

Cover Photo

Medina Falls and the Erie Canal. Oak Orchard Creek comes under the canal and turns into the medina falls. Photo captured with a Mavic 2 Drone. And taken by Megan McAnn, District Technician, Orleans County Soil and Water Conservation District



From the President's Desk

The Quest for Equality and Inclusion:

Soil and water conservation Districts have been at the forefront of conservation in New York since our first conservation district was created in Schoharie County in 1940. This drive to implement conservation practices has always focused on implementing projects that meet the current need in the most economical way. To help Districts implement these practices the Agricultural Nonpoint Source Abatement and Control program was established by the New York Soil and Water Conservation Committee in 1994 to assist New York State farmers in preventing and controlling water pollution from agricultural activities by providing technical assistance and financial incentives. This program, along with many more that have been made available to Soil and Water Conservation Districts have allowed us to meet the need for conservation on the ground. Whenever challenges and opportunities have come up, Districts have been there to meet those needs. From the ACRF program in 2011 that helped producers recover quickly from the impacts of hurricanes Irene and Lee to the current program offerings like CRF, Districts have stepped up to meet the many challenges placed before them.

In all of those programs and challenges Districts have worked to implement conservation on the ground in New York based on need. This need is determined by each District with reference to their daily workload and what resources are identified as most stressed. Districts typically develop plans to help with the prioritization of projects. When this involves agriculture, a District's prioritization is based on their AEM Strategy. This strategy is created through a process of gathering data on the resources of the County, including things like the DEC PWL, watershed management plans, Source Water Assessments and input from other agencies and organizations (NRCS,CCE, Etc...). When reviewing possible projects and resource needs that do not have an agricultural focus, several Districts may work jointly to cover a watershed that may span political boundaries. These watershed groups that now cover the entire state and all of the major watersheds use a similar process to review scientific documents and resources to identify projects and areas that need attention. This information is put together in a document, a Watershed Management Plan that is used to guide the work of The Districts and their partner organizations.

In the process of this work, Districts do sometimes come across areas that need attention that require a different approach to get this work done. One example is when farms were identified that needed assistance to implement practices to protect the County's resources and those farms were operated by members of a religious community that seldom works with governmental organizations. Districts collaborated successfully to develop methods to work with these operations. These success stories were shared at a CDEA sponsored training.

At the 2021 Virtual Water Quality Symposium, the CDEA worked with NRCS and other partners across the country to put together a very informative day long training to help Districts adapt to work with urban and suburban producers. These will certainly not be the last trainings that are held in New York to assist Districts that have communities that differ from their usual cooperators that they need to reach out to.

It is likely true that the vast majority of the farmers that Districts work with, look more like Grant Wood's 1930 painting American Gothic than the typical representation on your television. This is anecdotal of course; I know of no source of information that details the race, gender or financial position of District Cooperators. But I will concede that the majority of the farmers I have worked with during my career have been white and I will go as far to say that they are mostly male as well. This is certainly not the rule but is a result of many years of traditional farm families being led by the father with the support of his wife and children. Again, as an observation, we are seeing more female District Cooperators now and those women are assisted in the same way as the male farmers.

To date I have not heard of any individual complaint about a District that has refused to serve a producer on the basis of race, religion or gender. I have asked the State Committee to pass along any inquiries that they receive relating to any complaints of Districts that are refusing service and at this time I have not been provided with any. I would be surprised if any such complaints did arise and I would immediately reach out to any District that was doing this to help to ensure that it did not continue. Knowing many District employees personally, I would never expect this to be necessary.

A quick review of the 2021 Directory of District Staff that is maintained by the SWCC, it looks like 46% of District staff are female. This is all without any mandate or required reporting of staff numbers based on race or gender. Some would also question the makeup of District Boards based on these criteria. Using the same source, 20% of all Board Members are female. While that percentage seems low, it would be good to mention that with two members of each Board coming from the elected representatives at the county level and two more being put forward by the Farm Bureau and Grange of that County, the District may only have any major input into the selection of one Board member in the case of a five member Board and three in the case of a seven member Board.

Your CDEA Board is another example of District Representation. We are elected by the District employees from across the state. With open elections, the resulting makeup of our CDEA Board is 8 women and 5 men. I am honored to work with this dedicated group of individuals that works to support District staff across the state with no regard to gender or race. To focus on the differences would only serve to divide. Instead, we choose to focus on the needs of our members and work to support those needs.

The idea of adding questions relating to these segments of our population to District grant proposals or other District documents would be, in my opinion, a waste of District time and resources. As stated clearly above, our programs and projects are guided by scientific information and data. If we are to "trust the science" we should continue to strive to use the most up to date scientific information to guide our decision-making process when selecting projects to submit for grant funding or when simply prioritizing projects that we will work on in our counties. To continue with the science-based decisions, I would also expect that the agencies that provide funding would follow that same approach of funding projects based on the scientifically justifiable need. This scientifically based application and review process is meant to ensure that our money (this is money from the State, which means it is money that is collected from taxes that we pay) is used to fund projects that will have the greatest impact on the resource for the least amount of money.

If the State begins to use race or gender as part of their ranking criteria, they will get the projects that they ask for. To shift the focus of our programs from science based to emotions based would be to the detriment of our environment and our local natural resources.

Dustin Lewis CDEA President



CDEA News is proud to present **Where in New York is Ronny Raindrop?** By evaporation or precipitation, by sublimation or freezing, Ronny thrills crowds all across New York State. Submit your photos of Ronny with a brief description of what he's doing and where he is.



Ronny at the Franklin County Fair, mid to late 80s.



Ronny Raindrop traveled with Oswego County SWCD's Erica Schreiner to New Orleans and vicinity. Photos are of Ronny at the Big Branch Marsh National Wildlife Refuge, Home - Big Branch Marsh - U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (fws.gov) and on Bourbon Street.



Out with the old, in with the new! CDEA Vice President Caitlin Stewart met with costume maker Liz Woods of Fine Character to discuss making new Ronny Raindrop costumes. Ronny, it's time to fix your eyebrow!

Forestry Best Management Practices and Skidder Bridge Workshop

When: November 17, 2021 7:30am - 3:30pm Where: Wilmington, NY

Join us for a logging site tour that will discuss portable skidder bridge placement across streams, Forestry Best Management Practices (BMPs), Erosion and sediment control products for timber harvests, permits and cleaning up spills. In additional to the logging site tour, attendees will also construct a portable skidder bridge at Ward Pine Mill.

This workshop will focus on the benefits of BMPs for:

- water quality protection
- forest and soil health improvement
- the conservation of critical habitat areas.

At the conclusion of the workshop, each logger in attendance will be entered into a



Loggers, forest landowners, town and zoning officials are encouraged to attend!

Continuing Education Credits available through:

- Society of American Foresters-4.5
- Master Logger Training 6hrs
- New York Logger Training 1
 **Pending approval

drawing to take the skidder bridge with them for FREE!!! All workshop attendees will receive a copy of the <u>NYS 2018 Forestry BMP Field Guide</u>. This workshop is FREE and open to the public and no previous training or experience is required.



Professional Engineering Training Session in Washington County Ryan Cunningham, Association Environmental Analyst, New York State Soil and Water Conservation Committee

Ideal Dairy Farms and Washington County SWCD hosted an engineering training session in



Ideal Dairy tour.

late October that focused on manure management practices and the opportunities for state and federal implementation funding for farms. Engineers from many local consulting firms participated, along with several from public agencies. The training was funded by the Lake Champlain Basin Program with staff from Cornell's Pro Dairy providing the training.

A long-term goal of this training is to increase private sector engineering capacity within the Lake Champlain Watershed, and beyond. As the demand for more programming continues, Soil & Water Conservation Districts are increasingly in need of engineering assistance for the design and implementation of agricultural best management practices. This training provided the opportunity for networking and discussing these needs, along with a review of funding programs, design criteria with regards to farming operations, and USDA standards and specifications for these practices.

A second engineering training, focused on additional agricultural BMP systems, will be held on April 27th, 2022 in Clinton County, and hosted by the Miner Institute. Registration and more information will be available this spring.

Many thanks to all participants and supporters of this event, including Ideal Dairy Farms, Deep Roots Farm, Washington County SWCD, NRCS staff, the Lake Champlain Basin Program and Pro Dairy.



Ideal Dairy tour.

Water Chestnut Hand Pulling Project: Summer 2021 Summary Report Julie Romano (Crew Lead) and Chris Perrotta, Onondaga County Soil and Water Conservation District

The water chestnut (Trapa natans) is an invasive aquatic plant that is native to Europe, Asia, and Africa. It was introduced to the United States in the mid 1800's, and by 1884, the plant had unintentionally spread into the waterways of the Great Lakes Basin. These plants thrive in slow moving freshwater and can root in depths of up to 16 feet. Each individual plant produces 15-20 hard nuts, which remain viable to produce new plants for 12 years. The relatively large amount of seeds produced, along with their longevity allows

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dense populations to proliferate quickly. Populations create dense mats that prevent light from penetrating the water, shading out native aquatic plants that provide food and habitat for native fish, waterfowl, and insects. They also reduce levels of dissolved oxygen in the water column leading to fish kills. In addition to these ecological impacts, water chestnuts are also a nuisance species as their dense mats obstruct boaters and swimmers. In their native habitats, populations are kept in check by insects, however these insects cannot be released in North America due to their own invasive nature. Methods for control include early detection, mechanical harvesting, herbicide application, and hand pulling. The eradication of this plant requires annual harvests for 5-12 consecutive years.

For the summer of 2021, the OCSWCD water chestnut crew removed approximately 45,740 pounds of plants primarily from the Seneca River, along with some from the Oneida and Oswego Rivers, and Onondaga Creek. Additionally, the crew received reports of a patch of water chestnuts on the Jamesville Reservoir, but was unable to immediately remove it due to its proximity to a wetland. The crew then applied for and obtained a permit from the DEC to remove them which will be valid for 5 years. This was the second year of hand pulling utilizing a Jon Boat, which allowed for more efficient navigating of the river, loading, and unloading. The crew



filled recycling bins with plants, and dumped them into the bed of the truck where we would scatter them on local farm fields. This year, a brand new conveyer belt attachment for the bed of the truck made dumping much faster and easier. The crew revisited patches that we had previously pulled, and unfortunately in many cases the patches had returned to almost full size. This may be due to high water levels in the beginning of the season obstructing full removal of each plant, allowing for resprouting.

The OCSWCD chestnut crew was happy to have the opportunity to participate in a community pull alongside the Eno Point Camper's Association on Cross Lake. This community pull had a huge turnout of twenty three volunteers, all of whom were extremely hardworking and enthusiastic about the project. We had coordinated with a local farmer to scatter the excess plants on his recently harvested wheat field. Beneficially reusing the plants on a farm ensures that the nutrients in the water chestnuts are recycled and reused in a productive manner rather than being wasted in a landfill. Soil samples have been taken to find a quantitative value on nutrient levels gained from the chestnuts. We had two OCSWCD trucks transporting loads of chestnuts to the farm, and volunteers worked so efficiently that we had trouble keeping up. In total, fourteen truckloads, each weighing 1,000 to 2,000 pounds were pulled from the river and brought to the field. The OCSWCD is incredibly grateful for the hard work put in from the volunteers at Eno Point. They were some of the most hardworking and enthusiastic groups of volunteers that the District has ever worked with. It was calculated that volunteers contributed \$4,851 worth of in-kind labor that day! It is also important to note that the crew returned to Eno Point a few days after the pull for a press release where County Executive Ryan McMahon announced that he will be allocating 50,000 dollars in addition to the current funding to address the water

chestnut issue. This will primarily go towards labor hours, new equipment, and mechanical harvesting.

Another noticeable experience was the ability to work with the harvesters of CNY Aquatic Harvesting. This company is contracted by the OCSWCD, working tirelessly to remove the chestnuts from the waterways. The two-man crew worked to remove thousands of pounds of water chestnuts every day. When the hand pulling crew teamed up with the aquatic harvesters, they were able to hand pull near the shores where



it was too shallow for the machine, and dump directly onto the boat. This benefited both the hand pulling crew rendering us more efficient picking up to 110 bins per day, and the mechanical harvesters as we could get plants that were out of reach of the harvester.

This season proved to be extra difficult due to adverse weather conditions. Frequent rain and thunderstorms caused safety hazards such as lightning and stronger than normal currents. The hand pulling crew found safety in working along the slow moving eddies in the river, however the mechanical harvester was unable to work in some cases as the current was moving faster than the boat. Overall, the crew is happy with the amount of

chestnuts that they were able to remove despite the storms and high currents. The mechanical harvesting crew is still currently working seven days a week to remove chestnuts. They continue to overcome obstacles such as Cooper's Marina boat launch being shut down due to currents caused by a 200-year storm event in August.

We would like to thank all landowners and marinas who allowed us to launch from their property. We would also like to thank all parties involved for the many contributions that they made to the success of this program.

A Tribute to Gwyn Olenych

Mrs. Olenych retired from the Onondaga County Soil & Water Conservation District (District) on July 16, 2021. She started her career at the District on March 20, 2009, as an Account Clerk I. Over the years and with much experience, she tested her way up to and retired as an Accountant I.

When Mrs. Olenych started with the organization there were 5 bank accounts, and the annual budget was \$2.8 Million. Today there are more than 41 bank accounts, and the budget is \$5.2 Million.

From our quick calculations, it is estimated that Mrs. Olenych participated in, and presented 154 monthly financial reports to the Board of Directors, helped prepare 53 financial budgets (39 budgets for the District and 13 annual budgets for the City of Syracuse's Skaneateles Lake Watershed Agricultural Program (SLWAP)). All while making sure all contractors, vendors, and staff got paid in a timely manner!

She worked tirelessly for the District and the SLWAP. We truly appreciate her friendship, dedication, devotion, and gentle spirit that she graced the office with every day while on the job. We all wish her the most wonderful years in retirement!

Wise Words from our District Family

Interviewing experienced District employees who share some words of wisdom

Stacy Russell, Natural Resource Program Specialist

Cortland County Soil and Water Conservation District

25 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 the Cortland County Soil and Water Conservation District for 25 years. Prior to working in Cortland, I worked for Orange County, USDA Soil Conservation Service (yes, I'm really dating myself now as that was before the NRCS name change).

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

A. I am proud of many things that I've worked on here at the District, but there is one project, from early on in my career, that stuck with me and made an impact. This story requires a bit of background in the sense that it takes place on a farm that I worked with my very first year on the job. I met with this farm, initially, in 1996 and developed a farm plan, with a list of possible BMPs that could benefit the farm. At the time, the farm tabled the plan and didn't implement anything. It was a huge disappointment for me, especially as a new employee. But, fast forward approximately 5 years later, the farm contacts me and says they'd like to revisit the plan. After some plan revisions and funding requests, the plan was implemented 6 years after it was developed. This project helped me realize that we are in conservation for the longgame and that sometimes you plant a seed or an idea and, even though it might take a while for that seed to grow (6 years in this case), what we do makes a long-term difference.

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

A. I enjoy the variety of programs and natural resource issues that we work on. I'd never last at a monotonous job where I had to do the same thing over and over every day. It is true that District employees are really a "jack of all trades" ... from conservation education to technical implementation, we really do it all!

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

A. I would say that when I first started our programs were primarily centered on rural and agricultural issues. Our District program services, along with our staffing, have grown and expanded to include a variety of issues including; urban stormwater, surface and groundwater water protection, streambank stabilization, municipal projects, permit assistance, hydroseeding, invasive species monitoring and habitat improvement.

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

A. Don't be afraid to reach out and contact District staff from other counties for help. There is a wealth of expertise amongst the CDEA employees to tap into.

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

A. While working for USDA, I worked closely with the Orange Co. SWCD staff and often participated and helped out with the programs they offered.

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

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A. My position with USDA when I started was considered a temporary, two-year term position, so toward the end of that assignment I decided to jump ship and apply to a few Soil and Water Districts. Cortland offered me a position and, as they say, the rest is history.

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

A. I have quite a few from my earlier years of attendance, but I believe in the long standing rule that "what happens at the WQS, stays at the WQS!" *Q.* Please share with us a humorous moment from your time at your District.

A. Being chased by an aggressive rooster, as the farmer watched, and using my metal clipboard as a bat in order to escape. I learned two valuable lessons...never turn your back on a rooster and always take your metal clipboard along just in case!

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

Waste Ag Tire Recycling Project

Eric Jensen, Resource Conservation Specialist, Onondaga County Soil and Water Conservation District

Waste ag tires piled outside provide an environment for mosquitoes to breed in the stagnant water that collects inside. These mosquitos pose a health concern since they can carry West Nile Virus, EEE, and other diseases. By removing the tires, the risk of disease is reduced. In addition, large tire piles are a risk if they catch fire and release

thick black smoke and other pollutants through runoff during fire extinguishing efforts. Farms have a difficult time finding safe options to dispose of worn-out ag tires to comply with new NYS DEC waste tire regulations since most landfills and tire recyclers do not accept them due to the size and thickness of the tires. NYS DEC regulations prohibit burial or burning of tires. The Skaneateles Lake



Farm tire loading operations in progress.

Watershed Ag Program (SLWAP) partnered with the Onondaga County Soil & Water Conservation District was able to

truck tires! Semi-trailers require extra high lift equipment to load the tires over the 13.5-foot-high sidewalls. The large ag tires are loaded first, then smaller ag tires are

identify a facility in Niagara Falls, New York that processes large ag tires.

This summer with cooperation of local farms, we were able to load and ship to be processed nine semitrailer loads of



Pile of large ag tires.

waste ag tires totaling 154 tons. That is equivalent to over 10,600 auto and pickup

loaded to fill in the void spaces around the large ag tires to complete the trailer loads. Waste tires will be shredded into chips of various sizes and used for energy or other uses. We believe the extra effort to remove these ag tires and comply with NYS DEC regulations will provide lasting environmental benefits to the watershed and community.

For more information on waste ag tire recycling, contact the SLWAP & Onondaga County Soil & Water Conservation District office location at 6680 Onondaga Lake Parkway, Liverpool at (315) 457-0325.



Telescopic handlers loading tires into semi-trailer.



Windrow of tires ready for loading.

Madison County Farms and Conservation District Host NYACD Tour Troy Bishopp, Grazing Specialist at Madison County Soil and Water Conservation District

On a picturesque fall afternoon, Madison County Soil and Water Conservation District Manager, Steve Lorraine led a tour of district directors and guests on a 2 hour tour of 3 dairy farms who are implementing water quality practices with a glimpse of cover crops growing and a history of the area reservoirs that feed New York's canal system.

The first stop highlighted an ongoing lined-earthen manure

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storage and transfer system project for a 200-cow dairy farm. The farm also utilized robots to milk the cows so they have more time for crop production and family. The

associated wetland cell treatment area. A newly built manure storage facility for holding solids during inclement weather was also discussed. Finally, the directors learned about the county's cover crop planting efforts that saw 17

2nd farm was an organic 100% grassfed operation nestled above the pristine Nelson Swamp which rotationally grazes 50 cows on 80 acres. Directors witnessed a covered barnyard project being built because of the barn's close proximity to a watercourse. The district was also installing a grass waterway leading into a water and sediment control basin.



NYACD Tour at covered barnyard project.

farmers utilize the equipment and staff to plant over 700 acres of rye and triticale on corn silage fields within the Upper Susquehanna River Watershed.

Guests enjoyed the relaxed, informative look at what happens on the land and

The last farm was a CAFO dairy facility where Steve showed guests an elaborate silage leachate collection system with

NYACD tour of madison county

projects.

the conservation decision-making and diverse funding that guide the water quality projects. It also didn't hurt, that the tour featured plenty of cold, delectable, chocolate milk for



NYACD Tour.



NYACD Tour.

Capturing Rain is a Full-time Job for Grazing Dairies Troy Bishopp, Grazing Specialist at Madison County Soil and Water Conservation District

Penn Yan, NY---After the 2020 historic drought in the Finger Lakes, area grazing dairy farmers are enjoying 2021's robust growing season with plentiful moisture, heat and a return to pasture walks with an emphasis on biology.

However, this summer's deluges of frequent rain have tested a farmer's resolve to keep it sequestered on the land and away from impacting local waterbodies that welcome thousands of hungry visitors to the region. In Genesis 9:3, a reverie ensues: "Every moving thing that lives shall be food for you. And as I gave



pertained to pastures by Fay Benson. Leon led the eager group out to his certified-organic, 40 cow, 14 paddock grazing system where he discussed his forage management style, "as taking proper care of the plants" for profitability and soil health. With the "overly" abundant rain, swards were growing an inch per day and were fully recovered in 22 days, a feat usually

> witnessed in the spring. It showed how intensive management and fertility played a large part in the farm's resiliency.

In a group exercise, the farmers measured, bantered and predicted pasture production, much to the delight of everyone, because most practitioners have a different context and "grazier's eye". "It felt really good to laugh", said one farmer. Because farmers like tools, they squeezed grass plants and

Meghan Webster leads the soil health discussion at pasture *level.*

you the green plants, I give you everything."

To facilitate the important work green plants provide, Ontario and Yates County Soil and Water Conservation Districts recently led a large grazing workshop partnering with 2 local organic grazing dairies, Fay Benson, Small Dairy Educator for Cornell's South Central NY Dairy Team and USC Grazing Specialist, Troy Bishopp for a day of learning and fellowship.

The morning session held at Leon Brubacher's Dairy Farm in Himrod, NY featured a presentation on soil health and soil structure principles as it measured brix levels using a refractometer. Levels were between 7 and 10 which indicated the effect of the rain on lowering forage energy for the cows. Mr. Brubacher was using this premise and giving his cows a pasture ration where the cows only grazed the very tops of plants which also contributed to a high residual that armored his soil against the frequent rain events.

Folks also got to see a dung beetle trap for the first time as Mr. Benson, "delicately", pulled the simple device out of the manure to measure activity of the beneficial insects. With good grazing techniques, the insects were doing yeoman's work for the surrounding soil. As the tour ended, Yates County's Soil and Water Conservation District Senior Technician, Tom Eskildsen, described the benefits of sod for the Keuka Lake Watershed and gave advice on diverting water into grass catch basins and offering to help anyone design a more resilient farming operation.

The afternoon gathering held at Andrew Hoover's Farm in nearby Stanley, NY highlighted some different approaches to grazing for the larger herd of 100 cows. To lead off the fine day, Fay Benson taught a large contingent of farmers about soil management using the tools from the NY Grazing



A group of farmers investigate the merits of chickory on soil health.

The series of 5-acre rectangular paddocks are managed with rain capture in

the fall from Maple Hill Creamery. It works well for us," said Hoover. The Ontario County farm sits

higher up in the landscape and has had half the rain

mind.

of the Brubachers.

"Managing mostly dry cows, allows us to trample more forage and improve soil biology with more mature plants and a diverse mix of root systems, said Mr. Hoover. The pasture system has an extensive aboveground municipal water system to each paddock which allows for improved fertility

management and keeps animals out of the laneways. Most of the pastures had over 40 days of recovery to meet Andrew's goals.

"Well managed pastures like these, help protect our local watersheds, said Meghan Webster, Ontario County's Soil and Water Conservation District Manager. The merging of environmental and economic benefits through healthy soils and productive, profitable farms are priorities for us. We're happy to promote and support such positive practices".

The group ended their enlightened tour under a shade tree enjoying fellowship and Mrs. Hoover's homemade, molasses moon-pies and the farm's own delectable "full-fat", chocolate milk. The day reminds one of Isaiah 55:2b: "Listen to me, and eat what is good, and you will delight in the richest of fare."

Coalition Soil Health Trailer. "Soil aggregate structure is really key," emphasized Benson. "Soil needs to have good aggregate structure and stability to keep improving biology. Structure is caused by the bacteria eating process. By stimulating organic matter to do its job, we get really healthy soil." "In pastures, we need to be careful of compaction, said Benson. It's slow to show up and slow to get rid of. The more organic matter, the more resilient soil is to compaction". He cited his research on this topic at (<u>https://</u> <u>projects.sare.org/wp-content/uploads/</u> Compaction-Fact-Sheet-Final-1.pdf)

Andrew led the group out to see his "summer seasonal" certified-organic 100% grass-fed dairy herd. "Being seasonal in the summer allows us to efficiently harvest our forage crops, graze for maintenance not intense production, have time-off with our children and capture a higher milk price in

Dairy grazier showcases resiliency when Fred arrives Troy Bishopp, Grazing Specialist at Madison County Soil and Water Conservation District

If you want to learn about the attributes of good grazing management, go on a pasture walk with a herd of farmers. But been in the farming world since he was a small child, first watching his dad work with cows and now working with them himself. Due to his experience, a lot of the decisions he makes

if you want to see real resiliency on the land, visit a grass farm when "Fred the Hurricane" blows into town and dumps seven inches of rain on the landscape. It's an opportunity to appreciate and



Danielle Singer from Tioga SWCD scoops the ice cream after a recent pasture walk.

study how dairy graziers are building soil health, producing high quality organic milk and providing ecosystem services for their community in the face of weather events.

Quoting Proverb 4:11: "I instruct you in the way of wisdom and lead you along straight paths." That path to wisdom for over 50 farmers and agency professionals just happened to coincide with the remnants of a hurricane but hardly dampened the group spirit.

Dairy farmer Isaac Troyer of Candor, NY, teamed up with Cornell Cooperative Extension's South Central New York Dairy and Field Crops staff and the Tioga County Soil & Water Conservation District to host a two-hour tour that focused on his family's 40-cow, certified organic dairy grazing operation. Troyer said he's are based on estimation and long-term knowledge and the notion that "ballpark is good enough."

He was concerned about inheriting Kora Tall Fescue when he bought the farm and saw the cows didn't like grazing it, even though it's an endophytefree variety. "The cows like fescue for hay, but not as a grazing grass," said Troyer. The group of farmers helped him vet some scenarios to manage his fescue-heavy swards, from re-seeding and interseeding strategies to pre-clipping before grazing or using a different class of livestock to utilize it. On a positive note, it's great for autumn and winter grazing.

Troyer showed how he trampled tall grass using his dairy heifers and planned grazing, resulting in improved biological life, armoring the soil against the elements and creating a high-quality, diverse sward which kept animal performance high. It was noted that the forage was regrowing an inch per day from the rain and heat and humidity.

With all the moisture, guests saw a successful farmer-made bridge constructed of interlocking concrete blocks on stone piers. During times of low flow, the stream flows under the bridge; in times of high flow it easily goes over the bridge and



Farmers discuss dairy grazing strategies with a heavy fescue sward.

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self-cleans debris. The previous farm owner, Rob Howland, said he installed

track of daily decisions and simplifying recordkeeping for organic compliance. Troyer showed farmers his spotless milking

the practical bridge 15 to 20 years ago using about \$5,000 of his own money and a friend as an unofficial engineer for the design. "It's been tested many times and has held up well," said Howland.

The group, unencumbered by sporadic rain showers, discussed dry cow grazing regimes, petted the draft horses, took soil compaction readings with a furnished penetrometer, studied manure pats for signs of beneficial dung beetles, did some pasture



Farmers check soil compaction at Troyers farm using a penetrometer.

stocking math and talked about the attributes of having a grazing chart to keep parlor he built from scratch and how he manages his herd during the nongrazing season.

As the showers continued, guests convened under the barn roof for fellowship and reacquainting with friends with snacks provided by the Troyer family, including plenty of ice cream from the Tioga County Agricultural Resource Group and the Tioga County SWCD. Fred couldn't dampen the resilience of a group of committed farmers.

Annual NYS CDEA Fish On Challenge

The NYSCDEA is sponsoring a fishing challenge to all anglers out there.



Official Rules and Regulations

Participation Fee is \$10.00 per person and each participant will receive a pocket tape measure with the NYSCDEA logo on it. Registration is available for NYSCDEA members only and is between March 1, 2021 - May 31, 2021.

Register for the Fish On Challenge at https://forms.gle/9Hhdj36oWyRTH8Yq5

Yes...you need to be registered prior to submittal of any fish. All entries need to be submitted between March 1, 2021 – February 28, 2022. There are six categories and prizes in each!

Categories:	Smallmouth Bass	Largemouth Bass	Northern Pike
	Brook Trout	Rainbow Trout	Jokers Wild (Unique Fish)

General Rules

- You are not eligible to enter a fish if you caught it while fishing in a tournament.
- Entries are limited to those caught from NY waters only (including boundary waters).
- Entries will be scored based on length except for the Jokers Wild category, which will be judged by NYSCDEA on uniqueness of species, size and location of catch. Participant will have to specify why they think the fish is unique and why it should win.

Winners of all categories will be announced at the 2022 WQS Banquet.

For each entry, the participant is required to submit the following information to Fishcdea@gmail.com: 1.Name

2.Date caught

3.Location (waterbody) ... don't give up your secret spot, so saying farm pond is OK!

4.Species

5.Length

6.Picture of fish with the NYSCDEA tape measure or you in it.

7.If entering the Jokers Wild category you must include why the fish is unique and why it should win the category.

Register for the Fish On Challenge at https://forms.gle/9Hhdj36oWyRTH8Yq5

This is for fun only, so be honest and fair! If you have any questions, comments or if you are interested in registering, contact Maren Alexander at: <u>Fishcdea@gmail.com</u>. Tell us more about your fishing adventures and check out CDEA Fish On Challenge on Facebook!

NYACD News Blanche L. Hurlbutt, NY Association Conservation Districts Executive Director



Alice Holloran accepting award for Rich.

This year's award winners are as follows:

Appreciation Award	Greg Albrecht, Ag & Mkts
Special Service Award	Bob Somers, Ag & Mkts
Robert VanLare Award Cattaraugus SWCD District 7	Robert Shenk, Retired Fechnician
William Peoples Award	Rich Redman, Essex Co.

William Peoples Award SWCD Friend & Partner

Diversity Award

Associate Member Award **Commendation Award**

Partnership Award

Corey Nellis, Montgomery SWCD Manager Monroe SWCD

Distinguished Award

Media Awards

Scott Ryan, Montgomery SWCD Board Chair & 2n VP NYACD

Franklin SWCD

Upper Susquehanna Coalition

Cortland SWCD Best AEM Story

Hamilton SWCD Best Education/Outreach Story

Warren SWCD Best Core Mission Story

Congratulations to these award winners

During the annual meeting, the full NYACD Executive Board were reelected for another term.

We would like to THANK all the Districts that continue to support NYACD. With your support we are able to continue do the work for the districts through-out New York.

The NYACD Annual Meeting & Training session went off without a hitch. There was over 80 in attendance over the two days. Madison Co. SWCD did another wonderful tour, which everyone enjoyed that took the tour.

Senator Rachel May, District 53 spoke on what she is doing to support local soil and water districts. Kim Lafleur, 1st VP NACD spoke on the importance of recurring and retention of staff.



Larry Underwood.

Continued on Page 19.



2021 Mount Academy Adisors & Gavin & Jocelyn Mendal Proclamations.



Scott Ryan & Correy Nellis accepting their awards.

CDEA Wine and Pint Glass Tour

We all love our CDEA wine and pint glasses. Here they are in action across New York State. Cheers!



Franklin County District Technician Allycia Foote drinking in St. Lawrence county, a delicious strawberry rhubarb cider from Cayuga



CDEA News Editor Caitlin Stewart enjoys a glass of Malbec after completing an epic November edition with District and partner stories and photos. Cheers!



Photo Album



Conservation skills agroforestry tour at Brett Chedzoys farm.



CRF training access road.



CRF training session at Fesko Farm.



A group of farmers investigate the merits of chickory on soil health.



Future farmers pontificate in



Small Farms Educator Fay Benson show farmers a dung beetle trap in use.

Photos by Troy Bishopp, Grazing Specialist at Madison County Soil and Water Conservation District.



Photo Album



Jim Lieberum leading field discussion at ESI training in Keene, NY. Photo by Corrina Aldrich, District Manager, Washington County Soil and Water Conservation District.



Rich Redman with the William "Bill" Peoples award along the Boquet River with stakes recently planted. Photo by Essex County SWCD.



Essex County SWCD's fall planting crew. They partnered with Trout Unlimited to plant trees along the Boquet River.



Photo Album



The last of the pollinator's for the season. Picture is from gardens at Locust Grove Estates in Poughkeepsie, NY. Photo by Susan L. Odell-Pepe, Suffolk County Soil & Water Conservation District.



Wooden Water Tower near Moshier Reservoir. Photo by Tyler Kelley, Soil & Water Resource Conservationist, Herkimer County SWCD.



Franklin D. Roosevelt's Estate in Hyde Park on 10/10/2021. Outing with family. Normally the tree would be cut down, but the care taker's let nature take its course are repurpose the tree to house a bee hive (pollinators). Photo by Susan L. Odell-Pepe, Suffolk County Soil & Water Conservation District.

CDEA News needs your news!

Please email your stories, photos, save the dates, and fun moments to caitlinstewart@frontier.com

Special Columns!

Cover Photo

Your stellar photo could be on the cover of CDEA News. Submit seasonal photos of landscapes or conservation practices through summer, fall, winter, or spring. Include a few sentences describing the photo.

CDEA Wine and Pint Glass Tour

We all love our CDEA wine and pint glasses. Email photos of your glass in action. Cheers!

Where in New York is Ronny Raindrop?

Email your photos of Ronny with a brief description of what he's doing and where he is.

> Back issues are available on the CDEA website: www.nyscdea.com/newsletter/

Thank you for making CDEA News a continued success. Please keep you news rolling in!

Support the NYS Envirothon with Amazon Smile

Chastity Miller, President, NYS Conservation District Employees' Association, Inc.

Did you know you can use AMAZON Smile to help the NYS Envirothon! Please use Amazon Smile to give back to the Environmental Education Foundation for the State Envirothon and the National Envirothon in 2023! Here is the link for amazon smile along with some screenshots of what it should look like. Once you have selected them, it works exactly the same as the regular amazon site. Just note that if you go to the regular amazon.com site or use the app the charity will not get any donations, you have to use the smile.amazon site), you can still go to the smile site and already have stuff in your cart (in app or on regular amazon site), you can still go to the smile site and login and the items in your cart will show up on that site too, I did it just to try! Go to: https://smile.amazon.com & Sign in with your amazon account. This account has already done it, so it shows that their supporting the EEF already, but if you haven't yet you should automatically be prompted to pick a charity. Then you just search for "Environmental Education Foundation of Soil and Water Conservation" and hit select. REMEMBER-note that if you go to the regular amazon.com site or use the app the charity will not get any donations; you have to use the smile.amazon.com site. Thank you so much! We need all the help we can get.



New York State Conservation District Employees' Association, Inc.



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