

# CDEA News



NEW YORK STATE  
CONSERVATION DISTRICT  
EMPLOYEES' ASSOCIATION, INC.



*April 2024*

## Cover Photo

Oneida County SWCD made special ISO 12312-2 rated glasses for Ronny Raindrop so he could safely view the April 8 total solar eclipse. Ronny was totality ready!



## The CDEA Corner

**Caitlin Stewart, President, NYS CDEA, Inc.**

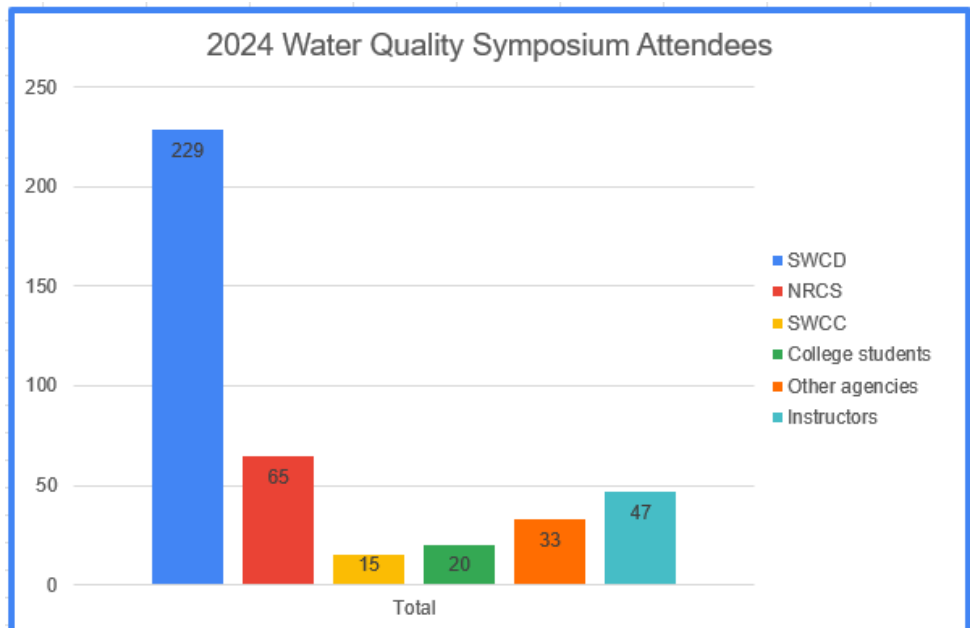
April greetings! Please take a few minutes to refill your mug or water bottle and enjoy the April CDEA News.

### Water Quality Symposium Review

The 2024 Water Quality Symposium was one for the history books with record numbers attending classes instructed by experts in tracks including agriculture, non-agriculture, clerks, education, and forestry. Attendees totaled 409! CDEA Vice President Jessica Armstrong did a beautiful job organizing the event. We extend our sincere gratitude to the instructors and volunteers who made this year's training session an incredible success. Email your course and instructor suggestions to Jess at [Jessica.Armstrong@oneidacountyswcd.org](mailto:Jessica.Armstrong@oneidacountyswcd.org)

### President's Report

- Hosted the March CDEA Annual Meeting and special meeting
- Attended 2 SWCC meetings
- Attended 1 NYACD meeting
- 4-Hour Fund Applications now available on SharePoint
- DEC permitting to be discussed at the next Municipal Assistance Subcommittee meeting
- Civil Service - I have a contact and am working to coordinate job descriptions and increase the frequency of exams
- CDEA News
- Answered many inquiries from District staff and 4-Way Partners
- Coordinating a media training



*See Corner, page 3.*

## Corner (from page 2)

### Upcoming Events

- CDEA hybrid meeting - May 30 - 31, Wyoming County Ag and Business Center, 36 Center St, Warsaw, NY 14569. Agenda to follow.
- New York State Envirothon - May 22 and 23, SUNY Cortland. [Volunteer!](#)
- 2024 NCF Envirothon - July 28 - August 3, Hobart and William Smith Colleges, Geneva

Please contact your Division Representative or me with questions or concerns. I wish you the very best with your upcoming spring programs and projects!

Kindest regards,



Caitlin Stewart, President, NYS CDEA Inc.





## New York Conservation District Employees Train for the Future

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

Syracuse, NY---“When you hand good people possibility, they do great things.” – Biz Stone

To create these possibilities for the conservation and resiliency of New

York State land and waters and citizens, one must invest in training the people to help the cause in “providing today & protecting tomorrow.” Just as a tree, plant or family establishes roots in our local com-

munities, “Local Soil and Water Conservation District staff provide the “Roots of Conservation”, says New York State Agriculture and Markets Commissioner, Richard Ball.

Expectations are high for implementation, as the 4.2-billion dollar NYS Environmental Bond Act, the Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act (Climate Act), regenerative farming initiatives, local food-sheds and recreating New Yorkers look for progress as investment in conservation and green jobs grow.

Alot of this work has been steered to the locals of conservation. To meet the expectations on the ground, the New York State Conservation District Employees' Association, Inc. (NYS CDEA) and their 58 respective Districts from every county and borough in New York State hold an intense four

-day, (WQS) New York State Water Quality Symposium for District Employees, USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service Employees, Water Quality Coordinating Committee representatives, and all conservation partners who seek effective professional development experiences

and training in helping customers.

The 2024 WQS, coordinated by Oneida County SWCD District Manager, Jessica Armstrong, was attended by a record number of over 300 professionals and featured 30 training sessions from small farm planning, storm-water management practices and grazing paddock designs to accounting procedures. Managing fallow land, learning about tree diseases, vegetable production and hands-on soil health practices and HydroCAD design

were taught by seasoned mentors and accredited engineers. The symposium also focused on personal development and communication skills in managing diverse projects and people.

In addition, a resource fair featuring producers, partner vendors and businesses provided a networking forum to learn about different strategies, equipment and products that help staff provide affordable, quality conservation practices to customers.

The NYS CDEA also takes the time to honor employees, conservation partners and special projects with a celebrated awards banquet. This year's event led by Hamilton County's SWCD Manager & NYS CDEA President, Caitlin Stewart, bestowed the prestigious Willard F. Croney Distinguished Service Award for excelling as the outstanding Conservation District Employee in the state to Shino Tanikawa, Executive Director of the NYC Soil & Water Conservation District.

“Thank you for giving me the most honorable recognition. I



*A packed house learning about agroforestry practices.*

*See future, page 5.*

## Future (from page 4)

am deeply touched and humbled. It is gratifying to have the work of an urban conservation district (in the most urbanized of cities in the nation) recognized as important and meaningful, said Tanikawa. Although I am the recipient of the award, I consider it an award to my district and all the people who have ever worked with the district staff, board and partners”.

This year’s awards banquet also honored other deserving land stewards. The President’s Award was presented to Cortland County SWCD’s Natural Resource Conservationist, Shawn Murphy. The Partnership Appreciation Award was bestowed on Matt Swayze, NYS Department of Environmental Conservation Forester. The District Director Award honored Larry Lewis, Farmer and District Board Chairman of the Yates County SWCD for his years of dedicated service. The Special Project Award went to Chautauqua County SWCD.

The Community Service Award was given to Brianna Rosamilla from Rockland County SWCD. Division Merit Awards were awarded to Scott Collins of Niagara SWCD, Jason Cuddeback of Cayuga County SWCD, Erica Scheiner from Oswego County SWCD, Brian Danforth from Delaware County SWCD, Jillian Zajac of Clinton County SWCD, Lori Sheehan from Washington County SWCD, Lauren Drum from Dutchess County SWCD

and Derek Betts of Nassau County SWCD.

“This year’s Water Quality Symposium was one for the history books”, said Stewart. We maxed out classroom space and hotel rooms at East Syracuse’s Doubletree by Hilton Hotel with record numbers of new employees learning to put conservation into action on the land and around water resources. The expert instructors and seasoned mentors cultivated professional development on all levels of experience. The networking opportunities allow staff the space to solve problems, build relationships across the state and work together to

help agriculture, rural, suburban and urban customers”.

To learn more and get connected with your local conservation district or NYS CDEA staff personnel, visit [nyscdea.com](https://nyscdea.com).



*NYS CDEA award winners.*



*2024 Willard F. Croney Distinguished Service Award recipient Shino Tanikawa with 2023 recipient Chastity Miller.*



## Students think Conservation Districts for Careers

Carla Yaw, Treasurer, Lewis County Soil and Water Conservation District

The Beaver River Career Showcase prepares students to become "Real World Ready". Michael Durant and Alexis Lyndaker represented the Lewis County SWCD by providing a display and answering questions from middle and high school students. They gave the students a good overview of what Soil and Water Conservation Districts do, as well as informing them of potential internships and jobs that can be available in this field.



## Madison County SWCD's farm projects

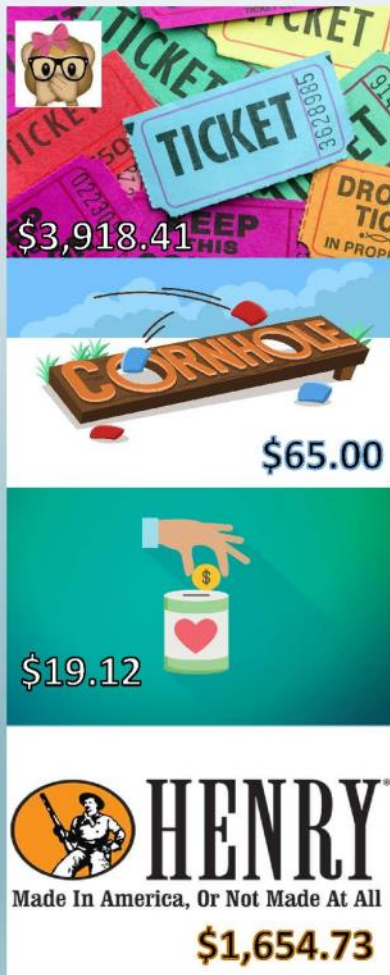
Troy Bishopp, Grazing Specialist, Madison County Soil and Water Conservation District

The Madison SWCD partnered with an organic and two conventional, local dairy farms to construct 3 covered barnyard systems for milk cows and dairy replacements in 2023. These extensive projects addressed uncontrolled barnyard runoff and nutrient management concerns identified in the farm's AEM & CNMP plan



*Covered barnyard for dairy replacement.*

as well as animal health and labor management goals. District staff provided planning, designs, construction help, countless hours of construction oversight and project certification working with Professional Engineer, Don Lynch. The farms provided labor and financial resources to the projects and utilized funding from the NYS Environmental Protection Fund, the USC Landowner Cost Share Program and the USC/NRCS Regional Conservation Partnership Program to complete the work.



The NYS Conservation District Employees Association  
wants to **THANK YOU** for your donations and  
participation in the Frank Bratt Scholarship fund raising  
activities at the 2024 Water Quality Symposium.



Combined proceeds from the Bucket Raffle/Silent  
Auction, Cornhole Tournament, Direct Donations, and  
the Gun Raffle totalled

**\$5,657.26!**

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT!**

Frank Bratt Scholarship Applications are approved quarterly and can be found on the NYS CDEA Website.

## **CDEA News needs YOUR news!**

Email your stories, photos, save the dates,  
and fun moments  
to [caitlin@hamcoswcd.org](mailto:caitlin@hamcoswcd.org)

Special columns!  
Cover Photo  
CDEA Wine and Pint Glass Tour  
Where in New York is Ronny Raindrop?

Visit [www.nyscdea.com](http://www.nyscdea.com) for newsletter back issues



## Mariposa Heights Farm awarded 43rd Madison County Conservation Farm of the Year

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

DeRuyter, NY--When Central New York Meteorologists reference the wild weather extremes in the hills of Madison County, they often talk about Brookfield, Lebanon, Cazenovia and a patch of hill country in DeRuyter that don't reflect "normal" weather predictions.

For those who farm in those areas, they regularly laugh, a defiant laugh, as they see the valley blanketed with precipitation knowing full well the temperature change can bring them copious amounts of snow, sleet or a heavier, colder rain. It makes for a hearty, resilient farmer. One such man and his family is Ted Fuller.

For generations, Mariposa Heights Farm founded by the Fuller family has milked cows, made crops, produced beef and raised equally hearty children on land resources that rise up to 1800 feet of elevation and feed communities downstream. It wasn't an easy journey for Ted and Becky; whose life's journey was cut short by cancer in 2020.

The legacy of dairy farming started in 1974 down Mariposa Road in Chenango County and in 1983, the former Richard Moyer dairy farm was annexed higher up the road into Madison County. Running both properties and making a profit in a challenging dairy market came to a difficult conclusion in 2003 when the milk cows were sold with the home farm being sold in 2004.

Part of living in a harsh environment is adapting to change. Like many dairy families of that era, working off the farm became a real-

ity for the Fuller family, with Ted driving school bus fulltime since 1996 (28 years) and Becky having a teaching assistant career in area schools. And since farming was in their blood, they called their smaller, Madison County 60-acre sod farm with its abundant water resources and rolling topography, home.

In 2012, the Madison County couple caught the passion for raising hearty, registered Red Angus cattle to complement their work schedules, sell breeding stock and freezer beef and teach the next generations the nuances of beef production while filling the family's freezer with homegrown meat. With over 40 head of cattle on the ground, Becky



*Grandpa Ted Fuller with some of his many grandchildren sharing the award.*

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*See farm, page 9.*



## Farm (from page 8)

knew improving soil health would be paramount for their resiliency and slowing runoff atop the Tioughnioga River Watershed.

She worked extensively with Jessica Heim, Madison County Soil and Water Conservation District's, CCA-accredited, Nutrient Management Planner to get soil sampling done and lay the groundwork in decision-making for applying manures and fertilizers to enhance the hay and pastureland and in turn the health of the animals and water holding capacity of the soil.

Becky's legacy of learning started a 6-year journey of improvement for the land and farmstead.

Ted worked with district staff using the Agriculture Environmental Management (AEM) planning framework to build common-sense conservation measures in a smaller farm context. The first projects focused on establishing and constructing a rotational grazing system geared towards Ted's daily workload off the farm with a secure perimeter high tensile fence and complimentary paddock subdivisions attached to a laneway for ease of people and cattle movement. To facilitate the nutrient management goals on pasture, an above ground water system was piped throughout the system to keep the cattle happy in the paddocks and secondary hay fields nourishing the microbes.

The farm's soil health systems and watershed were further enhanced by a 5-acre, district-planted riparian forest buffer and stream/pond exclusion fence for the resident wildlife population. Recognizing the importance of

cattle manure for the land, a new barnyard with associated stoned walkway, reinforced stream crossing and vegetated treatment area was built in 2022/23 to ensure proper collection of valuable nutrients and land applied at the right time.

Funding to implement these soil health projects were provided by the farm, the Upper Susquehanna Coalition's Water Quality Program, NYS Trees for Tributaries Program and the NYS Environmental Protection Fund.

"I appreciate the labor savings, healthier cattle, improved forage quality, the longer growing season up here, and less mud to deal with, said Fuller. Working with the district to improve our operation has been easy while also contributing to water quality coming off our "mountain" delivered to my watershed".

"It's important to work together and have a level of trust that gets the job done for our community. It's a story that resonates well with my beef customers and downstream neighbors."

"As the cows begin to calve for another season and the trees mature, receiving the Madison County SWCD Conservation Farm of the Year is a kind of testament for local folks working together on behalf of our children and grandchildren's environment. It's something I feel good about as a farmer", said Fuller.

"We appreciate working with the Fuller family to enhance the natural resources for all Madison County residents to enjoy while supporting the farm's endeavors for a sustainable future, said Steve Lorraine, Madison County SWCD District Manager. We love seeing all the grandchildren connected to the farm. It brings us pride in helping another farm family."

"As the District's 43rd awardee, we appreciate Ted's commitment and Becky's legacy in supporting our mission of enhancing wise use of county soil and water resources," said SWCD District Board Chairman, Rick Barnes.

To learn more about the positive attributes of conservation planning and implementation, give the Madison County Soil and Water Conservation District a call at 315-824-9849 or visit [madcoswcd.com](http://madcoswcd.com).

# GET OUT IN THE FIELD WITH US!



**The Upper Susquehanna Coalition invites you to join us for riparian buffer stewardship workdays across the Upper Susquehanna watershed!**

## ★ What are steward workdays?

The USC riparian forest buffer stewardship program hosts group workdays at select buffer sites over the course of the summer. Buffer stewards from participating counties, as well as USC partners, get together to learn, address concerns, and perform establishment activities in the field.

## ★ What can I expect to do at workdays?

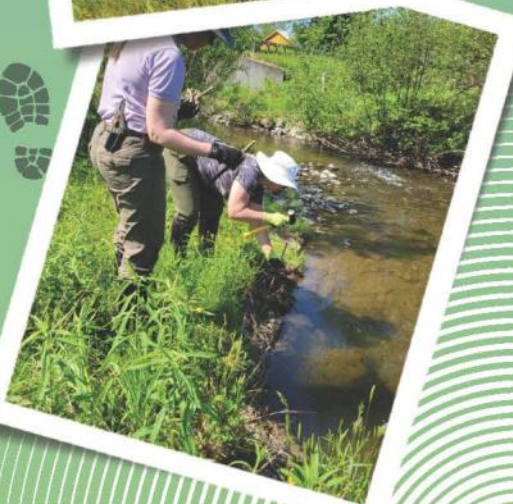
Workday activities can include survival assessment of planted forest buffers, invasive control, tree shelter maintenance, replanting, weeding & trimming, as well as training exercises such as practicing tree ID and learning about conservation projects.

## ★ How can I find out more?

Contact Ava Glasser, USC Buffer Stewardship Coordinator, to find out more about our workdays. Email: [glassera@tiogacountyny.gov](mailto:glassera@tiogacountyny.gov); or call (607)-972-2359.

## ★ Register for workdays here:

<https://www.u-s-c.org/StewardWorkday>





# Wise Words from our District Family

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

**Larry Underwood, Executive Director, Delaware County SWCD**

**32 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. 32 years.

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

A. *I spent the first 25 years of my career working directly with the farmers and landowners of Delaware County as a field technician but the last 7 years as Executive Director have been the most rewarding. To have such an incredible staff working on so many great programs and with the support of our fantastic Board of Directors, has been my proudest time.*

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

A. *I don't understand the question. Seriously though, the thought of working somewhere else has rarely crossed my mind. I feel fortunate to have been able to work, doing the kind of work I love, and being able to do it right here where I grew up in Delaware County.*

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

A. *When I started with Soil & Water, funding was minimal. We were barely sustainable with just a few employees. The SWCDs have continued to grow and broaden their services and adapt, expand and capitalize on many new and innovative funding sources and program opportunities. Rick "Bear" Weidenbach told me when he hired me that my future was so bright, I would need to wear shades! Boy was he right and it still holds true for all of us Districts as a whole.*

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

A. *Get yourself a pair of Oakleys. Again, on a serious note- welcome to the District Family! You are surrounded by hundreds of experienced District employees anxious to help you succeed. Learn from them. Ask many questions. Listen to them. Always respect our customers- the farmers, landowners, communities and your County. Remember where your paycheck comes from. Make decisions with District support. Offer solutions to resolve problems. We all make mistakes- tell us about it asap so we can fix it together and remember, that's how we learn.*

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

A. *My dad used to let Rick Weidenbach park the District truck at his gas station on main street here in Walton. It was the shortest distance from there to the all-you-can eat Chinese buffet across the street. My dad always put in a good word for me while I was in college to Rick. Rick called me in Syracuse and offered me a job when I graduated. True story.*

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

*See Wise, page 12.*



## Wise (from page 11)

*A. I had big plans to go West and use my degree in Fisheries and Wildlife Management but I quickly realized this was an opportunity to work and live in one of the nicest places in this country. A place I took for granted growing up here. That grass ain't always greener....*

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

*A. Yes, for the most part. Much of my education was and still is very applicable to what we do as Soil & Water Conservation Districts.*

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

*A. This is a tuff. So many great memories. Too bad I can't remember them! One time at our NYACD Annual Meeting banquet I needed to use the men's room. The banquet room was packed. The only door I could get to was behind the podium where the keynote speaker was addressing us. I had to walk right past him. He paused as I walked passed and stared at me. I ducked out through the door to find myself locked out of the hotel and standing in a dark, rainy alley. I had to walk all the way around the hotel to come in the main entrance and then fight through the crowd to my table. I got the dirty stare once again. Not my finest moment.*

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

*A. Probably can't talk about "most epic" memories here. Waking up at noon in Lake George and looking out the window. The parking lot looked like white egg crate foam. The bumps were our vehicles under many feet of snow! It took hours to get them shoveled out. Also, one of the most epic hangovers.*

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

*A. Brian Danforth and I placed pipe wrenches and other tools on the floor, around the only toilet in the men's bathroom and hung a "out of order sign" on the stall door for a day. The guys had to use the women's bathroom. Well, not all of us. Good, harmless fun!*

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. I would probably choose Jay Czerniak. He's a survivalist and a very clever one. We could easily live off all of the employee's lunches and leftovers in the breakroom fridges and the vending machines would be easy prey. Fire wouldn't be an issue with the thousands of pounds of useless stacks of paper. It wouldn't be a Naked and Afraid episode but darn close. We wouldn't be afraid.*

Q. Do you have a hidden talent?

*A. I have this really cool ability to say things to people and get a blank stare or an eye-rol or a headshake.*

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

*A. I'll miss the people. I'll miss all of you. Not to be negative, but it would be a longer list of things I won't miss.*

Q. Any concluding remarks?

*A. I think I have a couple more years left in me here at DelCo Soil & Water. It's been an amazing adventure and as we often say here: "we could write a book!" Be very proud of who you are and what you do. Protecting our natural resources is the most important job on this planet. I wish all of you a bright and fulfilling career.*

# Wise Words from our District Family

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

**Mark Seider, Manager and Engineer, Niagara County SWCD**

**24 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. It will be 24 years this June all for Niagara County. I was hired as an engineer, but the board of directors let the manager go three months after I started working, so I took over that role as well.*

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

*A. Building our office into an organization that is respected by the farming community and assisting our farmers to improve their operations.*

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

*A. I enjoy being able to take a project from start to finish. From performing site surveys, to designing projects and then building them. I like the variety of the work as well. As an engineer, it is unlikely that I would have ever been able to identify big blue stem, Indian or switch grass if I hadn't worked for the district and installed some grass-land habitat projects.*

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

*A. Early on we used to do a lot of surveys and designs for tile drainage systems. Most of the tile installers now have gps capabilities to prepare designs by themselves, so we don't design many tile systems anymore. We have branched out into being the coordinator for an Area of Concern, obtaining funding for planting trees in some cities, and have been focusing on invasive species control, specifically, Japanese knotweed because there was no other agency doing anything about it.*

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

*A. Learn as much as you can. The districts are very diverse so there is plenty to learn outside your field of expertise and there needs to be a good transfer of knowledge as the older employees move on.*



*See Wise, page 14.*

## Wise (from page 13)

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

*A. I used to go to the soil and water office when we were doing environmental site assessments for a firm I once worked for. I didn't really know what they did, other than they had aerial maps that we needed to review.*

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

*A. I was starting a family and had one young son with another on the way. I was driving 50 minutes to buffalo every day and the soil and water office was only 20 minutes away so I figured I could save an hour a day in the car to spend with the kids.*

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

*A. Yes for the design work. But there was a lot of research and on the job training for doing the habitat work, ponds, operation of our inter-seeder and no-till drill, planting recommendations for habitat and wetlands projects, etc.*

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

*A. My second year at the district I was surveying a barnyard with Greg Tessman and a Jersey bull came over to the area I was working in. I wasn't familiar with risk, but Tessman got me out of there pretty quickly. Later on in the project the contractor parked his truck in the pasture 1/4 mile away from the barn. The bull saw the truck in the pasture, walked out and proceeded to bash in the side of the truck.*

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

*A. I'm pretty conservative, so I just enjoy having a drink with other district employees that you only see once a year.*

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

*A. few years after starting, I wrote up a resignation letter on April 1<sup>st</sup>, dropped it on Darcy Tones desk, stepped around the corner while she read it and got to listen to her go into panic mode.*

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. few members from my backyard athletic association. Cornhole board, darts and beer.*

Q. Do you have a hidden talent?

*A. I have built houses for myself, two brother and my parents. Now I use my woodworking skills to build wildlife boxes for several districts to sell at their tree programs.*

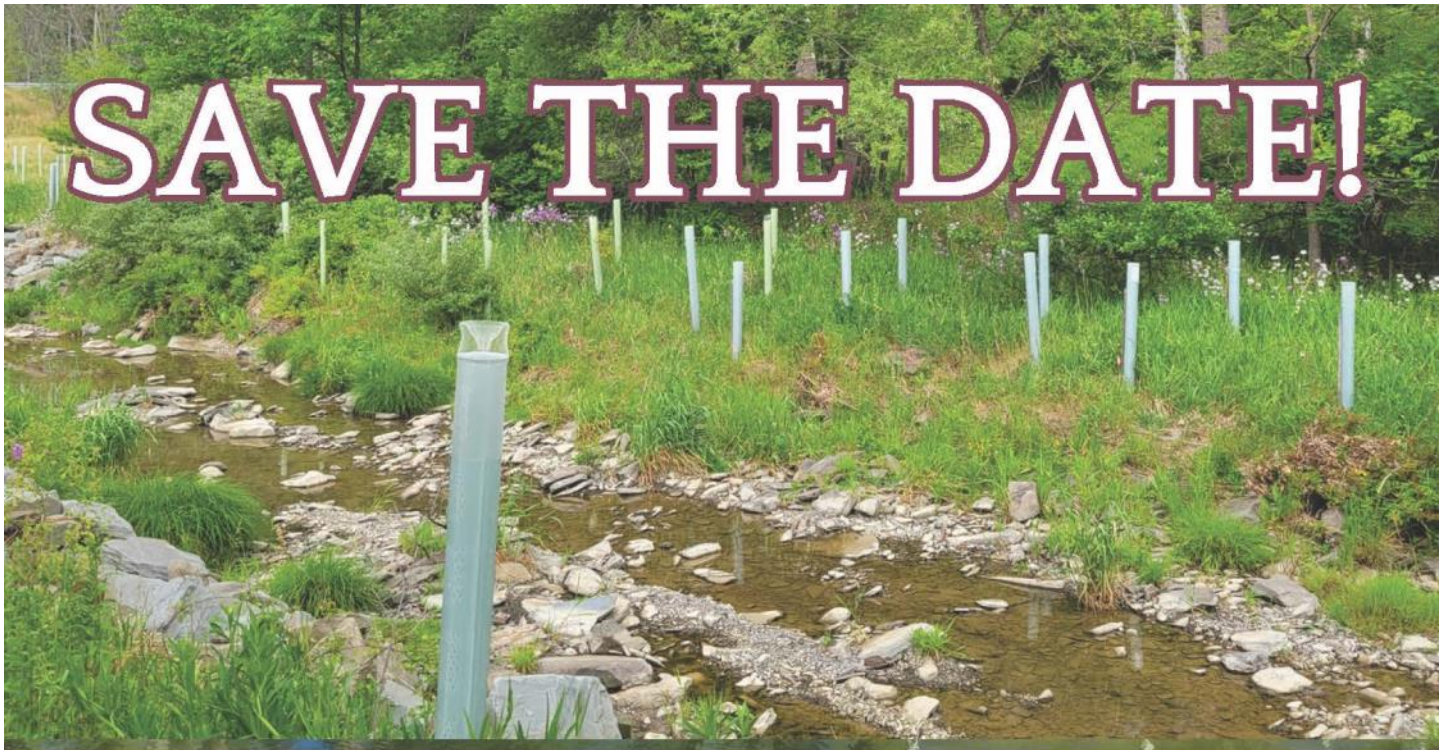
Q. Tell us about what you will miss when you retire.

*A. Helping the community, my coworkers and the farmers that we assist.*

Q. Any concluding remarks?

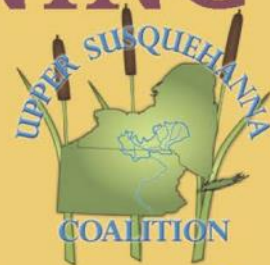
*A. My dad once told me as I was helping with a project when I was a kid - when he goes to reach for a hammer, I should already have it in my hand, ready to hand it to him because I should know that is the tool he is going to need next. So don't just stand and watch - make sure you actively participate and engage on every project that you are involved in.*





# USC BUFFER STEWARD VIRTUAL TRAINING

May 22nd, 2024  
9am-1:00pm



Learn the basics of buffer stewardship, from field safety to survey and assessment protocols. Contact Ava Glasser at [GlasserA@tiogacountyny.gov](mailto:GlasserA@tiogacountyny.gov) with questions.

Register here:  
[www.u-s-c.org/stewardtraining](http://www.u-s-c.org/stewardtraining)





## Stream Crossing Replacement

Megan P Myers, District Manager, Rensselaer County Soil and Water Conservation District

The Rensselaer County SWCD completed a stream crossing replacement (standard 578) project in late 2023 through AEM 17 funding. This is a cattle crossing on a beef farm located on the Tomhannock Reservoir in Pittstown, NY. The project involved removing two 24" culverts and replacing them with an engineered bridge span sturdy enough to allow beef cows to cross. This new crossing will reduce flooding, improve water quality, keep the livestock out of the tributary, and allow fish passage. The Tomhannock Reservoir is a drinking water supply, serving water to over 135,000 people.



*Ratigan before.*



*Ratigan after.*

## Small yet Mighty Team Protects Watershed Resources

Caitlin Stewart, Manager, Hamilton County Soil and Water Conservation District

LAKE PLEASANT – The Hamilton County Soil and Water Conservation District’s small yet mighty team works year-round to protect watershed resources and

erosion, monitor water quality, prevent the spread of invasive species, and educate people of all ages. We are governed locally by an active and engaged Board of Directors: Victoria Buyce, Jonn M. Stortecky, Betsy Baine, Chris D. Rhodes, and Shawn Hansen.”

District staff are the boots on the ground for conservation in

Hamilton County, and their 2023 accomplishments include:

- Responding to 475 requests for technical assistance;
- Planning and installing 3 dry hydrants that provide fire and public safety;
- Monitoring 20 lakes from June through October for chemical and physical data;
- Creating a quarter of an acre of riparian forest buffers;
- Seeding 6.5 acres of critical area for erosion and sediment control;
- Stabilizing 200 linear feet of



***District Technician Lenny Croote hydroseeds biotic soil media and grass seed on top of Geoweb to prevent erosion at the Gilmantown Road bank stabilization project site.***

strengthen resiliency throughout the third largest and least populated county in the state. Four staff members implement diversified programs and projects that protect natural resources and help landowners. Their work is detailed in the 2023 annual report that highlights accomplishments and metrics.

“2023 was another stellar year for conservation in Hamilton County,” said District Manager Caitlin Stewart. “Technicians Lenny Croote and Katie WhitKovits, Clerk Marj Remias, and I focus on key program areas that control sediment and

streambanks;

- Responding to 7 permit application requests;
- Completing 15 invasive species projects that restored 2 acres of land;
- Mapping 173 miles of snowmobile trails for municipal grant reimbursement;
- Selling 1,544 seedlings for conservation and reforestation efforts on private land;
- Implementing 7 flood mitigation projects that protected 1 acre of land;
- Educating 1,235 people at 25 outreach events;
- Testing 87 samples of drinking water for bacteria; and
- Recycling 3,940 pounds of boat storage plastic.

*See Mighty, page 18.*



## Mighty (from page 17)

“Participating in educational programs like Conservation Field Day and Envirothon are the greatest joy you can imagine,” said Stortecky. “To see young students learn from experts in their chosen fields gives everyone a renewed sense of a bright future not only for conservation, but also for our country. Everyone comes away with a smile and pride in a job well done. The best part is that it gets better every year!”

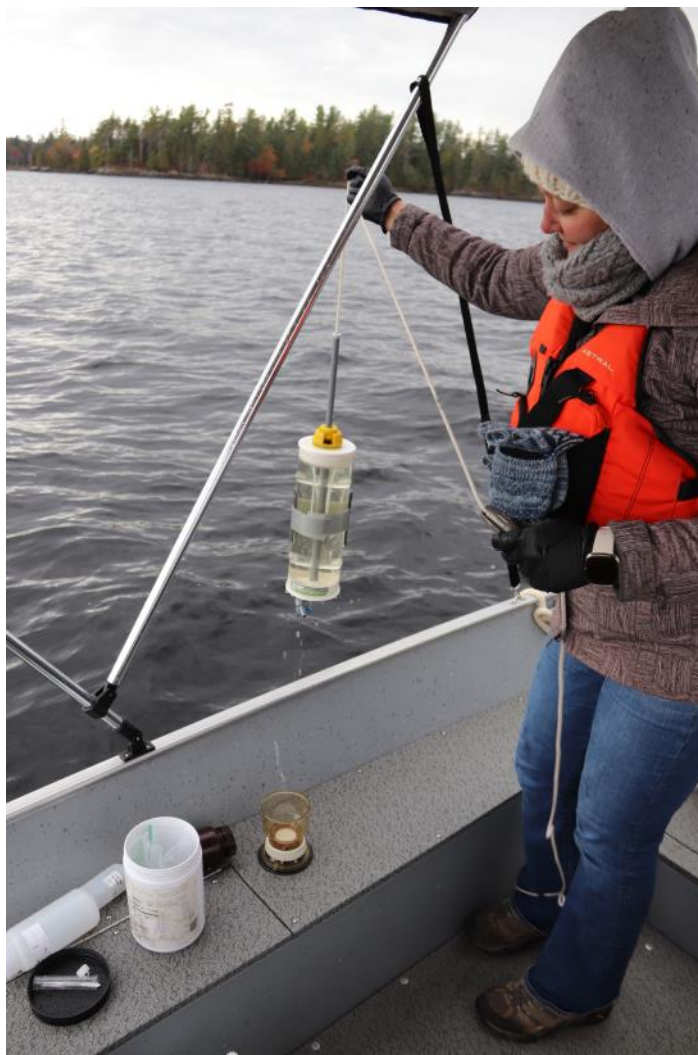
Continuing education and certifications ensure that District staff have the skills required to implement best management practices on public and private land. In 2023, staff attended 40 trainings that focused on stormwater management, green infrastructure, and invasive species. Croote and WhitKovits are

Certified Pesticide Applicators. Croote is certified in the North Atlantic Aquatic Connectivity Collaborative and Certified Professional in Erosion and Sediment Control.

“Hamilton County Soil and Water is a great help to municipalities throughout the county,” said Rhodes. “From planning to permitting to implementation and finish, Lenny and staff are professional, efficient and effective.”

With the severity and frequency of flood events on the rise, the District team has the expertise and equipment necessary to assist municipalities and landowners when disasters strike. 2023 annual accomplishments include assessing flood damage to prioritize remediation projects in the wake of the July and December storm events, collecting data for the Shaw Brook restoration project in Long Lake, rerouting 50% of the volume of the Wells Road tributary to prevent runoff from flowing on the road, and replacing a

36-inch culvert with a 9-foot bottomless box culvert on Parkhurst Road, Inlet.



“It’s so empowering to get out and survey for invasive species to help protect our land and waters,” said WhitKovits. “We checked the underside of hemlock branches by snowshoe to survey for Hemlock Woolly Adelgid and conducted a rake toss survey from the boat on a gorgeous summer day. The best part is, we didn’t find any invasives during these gratifying surveys!”

*See Mighty, page 19.*

***District Technician Katie WhitKovits takes a water sample on Long Lake.***

## Mighty (from page 18)

The Caring Through Conservation Mini-Grant Program was launched to empower organizations to implement projects that educate the public or students about environmental issues, enhance natural resource management, and protect watershed resources. \$6,972 in grant funds supported live edge plows for salt reduction in the towns of Lake Pleasant and Inlet, community garden fencing in Lake Pleasant, and the Monarch and Milkweed Challenge and Report in Indian Lake.

“I just love how passionate the whole entire staff is about doing their jobs,” said Hansen. “The knowledge that the staff has about everything from culvert sizing, bank stabilization, how the stream or waterbody is to flow to avoid erosion helps municipalities. The Caring Through Conservation mini grant helped the Town of Inlet Highway Department purchase

vital wear parts for our snowplow to help with the reduction of road salt needed to keep the state road safe.”



***District Manager Caitlin Stewart shows a 6<sup>th</sup> grader from Wells Central School a river critter.***

The 2023 annual report is available at [hamcoswcd.org](http://hamcoswcd.org), and hard copies are available at the District office, 103 County View Drive, Lake Pleasant.

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 [hamcoswcd.org](http://hamcoswcd.org) or call 518-548-3991.



# Where in New York is **Ronny Raindrop**?

Ronny Raindrop was honored to participate in the 2024 International Ice Hockey Federation Women's World Championships Mascot Day in Utica, NY. Teams from China, Japan, Sweden and Norway played for a crowd of over 3,000 students. What an experience!!





# Good Eats



4-Way Partners travel all over the state, and we get hungry! These ice cream parlors, pizza joints, diners, food trucks, ethnic restaurants, dive bars, and farm to table establishments come highly recommended. Stop in for a bite the next time you're in the area.



Nestled in the foothills of the Adirondacks within the hamlet of Harrisville (Lewis County), you will find Tracside Tavern. A great place to grab a cold pint and try one of their specialty pizza's of the month. When April rolls around the locals can't wait to grab the "Trac Attack". Tracside's take on a Big Mac – pizza style. A sesame seed crust, mac sauce, ground beef, red onion, pickles, cheese and a drizzle of ketchup and mustard make this unique and delicious pizza! Located less than a mile from home this is one of my favs!  
Carla Yaw, Lewis County SWCD

## 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!



The blackberry cider purchased at WQS was a hit for Amber Luke, Washington County SWCD.



Chastity Miller, Franklin County SWCD, enjoys a post Tree Sale pick-up iced tea.



Caitlin Stewart, Hamilton County SWCD.



## Photo Album



Sun setting over portions of the remaining hay crop from 2023 as we prepare for 2024 crop season. It will be here before we know it! Amber Luke, Washington County SWCD.



Total solar eclipse viewed from Raquette Lake on April 8, 2024. Caitlin Stewart, Hamilton County SWCD.



# Annual NYS CDEA Fish On Challenge

The NYSCDEA is sponsoring a fishing challenge to all the Soil & Water Conservation District anglers out there!



Participation Fee is \$10.00 per person and each participant will receive a NYSCDEA pocket tape measure (\*\*If you haven't received a tape already). Registration is available for NYSCDEA members only. CASH Preferred!

Register [HERE](#) for the Fish On Challenge by **May 31, 2023**

*\*\*\*New district employees can sign up anytime!*

There are Six Categories and prizes in each:

Smallmouth Bass

Largemouth Bass

Northern Pike

Trout Special

Comradery Catch!  
*For the spirit of friendship and good times with the family!*

Jokers Wild

## General Rules

- You are not eligible to enter a fish if you caught it while in a professional tournament.
- Only one prize per fish.
- Entries are limited to those caught from NY waters only (including boundary waters).
- Entries will be scored based on length except for
  - Jokers Wild will be judged 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.
  - Comradery Catch will be judged based on species, fishing story (optional), location, etc.
  - Trout will be judged based on length, species, and location of catch.

Enter a Fish: the participant is required to submit the following information to [Google Forms](#) or [Fishcdea@gmail.com](mailto:Fishcdea@gmail.com):

1. Name
2. Date caught
3. Species
4. Length
5. Location (waterbody)
6. Picture of fish with you or a measuring tape!
7. If entering the... Jokers Wild category you must include why the fish is unique and why it should win the category.

*All entries need to be submitted between  
March 1, 2023 – February 28, 2024*

Examples for pictures:



Winners of all categories will be announced at the 2024 WQS Banquet.

Register for the Fish On Challenge [HERE](#)

CASH Preferred!

If you have any questions, comments or if you are interested in registering, contact [Fishcdea@gmail.com](mailto:Fishcdea@gmail.com)





New York Association of Conservation Districts  
c/o Steuben County SWCD  
415 W. Morris Street  
Bath, NY 14810  
[www.nyacd.org](http://www.nyacd.org)

**CDEA April 2024 Report Respectfully**

Submitted by Blanche L. Hurlbutt, NYACD Ex. Dir.

**Legislative Days Follow-Up:** Legislative Days was another great event. We had met with about ninety Legislators &/or staff and told the SWCD story through-out the day. There were over fourteen SWCD's present to spread the word. We had a few glitches, but they were easily fixed and next year we hope more folks will be able to attend and spread the word.

**Fly-In, Washington, DC:** Sam Casella, NYACD President attended the NACD Fly-In, Washington, DC in March and met with members of the US Senate & Congress. Sam shared with the Legislators the soil and water conservation district projects and programs that SWCD does throughout the year. Sam also provided them with the annual Legislative day booklet showcasing what SWCD's have completed in 2023.

**2024 NYACD Annual Meeting:** Will be held on Monday, October 21 & Tuesday, October 22, 2024, at the Hamton Inn, Penn Yan, NY. I'm also working on scheduling training sessions for the annual meeting and preparing for the annual business meeting. The request for potential award winners will be emailed to everyone later this summer. In the meantime, please consider who you feel is worthy of one of the annual NYACD awards and nominate them. This will be two full days beginning on Monday with six training sessions and a tour of Yates County SWCD projects, Tuesday morning will be the annual business meeting and we will have the annual awards banquet luncheon in the afternoon.

**Stream C:** It is our hope that this will not come back up again after being vetoed once again by our Governor. If I hear anything or any changes, I will let the Directors and Districts know.

**Senate Bill #S7854:** I reached out to Senator May & Hinchey's office and share with the districts their responses to this bill. I presently don't think this is something that Districts should be overly concerned about, but as always, I will let Districts know or if any District has concerns about this bill I will once again reach out to the Senators. It presently has not been picked up by the Assembly side.



## **2024 NYS Envirothon & 2024 NCF Envirothon New York April Report**

Respectfully Submitted by Blanche L. Hurlbutt

The 2024 NYS Envirothon event will be held on Wednesday, May 22nd and Thursday, May 23rd at SUNY Cortland, Cortland NY. The committee has been meeting monthly in person or by zoom. The committee is right on track to host this event. The testing site has been selected, the main buildings, along with the dorm rooms. T-shirts will be ordered shortly with a very cool logo. We have some fun advisor tours scheduled and a bunch of fun activities for the teams during their down time. The oral presentation problem and judges score sheet is up online. Check out the NYS Envirothon website is [www.nyenvirothon.org](http://www.nyenvirothon.org).

The 2024 NCF-Envirothon New York committee is working hard to prepare for this great event. The committee has been working hard to complete and meet the NCF deadlines. The tests are in the works along with the oral presentation problem. We have been meeting with NCF committee members monthly.

We have the airport selected for teams to arrive at with a room set aside for them to sit if the shuttle isn't there when the first arrive. We have the buses lined up for the week, along with guest and advisor tours. Our fun/educational has been set for Niagara Falls and with the help of Niagara County SWCD we can host lunch on Goat Island.

At present we have had only thirty-six (36) districts donate to this event, we are hopeful every district will do their part and provide the funding requested. Some districts have provided funds above the requested amount, which has been greatly received. Our present budget is over \$600,000 with NRCS donating \$350,000. The Environmental Education Foundation has been searching for additional funding along with the New York committee. It is our hope to have all the necessary funds raised before the event. We are presently making our deposits and ordering necessary items for the event.

Please consider supporting this major international event, if you haven't already, and volunteer to help during the week. Come see what a great program Envirothon is for teaching our youth the importance of caring about their environment. We hope to have the volunteer web page up online and ready for folks to volunteer within the next couple of months, so keep an eye out for it on the NYS Envirothon website.





### **Executive Committee Members**

**President: Caitlin Stewart**

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**Vice President: Jessica Armstrong**

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**Secretary: Joann Burke**

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**Treasurer: Katy Kemmeren**

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**Member At Large: Alice Halloran**

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**New York Association of Conservation Districts:**

**Blanche L. Hurlbutt**

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**Soil and Water Conservation Committee:**

**Bethany Bzduch**

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