promoter of high-level grazing and land management systems”.

This national honor adds to Bishopp’s body of work within the agricultural community. He was previously awarded with the NYS Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative Pioneer Grazier’s award, has garnered numerous Harold “Cap” Creal Excellence in Journalism awards, Agriculture in the News awards, NESARE & National NACD photography awards and several Mohawk Valley Toastmasters International Public Speaking contest awards.

Grassfed Exchange Board member, Dr. Allen Williams said, “Troy has long been a pioneer and innovator in the world of grazing. He is a tireless practitioner, advocate, and promoter of the myriad benefits of adaptive grazing principles. He is always willing to share his extensive knowledge with anyone who has interest and has been instrumental in positively affecting grazing at a landscape scale. Truly an honor and well deserved.”

Friend, NY Beef Farmer & Grassfed Exchange Board member, Morgan Hartman praised the Grass Whisperer, “I got started into grassfed beef seriously in 2007. One of the key people who inspired me and has been a mentor is Troy Bishopp. He’s been at this as a practitioner/farmer and as a teacher since before it was cool. One of the most inspiring aspects of what Troy does is his commitment to helping other farmers and his passions for seeing others succeed.”

University of Vermont Pasture Program Coordinator Jenn Colby said, “Troy’s passion and commitment to grass-based livestock farmers in the Northeast is unparalleled. He is ready to ask hard questions or share personal feelings and experiences to help each farmer feel supported and be more successful. Seeing Troy’s local and regional efforts rewarded on the national level was not only well deserved, but a personal highlight for those of us knowing how hard he works to achieve the mission of grass farming.”

“Troy Bishopp has dedicated a great amount of his time assisting members of the agricultural community. He has helped many of us in creating a vision through his passion of farming. His one-on-one approach has not only kept me farming, but has made it profitable. This has not only helped our operation increase time spent with family, but has made farming enjoyable. I have also noticed my decrease in fuel consumption, reducing my carbon footprint. Troy has been a great asset to the farming community of this area and a dedicated voice”,

See Recognition, Page 10.
Recognition (from page 9)

said Purple Tie Farm Beef Farm’s, Allen Riley.

“Troy has connected the dots between the profitability of grass farming for rebuilding local farm communities. He has been a tireless advocate for farmers and local food sheds. He is to be commended for his efforts to educate his peers, governmental agencies in charge of grassland management, and the politicians who empower the programs. His wit and humor, mixed with realistic commentary, about what is wrong with our rural farm economies prove Troy’s passion for farm sustainability. Farmers and local communities have been the benefactors of his energized grazing career”, said Kim Seeley, Milky Way Dairy Farm.

"This award is dedicated to my ancestors and family who have given me inspiration to build “sweat equity” for the good of the earth and in memory of my late brother, Scott Bishopp, who knew the value of mentoring and teaching the next generation lessons in life. I am humbled, proud and thankful to receive recognition for this 2017 service award from my peers at the Grassfed Exchange. This award speaks volumes on behalf of all who have mentored me over my 35 years advocating for the use of managed grasslands to feed and clothe the soil of America. I hope my toil will spur future generations to consider the awesome possibilities of grassland farming for economic, environmental and family well-being”, emphasized Bishopp.

Draining a Beaver Dam
Meghan G. Kuchma, Intern, Onondaga County Soil and Water Conservation District

Friday October 20 was a challenging day packed with its own rewards. Many people came together to install four 12-inch plastic culvert pipes through a beaver dam on Heron Marsh in the Town of Cicero, NY. The goal was to lower the water levels that were causing flooding and damage on private property, while also protecting the beaver and their habitat. It was a warm fall day with a sighting of a bald eagle who was accompanied by a Cooper’s hawk.

This dam was approximately 2-3 feet high and less than 20 feet long. There was a little issue submerging the upstream end of the pipes, but it was eventually sunk. A suggestion given by a volunteer was installing four 20-foot-long, 12-inch pipes (2 side by side), use two 20-foot-long, 12-inch pipes side by side. The upstream 10-foot section should be perforat-

See Dam, page 11.
ed. By cutting the materials in half on smaller dams, the costs for these projects would also be reduced accordingly. This would also likely cut the installation time in half. A special thank you to the four entities that came together to remediate an issue of a beaver dam on Land Trust property at Heron Marsh Preserve in Cicero, NY. Many thanks to Meredith Perreault from the Land Trust, ESF students, Chris Woznica the Highway Department Superintendent, Mark Venesky the Town of Cicero Supervisor, and the Onondaga County Soil Water Conservation District staff for preparing the dam for the construction of the drainage, supplying the necessary tools and supplies, and in participating in the installation of the culvert pipes into the beaver dam.

To learn more about installing drainage tubes into a beaver dam, please visit: http://naturalhighs.net/waterfalls/falls07/BeaverDamDrain.htm

While on one of mine and Teresa Links supply runs I came across a caterpillar that I did not recognize and thought beautiful.
The students of a Geographic Information Systems (GIS) class at the College at Brockport created watershed and invasive species story maps for the Hamilton County Soil and Water Conservation District. A story map is an interactive online tool that engages audiences with maps, photos, and narrative text to tell a story. The project is now complete and has been launched on the District’s website.

“Dr. James Zollweg reached out to me last year with the idea to have his students create a story map for the District,” said Manager Elizabeth Mangle. “The students developed maps, reports, and a pamphlet with environmental protection tips, invasive species information, and water quality data for our county.”

The watershed story map contains information for Hamilton County’s major watersheds including interactive maps, geographic histories, and water quality concerns. The story book’s final chapter, Lake Monitoring, details the program’s overview and goals, as well as mapped water quality data.

Chapters of the invasive species story map include District initiatives, adverse impacts of invasive species, spread mechanisms, and clickable invasion maps. The story book’s last chapter details ways to help stop the spread of invasive species.

“It was an absolute pleasure to work with this team of enthusiastic students including Kinsey Irvin, Abigail Butler, Andrew Walter, Christopher Maier, Cindy Brownson, Jared Bearce, Julia Vigil, and Nicholas Farese,” said Conservation Educator Caitlin Stewart. “Through countless emails and phone calls, information was exchanged for the students to create these sharp story maps that creatively share the story of conservation in Hamilton County.”

Story maps, reports, and the pamphlet can be viewed on the District’s website at www.hcswcd.com.

The District has been working to manage and promote the wise use of natural resources in Hamilton County since 1965. For more information go to www.hcswcd.com or call 518-548-3991.

The invasive species GIS story map allows users to view invasion locations and click on points for more information, such as Eurasian watermilfoil data for Seventh Lake.

The watershed GIS story map tells the story of Hamilton County’s 6 major watersheds, allowing for an interactive and educational user experience.
New York State
Conservation District Employees’ Association, Inc.

“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**
Steve Lorraine, Madison County

**Vice President**
Chastity Miller, Franklin County

**Secretary**
Caitlin Stewart, Hamilton County

**Treasurer**
Kristin White, Seneca County

**Member At Large**
Doug Kierst, Cayuga County

**Division Representatives**

**Division I**
Judy Bennett, Orleans County

**Division II**
Kelly Emerick, Monroe County

**Division III**
Raeanne Dulanski, St Lawrence County

**Division IV**
Velynda Parker, Steuben County

**Division V**
Laura Benedict, Essex County

**Division VI**
Ben Luskin, Washington County

**Division VII**
Erin Sommerville, Dutchess County

**Division VIII**
Ann Marie Calabro, Suffolk County

www.nyscdea.com/  •  Phone: 607.776.7398, ext 3  •  Fax: 607.776.7487