

2026 CONSERVATION SKILLS WORKSHOP

The 2026 Conservation Skills Workshop will be held October 5th – 8th in Auburn, NY at the Hilton Garden Inn Auburn (note change in location). Included in this packet you will find the 2026 Conservation Skills Workshop registration information, class descriptions and class schedule.

This year we have a number of classes that cover multiple days. Please read each class description carefully and be aware that classes will overlap. All classes run from Monday to Thursday. In addition, **classes will start at 10:00 am on Monday morning. Classes start at 8:30 on Tuesday – Thursday.**

This year's registration will be waived for SWCD Employees; outside registration rate is \$50 per person.

Registration forms will be accepted electronically for 2026; however, payments must still be mailed to the address below. Registrations are due no later than September 4th, 2026.

****LATE REGISTRATIONS WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED****

Each registrant will be responsible for booking and paying for their accommodations.

[Click here to fill out registration form](https://forms.gle/C7JWrmQeDgE5EAR77)
<https://forms.gle/C7JWrmQeDgE5EAR77>

MAKE CHECKS PAYABLE TO: NYSCDEA
PLEASE PUT ATTENDEE NAMES ON MEMO LINE OF
CHECK MAIL CHECKS TO: FULTON COUNTY SWCD
113 HALES MILLS ROAD EXT
JOHNSTOWN, NY 12095
C/O MIKAELA PERHAM

Questions?

- Classes or Registration – Tom Eskildsen at Yates County SWCD – (315) 536-5188 or tom@ycsoilwater.com
- Payment – CDEA Treasurer Mikaela Perham at Fulton County SWCD – (518)762-0077 or fultonswcd@gmail.com

DIRECTIONS: Classes will be held at the Hilton Garden Inn Auburn (unless otherwise noted in the class description) 74 State Street, Auburn, NY 13021. Please read the class description for location information. Further information on location may be provided by class coordinator at a later date.

DINING: All meals for the workshop are the responsibility of the registrant.

Lodging: When booking rooms on your own it is recommended to book directly with the hotel and not with a third-party website (Hotels.com; Expedia; Booking.com.....). For a government rate, registrants may need to bring proper identification, proof of employment, and tax-exempt certificate.

1. Hilton Garden Inn – 74 State Street, Auburn – (315)-252-5511 – Block of 25 rooms available for each night on a first come, first served basis. Rooms must be booked by August 21st!
 - Per Diem link (government rate employees) - <https://group.hiltongardeninn.com/k3v09t>
Group Code/Special Rate Code: 918
 - Non-Per Diem link (non-government rates) - <https://group.hiltongardeninn.com/aqflca>
Group Code/Special Rate Code: 91N
2. Holiday Inn – Auburn – 75 North Street, Auburn – (315)-253-4531 – Block of 25 rooms available for each night on a first come, first served basis. Rooms must be booked by September 5th.
 - Booking Link – <https://www.ihg.com/redirect?path=rates&brandCode=HI®ionCode=1&localeCode=en&checkInMonthYear=092026&checkInDate=5&checkOutDate=8&checkOutMonthYear=092026&hotelCode=SYRAU&GPC=SOU&numberOfAdults=1&numberOfRooms=1&adjustMonth=false&showApp=true&monthIndex=00>
3. Inn at the Finger Lakes – 12 Seminary Ave, Auburn – (315)-253-5000
4. The Cayuga Inn at the Finger Lakes – 37 William Street, Auburn – (315)-252-7567
5. Other lodging and hotels exist in Auburn & surrounding areas as needed.

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Please remember, 1) you are visiting these field sites as part of the 2026 Conservation Skills Workshop for educational purposes, 2) these sites are open to you as a courtesy to help accommodate your training needs, and 3) by participating in this training you agree to utilize information for training purposes only and to keep all information confidential.

Course List

1. Four-Day AEM Tier 3A Planning Training

October 5th – 8th all day

LIMIT: Min – 6 Max – 30

CLASS & FIELD

Instructors: Brendan Jordan, Gideon Frisbee, Chastity Miller, Ron Bush, Greg Albrecht – NYS SWCC; Kirsten Workman, Jason Oliver – Cornell ProDairy

*** Please note this class runs the full week!**

Description: During this four-day course, participants will gain hands-on experience and instruction with whole farm AEM Tier 2 assessment and Tier 3A conservation planning for farmstead, cropland, and pasture land uses. Participants will form small groups and work together with peers and instructors to develop Tier 3A conservation plans for a nearby farm over the course of the week, so it's important to register for all four days. On the final day, teams will present their plans for discussion among classmates and instructors. This course will be helpful for those starting to work with farmers on AEM conservation planning and interested in building their planning skills....and includes plenty of opportunity for fun and networking with fellow planners along the way! Time will be shared between the classroom and the farm, so be prepared for seasonal weather (boots, raingear, sunscreen, water, etc.) each day.

CCA CEUs: (Day 1): 1 SW, 1 NM, .5 CM, .5 PD / (Day 2): 2 SW, 1 NM, .5 CM, .5 PD / (Day 3): 2 SW, 1 NM, .5 CM, .5 PD / (Day 4): 2 SW, 1 NM, .5 CM, .5 PD

2. Basic Tree ID

October 5th 10 am to 4:30 pm

LIMIT: Min – 10 Max – 35

CLASS & FIELD

Instructors: Allison Brusa – Field Forester, SUNY ESF ADK Forest Properties; David DuBois – Director of Stewardship, Baltimore Woods Nature Center

Description: This course will be held at Baltimore Woods Nature Center (4007 Bishop Hill Rd, Marcellus, NY 13108) and consists of both classroom and field training to build core skills used in identifying common northeastern tree species. The classroom portion will cover basic tree identification and key diagnostic features, as well as important invasive species found in NYS forests. The field session will reinforce identification techniques in a forest setting and entail viewing several hardwood and softwood species, as well shrubs and herbaceous plants along the trails located at the facility. Habitat, practical uses and soil preferences will also be discussed for various trees in the field. Participants should leave with an understanding of the common tree species visible in New York State, and a familiarity with the techniques used to identify them.

Please be prepared to be outside in seasonal weather (boots, raingear, water, etc.) and students should plan to bring a lunch.

CCA CEUs: 1 SW, 1 CM, 1 PM

3. Streams 201

October 5th 10 am to 4:30 pm

October 6th 8:30 am to 4:30 pm

LIMIT: Min – 5 Max – 30

CLASS & FIELD

Instructors: Lydia Brinkley, Upper Susquehanna Coalition; Connor Hubbard, Tioga SWCD; Angel Hinickle, Tompkins SWCD; Peter Nichols, Schoharie SWCD

***Please note this class runs October 5th and 6th!**

Class location – Locke Fire Hall, 1066 NY-38, Locke, NY

Description: This workshop introduces concepts of stream restoration using natural channel design techniques. Participants will work in small groups in the field to assess existing stream and geomorphic conditions to develop reference reach design parameters. In the classroom, groups will apply morphological design parameters to create a case study stream design for channel dimension, pattern, and profile. Design products include stream channel layouts, typical cross-sections, longitudinal profiles, and basic hydraulic and sediment transport calculations. Other topics include in-stream structures, design specifications, and construction. There will be in-field portions of this training to off-site locations; please bring appropriate field gear (waders) for taking measurements in and around streams. If possible, attendees should also bring a laptop to experience data entry and analysis.

****This is an advanced-level course for conservation district staff who completed last year's Streams 101 course at Conservation Skills Workshop or have been engaged with stream data collection.**

CCA CEUs: (Day 1): 2 SW / (Day 2): 3 SW

4. Climate Resilient Farming Project Tour

October 5th 10 am to 4:30 pm

LIMIT: Min – 5 Max – 40

CLASS & FIELD

Instructors: Danielle Singer – Tioga County SWCD; Jason Cuddeback – Cayuga County SWCD; Ian Priestly – Wayne County SWCD

Description: Hit the road for a full-day field class featuring guided tours of Climate Resilient Farming (CRF) Grant Program projects across all four tracks: Track 1 Livestock Management, Track 2 Adaptation and Resiliency, Track 3 Healthy Soils NY, and Track 4 Agricultural Forest Management. Participants will visit four farm sites to see example projects firsthand and discuss additional practices eligible for funding. The training focuses on planning, troubleshooting, communication with contractors and landowners, and practical lessons learned. Attendees should come prepared to walk farm sites in day-of weather conditions, share how their county has utilized CRF funding, and participate in discussions about project opportunities under each track.

CCA CEUs: 1 SW, 1 NM, 1 CM

5. Construction Site Inspections & SWPPPs

October 6th 8:30 am to 4:30 pm

LIMIT: Min – 10 Max – 25

CLASS & FIELD

Instructors: Jessica Verrigni – Schuyler County SWCD

Description: This class is intended to give attendees a general understanding of the NYS SPDES General Permit for Construction Activity and how to conduct an inspection of a permitted construction site. In the morning students will learn about the SPDES General Permit and how to read a Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP). In the afternoon, students will travel to an active construction site and learn how to conduct an inspection. Students will need to bring a hard hat and safety vest. This will be outside rain or shine so bring appropriate gear for outdoor field work.

Please note: Transportation to the construction site will not be provided. Students will be expected to carpool to the construction site which will be up to 45 minutes from classroom location. Course time reflects this travel time.

7 Professional Development Hours for NYSE&SCCP and CPESC

CCA CEUs: 2 SW

6. Heavy Use Area Protection

October 6th 8:30 am to 4:30 pm

LIMIT: Min – 5 Max – 50

CLASS & FIELD

Instructors: Tim Clark, Chastity Miller – NYS SWCC

Description: Heavy Use Areas are integral parts of many farm operations. This course will cover planning and siting constraints, managing offsite runoff, making manure scraping easy, and collecting rainwater. Uncovered HUAs should be treated with a vegetated treatment area, so preliminary VTA sizing and siting will also be covered. (Participants should note that final design signoff of VTAs requires a licensed engineer.) Course includes a field visit so dress accordingly.

This course also includes a take-home design project. Successful completion of the project earns the student basic Conservation Approval Authority for Heavy Use Areas.

CCA CEUs: 2 SW, 1 NM

7. Agroforestry: Nut Orchards & Conservation

October 6th 8:30 am to 4:30 pm

LIMIT: Min – 10 Max – 40

CLASS & FIELD

Instructors: Greg Albrecht – AEM Programs Coordinator / SWCC; Maren Stoddard – SWCC Data & Environmental Modeling Specialist / Forester; Aaron Wightman – Dark Forest Farm; Jeff Zarnowski – Z' Nutty Ridge

Description: This course will explore the ins and outs of growing tree nuts (and sap), covering transitioning farmland to tree nuts, production, processing, and conservation by touring two farms. Aaron Wightman and Sara Reynolds have been transitioning hay fields and forests for the last two years on their recently acquired farm to tree nuts (e.g., hazelnuts, chestnuts), trees for sap (sugaring), habitat, and a sense of place. Jeff and Dawn Zarnowski have been evolving their tree nut farm (e.g., walnuts, chestnuts, hazelnuts and more), nursery, and processing facility for over 30 years (<https://znutty.com/>). We'll learn about their goals, approaches, management, challenges, and conservation efforts as we tour both farms and gain familiarity with native nut orchards and other agroforestry pursuits.

The farms are about 75 minutes south of Auburn and the class will be entirely on-farm, so come prepared for seasonal weather (boots, raingear, sunscreen, water, etc.). The class will include a lunch break on your own in nearby Marathon, NY, which has a pizza joint, a café, a grocery store deli, and a gas station.

CCA CEUs: 2 SW, 2 CM

8. Subsurface Drainage

October 7th 8:30 am to 4:30 pm

LIMIT: Min – 5 Max – 25

CLASS & FIELD

Instructors: Tom Eskildsen, Yates County SWCD; Corey Nellis, Montgomery County SWCD

Description: This class is designed as an introductory level course to teach about aspects of subsurface drainage. The class will cover how to design subsurface drainage systems including depth, spacing, and sizing. The class will visit two different field sites followed by survey and design of a subsurface drainage system. Various types and usage of pipe materials will also be taught. This class includes outdoor site visits so please bring all appropriate outdoor gear including raingear & boots. Knowledge of general surveying and drafting will be helpful.

CCA CEUs: 3 SW

9. Wilderness First Aid Training

October 7th 8:30 am to 4:30 pm

October 8th 8:30 am to 4:30 pm

LIMIT: Min – 10 Max – 20

CLASS & FIELD

Instructors: Clint McCarthy – Stone Cottage Farm LLC

***Please note this class runs October 7th and 8th!**

Description: Wilderness First Aid is a 2-day, 16 hour long course that focuses on basic skills of response and assessment, musculoskeletal injuries, environmental emergencies, survival skills, soft tissue injuries and medical emergencies. This course will be instructed by Clint McCarthy of Stone Cottage Farms, LLC, a certified wilderness first responder, who can provide hands on expertise as participants navigate this course in the classroom and field setting. All participants that fulfill the 16-hour requirement will receive a nationally recognized 2-year SOLO certificate.

CCA CEUs: (Day 1): 1 PD (Day 2): 1 PD

10. Silvopasture

October 7th 8:30 am to 4:30 pm

LIMIT: Min – 15 Max – 35

CLASS & FIELD

Instructors: Erica Frenay – Shelterbelt Farm and Cornell Small Farms Program; Johnathan Bates, Brett Chedzoy – Cornell Cooperative Extension; Harrison Green – Propagate Ag

****Location:**** Shelterbelt Farm, 200 Creamery Road, Brooktondale, NY 14817

Description: Join us for a hands-on Conservation Skills Workshop at Shelterbelt Farm to explore the planning, design, and establishment of Silvopasture through strategic tree and shrub additions to existing grazing systems. This full-day workshop combines classroom discussion with field demonstrations, giving participants practical experience in developing productive, resilient agroforestry systems.

Hosted by Shelterbelt Farm, the day begins with the inspiring story of the farm's evolution—from holistic farm management and rotational grazing to the successful integration of Silvopasture. Participants will learn how management goals, site conditions, and long-term planning shape successful conservation practices.

Through guided instruction and field activities, attendees will learn how to evaluate a site, identify opportunities and constraints, develop a Silvopasture planting plan, and lay out new planting areas. The afternoon features hands-on tree planting followed by a tour of an established Silvopasture system, where participants will discuss lessons learned, management challenges, and the benefits realized over time.

Whether you are a farmer, landowner, conservation professional, or simply interested in agroforestry, this workshop will provide practical skills and real-world examples to help you incorporate trees into working pasture systems.

****Please bring a bagged lunch as there are limited lunch options located near the farm****

Please come prepared to be outside and working in seasonal weather (boots, raingear, sunscreen, bug repellant, water, long pants, work gloves, closed toe shoes, etc.). A clipboard for field notes may be helpful.

CCA CEUs: 1 SW, 1 NM, 2 CM

11. Pond Ecology

October 8th 8:30 am to 12:00 pm

LIMIT: Min – 5 Max – 30

CLASS & FIELD

Instructors: Meredith Holgerson, Department of Ecology & Biology, Cornell University

Description: Do you field questions from the public about Pond Ecology? Do they sound like this: Why is my pond full of water weeds? What is this plant? Why does my pond have algal blooms? Why did my fish die? What type of fish should I stock in my pond? If so, this class might be for you! You will learn about common aquatic plants and their identification, fish identification and stocking recommendations, basic ecology of a pond, and more. This will be a combination of in-class lecture and field visits to ponds at Musgrave Research Farm in Aurora, NY. You will take away skills to be better equipped to provide guidance to residents about their backyard pond ecology. We recommend boots to walk around pond edges and rain gear in case of inclement weather-- please dress appropriately for being outside! Bring your own lunch and water. There is no refrigeration or microwave.

CCA CEUs: 1 SW, .5 NM, 1 PD

12. Urban Agriculture

October 8th 8:30 am to 4:30 pm

LIMIT: Min – 10 Max – 25

CLASS & FIELD

Instructors: Chastity Miller – NYS SWCC; Chris Travis – Conservation District Specialist, EIT, Skaneateles Lake Watershed Ag Program; Don Stribick – Erie County SWCD

Description: This class will focus on Urban Agriculture. We will talk about the different types of urban operations and how to assist them! We will review the new Tier 1 and 2 for Urban Agriculture in the class in the morning and will visit to operations in the afternoon. We will also talk about how to implement projects on these types of operations utilizing the BMP Systems Guide and NYS AG and Markets cost share programs.

Sites: Brady Farm, 150 Ford Ave, Syracuse, NY 13207 / Urban Delights, 112-14 Bellevue Ave, Syracuse, NY 13202

CCA CEUs: 1 SW, 1 NM, 1 CM, 1 PD

13. AEM Tier 3a Forest Conservation

October 8th 8:30 am to 4:30 pm

LIMIT: Min – 10 Max – 35

CLASS & FIELD

Instructors: Joe Chairvolotti – District Manager, Oswego County SWCD; Maren Stoddard – SWCC Data & Environmental Modeling Specialist / Forester

Description: This one-day course will consist of both classroom and field training, and provides an overview of the AEM Tier process specific to forestry, covering the following:

1. An overview of AEM and how it relates to forest management on farms;
2. Preparation of Tier 1 and Tier 2 inventory and assessments for farms with forestland;
3. A discussion of Tier 3 BMP system planning to address resource concerns and available materials (i.e. Tier 3A Forest Conservation Planning template, Forest Conservation Sample Tier 3A Plan, various environmental resource mappers, etc.);
4. BMP examples in the classroom;
5. A discussion of potential or existing forestry BMP options to address resource concerns identified at the field site; and
6. A planning exercise to identify appropriate BMPs on-site.

Course participants will learn about identifying resource concerns and then planning practices associated with landings, skid trails, forest trails, stream crossings, sensitive areas for setbacks/buffers, and post-harvest restoration. District participants are encouraged to review the AEM forest management materials listed above within the AEM folder on the SWCC SharePoint site (<https://nysemail.sharepoint.com/sites/Agriculture/SWCC/SitePages/AEM.aspx>) as well as the NYS Forestry BMP Field Guide

(https://www.dec.ny.gov/docs/lands_forests_pdf/forestrybmp.pdf) in advance of the course.

Prior forestry BMP knowledge is not necessary for this course. Please be prepared to be outside in seasonal weather (boots, rain gear, water, etc.). The class will include a lunch break on your own and is within 10 minutes of a Byrne Dairy and other sandwich or fast-food options in the City of Fulton. The site is approximately 10-15 minutes from the classroom (Volney Town Hall).

CCA CEUs: 2 SW, 1 NM, 1 CM

2026 Conservation Skills Workshop

	Monday, Oct 5th Class Time 10:00 – 4:30	Tuesday, Oct 6th Class Time 8:30 – 4:30	Wednesday, Oct 7th Class Time 8:30 – 4:30	Thursday, Oct 8th Class Time 8:30 – 4:30
10:00 – 12:00 (Monday only) 8:30 – 12:00 Tues - Thurs	(1) AEM Tier 3 (2) Basic Tree ID (3) Streams 201 (4) CRF Project Tour	(1) AEM Tier 3 (3) Streams 201 (5) Construction Site Inspection & SWPPP (6) Heavy Use Area Protection (7) Agroforestry	(1) AEM Tier 3 (8) Subsurface Drainage (9) Wilderness First Aid Training (10) Silvopasture	(1) AEM Tier 3 (9) Wilderness First Aid Training (11) Pond Ecology (12) Urban Agriculture (13) AEM Tier 3 Forest Conservation
1:00 - 4:30 PM	(1) AEM Tier 3 (2) Basic Tree ID (3) Streams 201 (4) CRF Project Tour	(1) AEM Tier 3 (3) Streams 201 (5) Construction Site Inspection & SWPPP (6) Heavy Use Area Protection (7) Agroforestry	(1) AEM Tier 3 (8) Subsurface Drainage (9) Wilderness First Aid Training (10) Silvopasture	(1) AEM Tier 3 (9) Wilderness First Aid Training (11) Pond Ecology (12) Urban Agriculture (13) AEM Tier 3 Forest Conservation

**** Classes note ** – AEM Tier 3 is all week; Streams 201 is Monday & Tuesday; Wilderness First Aid is Wednesday and Thursday. All three classes require registrants to attend the full session covering multiple days.**

Note: Some of these courses have time frames that overlap. If you wish to take more than one course during the week, please check to make sure that your choices do ***not*** overlap.

Field trips and off-site classroom locations will require transportation – be prepared to drive or carpool.

Be prepared for unpredictable fall weather.

Off-site locations will be provided prior to the beginning of the session.