

CDEA News



NEW YORK STATE
CONSERVATION DISTRICT
EMPLOYEES' ASSOCIATION, INC.



June 2024

Cover Photo

Teams of high school students competed at the New York State Envirothon May 22 and 23 at SUNY Cortland.



The CDEA Corner

Caitlin Stewart, President, NYS CDEA, Inc.

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

Our May **CDEA meeting** was held May 30 – 31 in beautiful Wyoming County. Thank you Districts and partners for attending, and the wonderful Wyoming County SWCD team for hosting us! Minutes and agendas are available at www.nyscdea.com/

The New York State Erosion and Sediment Control Certificate Program Review Course is being offered August 14 and 15 in Ballston Spa. **The NYSESCCP exam** will be offered in Ballston Spa on August 16, and a separate registration form is required. Those interested in sitting for the exam must submit an application and be approved prior to registering to take the exam. At this time, this is the only Review Course scheduled for this year. For more information, go to <https://www.nyscdea.com/nysesccp/>

The 23rd Annual **CDEA Golf Tournament** to benefit CDEA programs will be held Thursday August 1, 2024, 10:00 a.m. at Casolwood Golf Club, Canastota. This fun event is open to all our conservation partners, and the \$75 registration fee includes greens fees, cart, lunch, and dinner. Registration is due July 22: <https://www.nyscdea.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/2024GolfTournamentRegistrations.pdf>

New York State will host the **National Conservation Foundation Envirothon** where teams from across the globe will compete July 28 – August 3 at Hobard and William Smith Colleges, Geneva. Please consider volunteering and / or donating. Volunteers may sign up here: https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLScKlG9Hyzz_wlubbce3MzPI0n-gFWG6jvMsa6H2tHjXu0MHVw/viewform

The **New York State Fair** Committee selected the theme *Conservation Districts: Then and Now* for the 2024 and 2025 events, and is recruiting volunteers to work booth shifts. SWCD history, current work, and careers will be spotlighted. The sign-up link is available here: <https://www.nyscdea.com/state-fair/>

The **Conservation Skills Workshop** Committee is working on training descriptions and presenters. Save the date: September 23 – 26, 2024, Auburn, NY.

Planning has begun for the 2024 **Administrative Conference**. Email Dustin Lewis, Saratoga County SWCD Manager with class suggestions at dustinlewis@oneida-county-swcd.org.

CDEA Vice President Jessica Anderson obtained RFPs from hotels for the 2025 **Water Quality Symposium**. Email Jess course suggestions at jessica.armstrong@oneida-county-swcd.org.

Northeast Association of Conservation District Employees update:

- NACDE Conservation Award nominations for regional and local District employees and leaders are due July 12.
- National Association of Conservation Districts Northeast Region Meeting will be held August 9 - 14 in Boston, MA. Registration is open: <https://nacdnet.app.neoncrm.com/np/clients/nacdnet/eventRegistration.jsp?event=2380&>.

See Corner, page 3.

Corner (from page 2)

- National Association of Conservation Districts 79th annual meeting will be held February 8 – 12, 2025, in Salt Lake City, Utah.

I again emailed Mr. Cavazos, Municipal Assistance Unit regarding **civil service** challenges. Focus areas included updating the pool of testing questions or transitioning to training and experience tests, and addressing the long length of time it takes for exams to be held after they are ordered.

The **New York State Envirothon** was a tremendous success. Thank you, committee members and volunteers! The Mount Academy of Ulster County received first place, and will represent New York at the NCF-Envirothon.

A sub-committee was formed to update the **CDEA By-Laws**, addressing feedback received after the most recent revisions were printed for the 2024 annual meeting.

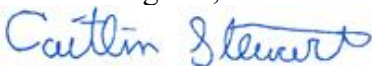
Thank you, AEAs, for hosting excellent **Managers' Meetings**.

I attended the following meetings to ensure CDEA's support of and contribution to the 4-Way Partnership and beyond:

- May and June Soil and Water Conservation Committee meetings
- May and June New York Association of Conservation Districts meetings
- [Invasive Species Advisory Committee](#) meeting (I serve as Secretary)

Please contact [your Division Representative or me](#) with questions or concerns. I wish you the very best with your upcoming summer programs and projects!

Kindest regards,



Caitlin Stewart, MS, President, NYS CDEA



After day 1 of the May CDEA meeting, Wyoming County SWCD team members Al Fagan and Rebecca Campbell provided a tour of spectacular Letchworth State Park.



New York State Erosion & Sediment Control Certificate Program Implementation Review Course

LOCATION: Saratoga County SWCD
50 West High Street
Ballston Spa, NY

DATE: August 14th and 15th, 2024

REGISTRATION DEADLINE: August 2nd, 2024

The New York State Conservation District Employee's Association will be hosting the New York State Erosion & Sediment Control Certificate Program Implementation Course on Wednesday August 14th from 8:30am to 4:30pm and continuing into Thursday, from 8:30am to 1 pm. This course will be instructed by Dustin Lewis- Saratoga County SWCD, Jim Lieberum, Warren County SWCD, and Jake Wedemeyer Ulster County SWCD. This session is intended to prepare individuals who plan to sit for the NYSESCCP exam.

This course presents details of the New York State Erosion & Sediment Control Certificate Program to establish and maintain a process to identify and recognize individuals who are capable of developing, designing, inspecting and maintaining erosion and sediment control plans on projects that disturb soils in New York State. Presentations include regulatory history, permit requirements, site planning and management, NYS Erosion and Sediment Control Standards, as well as site plan review and construction inspections. Participants will calculate soil loss impacts, stormwater runoff volumes, fertilizer and seeding quantities, and key design elements of runoff and sediment control practices. Participants should bring a scale, calculator, the most current copy of the NYS General Permit for Stormwater Discharges from Construction Activity, and the NYS Standards and Specifications for Erosion and Sediment Control. More information regarding the program and course can be found <https://www.nyscdea.com/nysesccp/>

This class can be counted for Professional Development Units (PDU's) for those that retain stormwater certifications in Certified Professional in Stormwater Quality (CPSWQ), Certified Professional in Erosion and Sediment Control (CPESC), and the New York State Erosion and Sediment Control Certificate (NYS ESCC). In addition, this class has been certified for 10 Professional Development Hours (PDH's) for New York State registered Professional Engineers by the Practicing Institute for Engineering.

The cost of attending this course is \$250/ per person without PDH credits and \$350/ per person with PDH credits. Pre-Registration is required. In order for this course to be offered, 10 attendees need to be registered otherwise the course will be cancelled. Return the bottom portion of this form, along with the registration fee, to Schuyler County SWCD, Attn: Jessica Verrigni, PO Box 326, Montour Falls, NY 14865. No refunds.

QUESTIONS? Contact Jessica Verrigni at jessicaschuylerswcd@gmail.com

Methods of Payment: Check Payable to Schuyler County SWCD- *No other forms of payment are accepted at this time*

NYSE&SCCP IMPLEMENTATION COURSE REGISTRATION August 14th and 15th 2024

Course Registration Fee (circle one): \$250 without PDHs
\$350 with PDHs

Name _____

Address _____

Phone _____

Email _____



New York State Erosion & Sediment Control Certificate Program Exam

**LOCATION: Saratoga County Soil and Water Conservation District
50 West High Street
Ballston Spa, NY**

DATE: Friday, August 16th @ 8 am

Saratoga County Soil & Water Conservation District will be hosting the New York State Erosion & Sediment Control Certificate Program Exam on Friday August 16th, 2024.

The New York State Erosion & Sediment Control Certificate Program Exam will test the applicant's knowledge of the fundamentals of erosion and sediment control, as well as the planning, design, construction, inspection and maintenance of erosion and sediment control practices. The exam is an open book exam and the students have 3.5 hours to complete the exam and must achieve a score of 75 to pass.

Individuals must submit an application and be approved to sit for the exam. This application must be received at a minimum 30 days prior to the exam date. There is an application fee of \$150. If approved to sit for the exam, there is a \$100 exam fee. Applicants DO NOT need to take the NYS Erosion and Sediment Control Certificate Program Implementation Review Course to sit for the exam.

More information on the program can be found at <https://www.nyscdea.com/nysesccp/>

QUESTIONS? Contact Jessica Verrigni, CPESC, CPSWQ at 607-535-0878 Email: jessicaschuylerswcd@gmail.com

NYSE&SCCP EXAM REGISTRATION AUGUST 16TH, 2024

Exam Fee: \$100

Methods of Payment: Check Payable to Schuyler County SWCD or Visa

Name

Address

Phone

Email



New York State to Host Students from Across the Globe for the 2024 National Envirothon Competition

Hanna Birkhead, Associate Director of Public Information, Department of Agriculture and Markets

New York State Agriculture Commissioner Richard A. Ball today announced that New York will host the 2024 National Conservation Foundation (NCF)-Envirothon, an international environmental and natural resources education competition for high school students. Winning teams from across the United States, including New York State, and countries including Canada, Singapore, and China will travel to this year's competition, which will be held from July 28 to August 3 at Hobart and William Smith Colleges in Geneva, New York. This is the first time ever

that New York State has hosted the competition.

Commissioner Ball said, "The annual Envirothon competition series is a critical part of environmental and agricultural education in our state and across the globe, and I'm excited that New York will host the final competition this year. With climate change continuing to impact us all, it has never been more inspiring to see passionate young people from around the world preparing to be ambassadors for the environment and our natural resources in the years to come. I congratulate our New York teams from 41 counties that will be attending the competition in Geneva later this summer and wish all competitors the best of luck."

See Envirothon, page 7.

Envirothon (from page 6)

Commissioner Ball additionally congratulated the student winners of the annual New York State Envirothon Competition, which took place May 22 and 23 at SUNY Cortland.

The team from The Mount Academy in Ulster County was named New York State Champion at the long-standing hands-on environmental competition, which challenges students on their knowledge of natural resource science, public speaking, and civic engagement. Red Creek Central School from Wayne County and Skaneateles High School in Onondaga County were awarded second and third place.

The winning team from The Mount Academy will travel the short distance to the International NCF-Envirothon to represent New York State this summer in Geneva, New York. Each member of the team received a scholarship, and the team will compete against other top teams from the United States, China, Singapore, and Canada.

The NCF-Envirothon competition is a series of field station tests in the areas of soils/land use, aquatic ecology, forestry, wildlife, and an emerging environmental issue. Throughout the week-long competition, students will demonstrate their knowledge of these areas through written tests and interactive stations featuring Geneva's natural resources. The teams will also prepare oral presentations on this year's current issue, "Renewable Energy for a Sustainable Future."

In the New York State Envirothon, 41 teams from across New York State competed in environmental science and natural resource management

written and oral tests during the two-day competition. The teams, made up of five students from 9th to 12th grades, qualified at the regional or local level to receive invitations to the state competition.



The Mount Academy team of Ulster County placed first at the New York State Envirothon and will represent the state during the NCF-Envirothon.

Conservation District Employees' Association President Caitlin Stewart said, "The New York State Envirothon brings together the best and brightest high school students for an outdoor competition focused on natural resources. They gave oral presentations on the 2024 topic Renewable Energy for a Sustainable Future, then took tough exams in wildlife, aquatic ecology, forestry, current issue, and soils. I had the absolute pleasure of speaking with many students, and I can say with confidence that our natural resources are in good hands with the future stewards of our world."

The 2024 New York State Envirothon was made possible through the contributions of several sponsors and partnering agencies, including the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets. The Department's Division of Land and Water Resources works to protect New York's land and water through farmland protection, farmland conservation, and proactive environmental stewardship programs. Many federal and state environmental agencies, soil and water conservation districts, and higher education institutions provided expertise and helped to organize the event.

The New York State Envirothon Committee is still looking for major donations and event sponsors along with

See Envirothon, page 8.

Envirothon (from page 7)

volunteers for the 2024 International NCF-Envirothon later this summer.

About the New York State Envirothon

The New York State Envirothon is coordinated by the New York State Envirothon Committee consisting of members of the New York State Conservation District Employees Association, New York State Soil and Water Conservation Committee, New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets, USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service, and volunteers. The program services hundreds of high school students throughout New York State and the five city boroughs. Winning teams from regional and county Envirothon competitions advance to the state level and then to the National Envirothon, earning awards and scholarships at each level. The program is funded from contributions and grants from individuals, businesses, and organizations. Contributions are tax

deductible through the New York State Environmental Education Foundation, and a portion of all contributions go towards the program. Additional information about the program and sponsorship opportunities can be found at www.nysenvirothon.net.

Sponsors of the 2024 New York State Envirothon include:

- ALCOA Foundation
- Niagara County Soil and Water Conservation District
- USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service
- NY Association of Conservation Districts (NYACD)
- NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets and the State Soil and Water Conservation Committee
- NYS Conservation District Employees' Association, Inc (NYSCDEA)
- Cattaraugus County Trappers Association
- New York Central Mutual Fire Insurance Co., Inc.
- In Loving Memory of Greg Hurlbutt
- Norton's Gas Inc.
- Chobani Inc.
- Stewart's Shops
- The Water Bottle Inc.

Conservation District Kicks off Third Year of HWA Treatment

Alaina Robarge, Conservation District Educator, Ontario County Soil and Water Conservation District

The Ontario County Soil and Water Conservation District kicked off the third consecutive year of the Hemlock Woolly Adelgid (HWA) treatment program in March. For three years now, the Ontario County SWCD and partners have been utilizing funds from the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative to monitor, scout and treat hemlock trees in important riparian gullies in the Canandaigua and Honeoye Lake watersheds in order to save the trees from the devastating effects of HWA. Treatment season started at the Wesley Hill Preserve, owned by the Finger Lakes Land Trust, with a release of silver flies, a predatory fly which feeds on HWA. These flies are reared by the New York State Hemlock Initiative in labs at Cornell to be released at sites of

*Silver fly
release.
Photo Credit:
Chris Ray,
Finger Lakes
Land Trust*



See HWA, page 9.

HWA (from page 8)

known HWA infestation. The goal being that these flies will survive, feed on the HWA and continue to grow their populations in order to keep the HWA infestation in check.

Protecting our critical riparian corridors helps stabilize streambanks and protect water quality. The District looks forward to continued work with a variety of partners and local landowners to identify and monitor the HWA threat and target efforts of chemical control and bio-control releases for long term management. We encourage private landowners to reach out if they have any hemlock trees on their

property. The Ontario County SWCD and Partners are always available to help evaluate the level of infestation and make management recommendations to help protect and conserve this important tree species.

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The Ontario County SWCD and Partners are always available to help evaluate the level of infestation and make management recommendations to help protect and conserve this important tree species.



Silver fly landing on a hemlock branch; the white woolly material indicating the HWA presence
Photo Credit: Chris Ray, Finger Lakes Land Trust



New York State Conservation District Employees' Association, Inc.
State Fair Committee

2024 New York State Fair Booth Volunteer Request

August 21, 2024 – September 2, 2024

Date: May 15, 2024

To: All NYS Soil and Water Conservation District Employees

From: Kristin White, Chairperson of the State Fair Committee

The NYSCDEA has had a booth at The Great New York State Fair for over 45 years! This booth is an educational display for fairgoers that promotes the great programs and projects of the Soil & Water Conservation Districts across the state. This year the event will be 13 days long and we're looking for your help!

The theme for the booth this year is, "**Conservation Districts: Then and Now**". We're working on creating a display that shows the history of Soil and Water Conservation Districts and we'll have information available for those that are interested in starting a career with SWCDs.

If you volunteer, there is a Booth Binder behind the counter that has instructions for opening and closing shifts, the shift schedule for the current and next year, committee contact phone numbers, public and volunteer comment pages, and sign-in/sign-out sheets.

| | |
|-------------------------|---|
| <u>Location</u> | Our booth is located in the Horticulture Building. |
| <u>Tickets</u> | Admission and Parking tickets will be issued to all volunteers. |
| <u>Shifts</u> | There are 2 shifts you can choose from: 10:00 AM to 3:00 PM <u>or</u> 3:00 PM to 8:00 PM. We are looking to have 2 volunteers per shift. It helps greatly if 2 people from the same District work a shift together. |
| <u>Incentive</u> | Volunteers are eligible to win \$50 cash incentive. The NYSCDEA State Fair Committee will draw 5 names from the sign-in/sign-out sheets. The winners will be notified via email. |
| <u>Shirts</u> | We will be getting new shirts this year. Please email your shirt size to Kristin White . |

HOW TO SIGN-UP FOR A SHIFT

We are using SignUpGenius® for volunteer registrations for the State Fair Booth. The link can be found on the NYSCDEA's website at <https://www.nyscdea.com/state-fair/>. If there are 2 employees volunteering to work a shift, please input each name separately. This program keeps track of how many people sign up for each shift and once a shift is filled, it becomes unavailable. To submit, select the yellow Sign Up box for the shift(s) you want. Then select the Submit and Sign Up button at the bottom of the screen. Put your County in the "Comment" section (**leave the Quantity at 1**; each volunteer must be entered separately) Please email Kristin White your shirt size. Be sure to include your email. A reminder will be emailed to you and we will also use this email to inform you of any cancellations.

In-Field CREP Trainings Held Throughout New York Train-Up Conservation Staff

Lydia Brinkley, Buffer Coordinator, Upper Susquehanna Coalition

“Get in the field together!” This was one of the main messages that came from the In-Field CREP Training Sessions, held in 4 locations throughout New York in May. For those of us in the Upper Susquehanna Watershed, that means that all interested parties should try to get in the field together when necessary to play a role in the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP). This may include the Farm Service Agency, Natural Resources Conservation Service, and the local Soil and Water Conservation District. These trainings focused on working together to find ways to say yes to land eligibility, and to find ways to enroll landowners in CREP to increase all of our conservation



Brandon Dennis giving a stream ecology lesson on the banks of the Oatka Creek in Mumford, NY.

deliverables. Overall, a lot of the training focused on enrolling land specifically for CP-22, Riparian Forest Buffer, and CP-30, Wetland Buffer, although several other Conservation Practices were discussed. After determining land eligibility, we discussed what the next steps would be to enroll landowners into CREP, and who would be responsible for those actions.

Training organizers included Nicole Angelo (Agricultural Program Specialist, Farm Service Agency), Karl Strause (CRP Program Manager, Natural Resources Conservation Service), Brandon Dennis (Resource Conservationist, NRCS), Scott Fickbohm (NYS CRP Manager, Soil and Water Conservation Committee), and Lydia Brinkley (Project Coordinator, Upper Susquehanna Coalition). Each day started off with a lesson in stream ecology, followed by a discussion on land and landowner eligibility, demonstrating Suitability and Feasibility worksheets, and then another lesson in riparian ecology and restoration considerations. Several scenarios were explored for each training session, and trainers tried to hit home that each site looks different; we should learn to work in and embrace the gray (as opposed to black and white rules).

Overall, about 150 conservation staff state-wide were trained through 4 separate sessions. “We hit the mark in getting folks thinking about and discussing buffers together, they are a priority practice!” said Nicole Angelo, FSA. Within the Upper Susquehanna Coalition, feedback has been really positive. Most of us enjoy field time to begin with, but we all really enjoyed a day together focused on how to get landowners and more land enrolled into CREP.



Exploring the riparian area of Schenevus Creek and a diversion ditch in Schenevus.



Dodging some rain and checking out a headwater tributary at the Tioga County Cornell Cooperative Extension Farm.

2024 Niagara Orleans Envirothon Grows Again with Twelve Teams Competing

Katie Pfeifer, Secretary and Assistant Treasurer, Niagara County Soil and Water Conservation District



Twelve teams of high school students from Albion, Brockport, Christian Academy, Lewiston-Porter, Lockport, Lyndonville, Medina, Newfane, Niagara Academy, Niagara Falls, Niagara Wheatfield, North Tonawanda, Royalton Hartland, Starpoint, Wilson, Niagara Career & Technical Education Center, and Orleans Career & Technical Education Center competed May 1st at the Niagara-Orleans Envirothon held at Bond Lake Park Nature Center in Lewiston. Teams of four to six students in grades 9-12 were tested on wildlife, aquatics, forestry, soils/land use, and a current environmental issue.

This year's current issue is Renewable Energy for a Sustainable Future. Students had to develop a theoretical plan for a school district to help reach renewable energy goals and present for a panel of judges to grade.

Congratulations to the team from Lyndonville for winning Orleans County and being the Over-All Envirothon Winners! The team was from Mrs. Wronski's class, students included Maddie Baker, James Garcia, Molly Ingersoll, and Jocelyn Mack.

Congratulations to the over-all winners for Niagara County from Niagara Orleans County Career and Technical Center from Mr. Kaplewicz's class, students included Alex Achtziger-Hughes, Samantha Maciejewski, Miles Manns, and Alyssa Nagel.

The team from Lyndonville won the Oral

Presentation, Current Issue, and Soils portions of Envirothon. RoyHart's team from Mr. Sweeney's class won the Aquatics portion, students included Cayla Burch, Mackenzie Diamond, Vanessa Grant, Joshua Kennedy, Clara Wojciechowski, and Adam Yanicki. A second team from Niagara Orleans Career and Technical Center won the Forestry and Wildlife portions, students included Shane Beaton, Devin Carney, Cole Handrich, Dakota Ward, and Ava Vanoni.

The over-all county winners will move on to represent their county at the NYS Envirothon later this month at SUNY Cortland. Good Luck teams!

A special thank you to this year's event sponsors M&T Bank, NewRoyal Orchards, and the NYS Forest Owners Association – Niagara Frontier Chapter for providing breakfast, lunch, and Envirothon shirts for the students. Exams and proctoring were provided by the Aquarium of Niagara, NYS Department of Environmental Conservation, Iroquois National Wildlife Refuge, and both Soil and Water Conservation Districts. Vic DiGiacomo of the NYS Soil and Water Conservation Committee came to discuss future conservation careers and opportunities with students.

The Niagara-Orleans Envirothon is a yearly event for county high school students presented by Niagara County Soil and Water Conservation District and Orleans County Soil and Water Conservation District. Envirothon is an environmental competition on different aspects of natural resources. It gives students hands-on experience and knowledge of the environment to understand how to protect and manage the natural resources around them.

For more information about Envirothon visit www.envirothon.org or www.nysenvirothon.org. To participate next year please reach out to our office at 716-434-4949 ext. 4 or email Katherine.pfeifer@ny.nacdnet.net.



23RD ANNUAL NYSCDEA GOLF TOURNAMENT TO BENEFIT CDEA PROGRAMS

Each team that brings a
donation for prizes will receive
a *Mulligan*.
Please bring a
Donation!

*Free gift for
every participant*

50/50 DRAWING

SKINS GAME (Optional)
LONGEST DRIVE
CLOSEST TO THE PIN
CLOSEST TO THE LINE

THURSDAY—August 1st, 2024

10 a.m. shotgun start

CASOLWOOD GOLF CLUB

Canastota, NY

\$75 per person

**Includes: Greens fees, cart, lunch at the
turn, and dinner (Steak, salad, salt potatoes,
vegetable)**

Open to all SWCD & NRCS employees, their families,
and all of our conservation partners
The perfect tournament for the avid golfer or the golfer
that plays once a year. Come out and join the fun!

Need directions? www.casolwoodgc.com

**Make checks payable to
NYSCDEA**

Send check and registration to:
Chenango County SWCD
99 North Broad Street
Norwich, NY 13815

Questions?

Contact:

Doug Kierst 315-252-4171 x 4
Russell Smith 607-756-5991

CAPTAIN & CREW

County/Affiliation _____
Contact Telephone # (____) _____ - _____

(Please list your team members)

**Deadline
July 22nd**

- 1 _____
- 2 _____
- 3 _____
- 4 _____



Wise Words from our District Family

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

Mark E. Burge, Executive Director, Onondaga County SWCD

23 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 have worked for Onondaga County SWCD for 23 years.*

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

A. *Keeping the District in business! Back in ~ 2009, the District lost a major source of funding. It was so bad; we had to develop a layoff list and actually start to lay off staff. We needed to cut costs and/or increase revenue by ~\$1 Million, to start. All options were being considered as we were likely to be the first SWCDs to go out of business, if we could not turn it around. On top of that, I was a new District Executive Director in the “Acting” role trying to figure out the job and trying to put together a plan to save the District. Our team did it! And we ended up being stronger today for going through that event!*

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

A. *I really like the people, the customers, working locally and being home most nights. I came from the private sector working as an environmental consultant. In the end, I travelled three to six months per year every fall, home only for the weekends (at best).*

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

A. *Yes! Two decades ago, our workload was 95% traditional agriculture. Today, it is everything; forestry, terrestrial and aquatic invasive species, erosion and sediment control, hydroseeding, urban agriculture, etc. I expect that it will only get more exciting in the next year with all of the dynamic funding coming from many NYS and Federal sources for everything from additional water quality work to urban agriculture.*

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

A. *Definitely enjoy the ride, stay with it for a few years (don't just come through the doors, get one year of experience and move on), and learn and experience EVERYTHING that you can! It really is a great family!*



See Wise, page 15.

Wise (from page 14)

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

A. While at college at ESF. Initially, I wanted to work for the Soil Conservation Service, but realized how blessed that I am to have found the District's and the work that they can do. The Districts move almost at the speed of private business, and I really like that!

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

A. I was working in the private sector as an environmental consultant (a lot of wetland delineation and creation/mitigation work) and in the fall/winter season, many power-line vegetation right-of-way assessments. The work would have you leaving Sunday night or early Monday morning to return late on Friday evening. It started out as 3-month stints and then turned to 6-month stints. I was SOO excited when the District called for an interview! A chance to again work local.

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

A. To an extent. Especially the field skills learned at Paul Smith's College. What I really felt like made the biggest difference was my experience in the private consulting field. There was always a pile of projects to work on and it was the same at the District.

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

A. The times that we have been able to recognize staff, board members and partners with awards, either through NYCDEA and NYACD, or inner office, for the great work that they do and to say, "Thank You!" for their support of the District and its people!

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

A. Oh, there are SOO many. One involved a Hawaiian Luau in Binghamton, the Sumo wrestling in Auburn (and the missing tooth!) and

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

A. Giving a former employee, Henry Kelsey, a ride on the Honda Silver Wing 500 I had (my first road bike) up to Syracuse, in very cold weather, so that he could pick up his vehicle. We looked like that scene from the movie Dumb and Dumber!

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. The original board members from 1944! I wish I could hear what they were talking about and what they thought the District would become, and then see their reactions as to where we are and where we are going in the future. The charcoal grill, steaks, ice cream and coffee!

Q. Do you have a hidden talent?

A. 15 years ago I helped our County start an Animal Response Team for large animal rescues and small animal sheltering (in the event of major disasters). It is actually a very successful team in NYS. We just rescued a 6 year old, ~2,500 pregnant draft horse on Monday evening, April 15 that was cast in its stall using a specially designed rescue glide. After the rescue we needed to utilize specialized lifting equipment, affixed to a town payloader, to get the horse back on its feet. Both mama and baby-to-be are doing well! A 4 hour

See Wise, page 16.

Wise (from page 15)

rescue effort with many neighbors, the local VFD, and our trained response team members.

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

A. Certainly, the people and the projects! I will also miss the pace as the job is so much more than a 40-hour work week.

Q. Any concluding remarks?

A. Districts, their staff and boards of directors, and all of the support organizations are really amazing group of people that accomplish so much! I wish for more continued success and satisfaction for those that carry on the District work traditions!

Conservation District Tree Sales Clean Climate

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

LAKE PLEASANT – Planting trees could very well be our planet’s quintessential conservation practice. After all, trees produce oxygen, absorb pollution, prevent soil erosion, provide homes for wildlife, and help people find calm among the chaos of everyday life. All across New York, county Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCD) held tree sales that clean the climate, green local neighborhoods, and spruce up communities.

Conservation Districts are the go-to organizations to help achieve New York State’s Climate Act goals, including planting 25 million trees by 2033. In 2023 alone, their tree sales resulted in planting 489,488 seedlings statewide. Plantings will leaf out and protect the environment.

“Our farmers have long been at the forefront of meaningful, sustainable efforts to preserve our natural resources and combat the effects of climate change, and they also know a thing or two about planting!”

said Richard A. Ball, Commissioner of the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets. “We were proud to be a part of this effort to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and are grateful to our partnerships with Conservation Districts across the state who are consistently working to help achieve New York State’s nation-leading climate goals.”



Senior District Technician Lenny Croote double checks tree sale orders.

The Hamilton County SWCD team packed orders for the April 27th sale with a whole lot of TLC. First, they dipped roots in a gel to lock in moisture. Then, they wrapped roots in newspaper, and bagged and tagged plant bundles. Their Tree and Shrub Sale only offers plants that are native to the Adirondacks, and all species are non-invasive.

Beyond planting trees, SWCDs are the boots on the ground for climate resiliency, flood mitigation, Agricultural Environmental Management, water quality protection, and erosion prevention. Their

See Climate, page 17

Climate (from page 16)

expert staff hold certifications to ensure the services they provide and projects they install are science backed, legitimate, and implemented with competency. From culvert projects to invasive species management, and from water quality monitoring to education, SWCDs do it all.

“It may sound cliché, but it’s true: an investment in our environment is an investment in our future,” said Bethany Bzduch, Executive Director, New York State Soil and Water Conservation Committee (SWCC). “We at the SWCC know that there’s nothing more important than environmental

management, and we’re working hard to find new ways to safeguard our natural resources and give back to the land that sustains us. The impact that planting 25 million new trees will have on this work, and on our state as a whole, is monumental.”



The Dacre family on their way home with their seedling packs to plant.

This year, the Hamilton County SWCD’s Adirondack Tree and Shrub Sale resulted in local landowners planting 173 non-invasive seedlings.

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 or call 518-548-3991.

Silvopasture Field Day

Daniel W. Berheide, Technician, Essex County Soil and Water Conservation District

Our May 4th Silvopasture Field Day in Essex County brought together technical expertise and multi-disciplinary precept to examine a local case study in silvopasture. Led by experts in the subject, Bret Chedzoy and Peter Smallidge, the field day began with a classroom portion at the Whallonsburg Grange to review the basic principles of Silvopasture and become acquainted with one another. 20 attendees including service providers from SWCDs, NRCS, LCBP, CCE Columbia-Greene-Schuyler counties, foresters, farmers, a logger, and interested landowners.

The field portion brought folks to one of our local AEM participants whose agricultural operations exemplify good pasture management and have been exploring the integration of Silvopasture through the implementation of their updated Forest Management Plan. There we met with the farmers and consultant forester to review the history of their property and examine first-hand the sites where Silvopasture practices are being integrated into their livestock management. This case study allowed folks to work through some of the complexities of implementing silvopasture beyond the theoretical and afforded the opportunity to practice field skills, such as sampling basal area. Ultimately the workshop aimed to build participants' knowledge base, confidence, and expert network.



This program was made possible with funding from the CDEA 4-Hour Fund. To apply, contact your Division Representative or find the application packet on SharePoint.

Roadway and Roadside Drainage workshops

Megan Webster , Manager, Ontario County Soil and Water Conservation District

During the month of May, Districts teamed up with Cornell Local Roads Program to offer Roadway and Roadside Drainage workshops. You may be familiar with NYS Local Technical Assistance Program Center's (NYS LTAP) programs and offerings, and may have even taken a course or two at Conservation Skills Workshop or the Water Quality Symposium. CDEA 4 Hour Course funds were utilized to sponsor three similar workshops in Chemung, Madison and Ontario Counties. With all of our busy schedules, offering financial support covering the registration fee provided the added incentive for attendance.

Districts had the opportunity to highlight local programming such as water quality improvement projects, hydroseeding programs and stormwater management programs and showcase our technical knowledge and resources we provide to state, county and municipal highway departments. This collaboration helped to educate both District staff and also gave a valuable partnership and networking opportunity with our local highway departments. With over 90 attendees, the workshops provided a great venue for discussion of shared challenges and future opportunities and attendees from across New York State. District staff were able to share potential funding opportunities and innovative technologies and best management practices we have been using in our regions. The CDEA 4 hour Course Funds were instrumental in providing this opportunity for Districts and we thank you for your support!



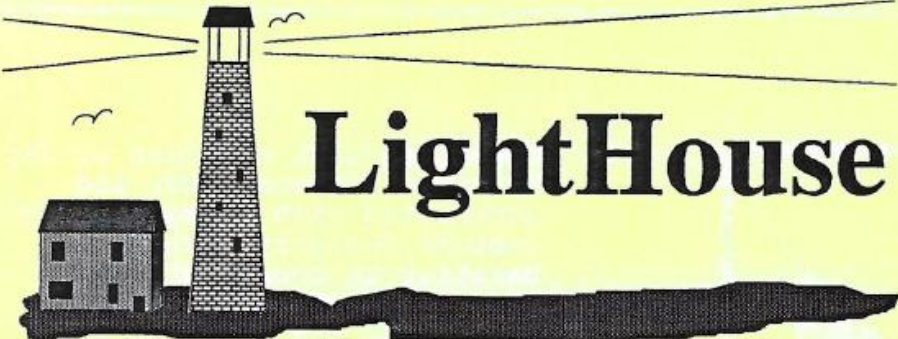
Where in New York is **Ronny Raindrop?**

Ronny Raindrop's Birth Announcement

Erica Schreiner, Senior District Technician, Oswego County Soil and Water Conservation District

Ronny was "born" in Oswego County in 1990, so Ronny will have 35 years of service to SWCDs in 2025! Below is the Oswego SWCD newsletter announcing the birth.

CDEA will have a year-long celebration of Ronny Raindrop in 2025. Be on the lookout for activities and events showcasing our beloved mascot, including new costumes for Divisions!



LightHouse

Oswego County Soil & Water Conservation District, 2 Erie St. Oswego N.Y. 13126 343-0040

October 4, 1990 Fall issue Vol.3 issue 1


Raindrop Comes Alive!

Recently, the New York State Conservation District Employee's Association (NYSCDEA) became the parent of a big blue raindrop named "Ronny the Raindrop." With the celebration of 50 years of Soil and Water Conservation in NYS, the NYSCDEA State Fair Committee, created Ronny. Ronny represents the association and promotes water quality programs throughout New York State.

Under the leadership of Committee Chairperson John Flanagan (Oswego SWCD) the

Committee took the idea of Jay Matteson (Oswego SWCD) and contracted with Oswego County Costume Designer Kevin Baratier to construct Ronny. One month and \$800.00 later, Ronny made his debut at the Oswego County Fair. Everyone, children and adults, loved the raindrop. After the County Fair, Ronny went on to the NY State Fair. Ronny stayed at the Fair for the duration. Ronny even appeared with Wayne Mahar of WSTM TV ch. 3 to do a weather broadcast.

Since the Fair Ronny has made appearances at shopping malls in Rochester, will be appearing in a parade in Broome County, and is scheduled to appear in Tioga County. Overall, Ronny has met over 20,000 people since he was born. You could say that Ronny has made a big "splash" in New York State.



Agricultural BMP Workshop



SAVE THE DATE:

August 20-21, 2024

in Geneva, NY

Presented by Ontario, Yates &
Seneca County SWCDs



This in-field technical workshop using active conservation project sites will be led by senior level SWCD technicians from Ontario, Yates and Seneca Counties. Training will be directed to beginning and intermediate SWCD field technicians in all aspects of planning, designing, and installing erosion control and upland water management best management practices on agricultural lands. The projects will focus on the core erosion control BMPs including water and sediment control basins, grassed waterways, terraces, diversions, and underground outlets. This class will be geared towards SWCD employees who have a desire to take a hands-on approach to getting conservation on the ground.

NYSCDEA funding for support of meals and travel is pending.

Space is extremely limited and preference will be given to SWCD employees actively designing and planning Ag BMPs



To apply for the training, please scan the QR code or go to:

<https://forms.gle/MSCovU5GNuLdFD5Z7>



Photo Album



Alaina Robarge, Ontario
County SWCD.



Madison County SWCD's Manager Steve
Lorraine at the barby.



Gilbraltar Farm was experiencing equipment and sheep movement restrictions from mud to access their hilltop pastures, so they worked with the Madison SWCD to install and upgrade 300 feet of an old logging road. The project consisted of excavation, installation of geotextile fabric under 12 inches of a bank-run gravel base with a 4" crusher-run top cover. A grass-lined channel carries moisture away from installed water bars leading to a 12" HDPE culvert pipe which drains away from road to an existing pasture. Already tested, the project has brought many smiles to the landowners. Troy Bishopp, Madison County SWCD.



Photo Album



Zip ties: the new duct tape.
Woah...did I just date myself with a MacGyver reference? When disaster struck during the May lake monitoring rotation, Hamilton County SWCD's Katie WhitKovits was spot on with her repair job.

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.



While in Wyoming County, the CDEA board enjoyed a fabulous dinner at the Amber Lantern Brewing Company, 44 N Main St, Warsaw. Menu favorites included Carolina gold jumbo chicken wings, fried dilled pickles, the Amber club, and Harvest salad.

Annual NYS CDEA Fish On Challenge

The NYSCDEA is sponsoring a fishing challenge to all 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.

Submission form [HERE](#) for the Fish On Challenge

There are Seven Categories and prizes in each: *New* Saltwater Fish

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:

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, 2024 – February 28, 2025*

Examples for pictures:



Winners of all categories will be announced at the 2025 WQS Banquet.

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

If you have any questions, comments or if you are interested in registering, contact Katie WhitKovits at: Fishcdea@gmail.com.



**New York Association of Conservation Districts
c/o Steuben County SWCD
415 W. Morris Street
Bath, NY 14810**

June 21, 2024

Dear Directors:

It is so hard to believe that summer is here, and everyone is so busy working on outdoor projects from stream restoration, manure pits, AEM projects, tree planting, and so much more. As summer is moving forward so are the preparations for the 2024 NCF Envirothon New York and the October 2024 NYACD Annual meeting.

2024 NYACD Annual Meeting: Is scheduled for Monday, October 21 & Tuesday, October 22, 2024, at the Hamton Inn, Penn Yan, NY. I have been busy reaching out to NRCS, Farm Bureau, Agriculture & Markets, NYS Archives, and others for potential training sessions. I have secured two sessions and working with folks on four more. We have a Yates County SWCD tour planned for Monday afternoon. Things are moving along as expected for this time of year.

NYACD By-Laws & Policies: We are reviewing and working on the NYACD By-Laws and Policies to update them and make a few changes. The By-Law changes will be provided at the NYACD annual meeting for your review and vote.

Senate Bill #S7854: I heard back from Luke at Senator May & Hinchey's office, and he is researching this bill to see if this would affect SWCD's in any way. They have had a few staff changes, so he has been a bit busy getting things together to be able to review this bill. Once Luke has had time to research the bill fully, he will reach out to me for discussion. I will keep you updated and informed.

Monthly meetings: Please remember that NYACD hosts monthly meetings on the fourth Wednesday of each month by Zoom. If you would like to join us, please let us know and I will forward you the Zoom link.

NYS Envirothon: Once again the NYS Envirothon Committee did another excellent job preparing and pulling off another successful event. The Mount Academy, Ulster County SWCD took first place and will represent New York at the 2024 NCF Envirothon which will be held at Hobart & William Smith Colleges, Geneva, NY on Sunday, July 28th - Saturday, August 3rd, 2024.

2024 NCF Envirothon: The New York Envirothon Committee is working hard to make this the best event it can be. We have prepared and are still doing last-minute things before we host the event. The committee has been working hard to put everything in place by Sunday, July 28th.

YOU, your staff, your family, and friends are needed because we presently only have forty-five (45) volunteers. This is a weeklong event and we need volunteers to pull this off. We need oral presentation judges, team buddies, trail guides, timekeepers, bus monitors, hosts, runners, test collectors, folks to help setup and take down at the training testing sites, as well as folks working with our activity's coordinator during all the fun activities. If you have some, half a day, full day, a couple of days or the whole week where you could help us out, we would so very much appreciate it.

As you all know this is quite an honor and responsibility for New York to host this event, so hopefully we will see you there at the opening, during the week, or travel to Niagara Falls with us, or attend the awards banquet at the end of the week.

Continued on page 25.

If you would like to have a NYACD Board member join one of your monthly board meetings, please reach out to any one of us and we will be happy to attend.

Have a wonderful week and if you have any questions or need information, please contact me at 607-965-6316.

Sincerely, *Blanche* Mrs. Blanche L. Hurlbutt, NYACD Executive Director



CDEA News needs YOUR news!

Email your stories, photos, save the dates,
and fun moments
to caitlin@hamcoswcd.org

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

Visit www.nyscdea.com for newsletter back issues



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