



Soil and Water Conservation News

United We Stand



Tompkins County Soil and Water Conservation District
1771 Hanshaw Road • Ithaca • New York • 14850
Phone 607-257-2340 FAX 607-257-7896

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www.tcswcd.org

January 2010

Tree Sale Order Form & Descriptions included in this issue!

ATTENTION!

We have changed the location of our tree sale pick up.

IT WILL BE AT OUR OFFICE 1771 HANSHAW RD. THE BLUE BARN IN BACK OF BUILDING. IT IS ACROSS THE ROAD FROM GUTHRIE CLINIC AND NEXT DOOR TO TAYLOR RENTAL.

**For any questions regarding this change, please call our office at 257-2340.
We will not be located at 4-H Acres this year.**

Update On State Funding:

By: Craig Schutt, District Manager

When I last reported on the state funding situation, in particular the NYS Environmental Protection Fund (EPF) was very much in question. The Governor had done a sweep of the EPF and money was not being put back to meet the obligations promised to agencies and municipalities. Finally in mid to late summer some Real Estate Tax (RET) dollars (RET funds are supposed to be dedicated to fund the EPF) were once again deposited into the EPF and payments began to trickle out. District's base funding state wide was paid and gradually other commitments were honored. Finally, in November an executed contract and critical funding for the important Stream Restoration/Aquifer Protection Project in Caroline arrived. To that end, we owe a big thank you to Senator James Seward and his staff. Without their tireless efforts on our and Caroline's behalf it would be impossible to move the project forward, as another key supporter was on the verge of pulling its committed contribution, due to what they perceived to be a lack of state support. Moving forward the next hurdle will be timing of reimbursement of the remainder of the state funds. The funds received only represents 25% of the total grant funds (\$220,000) and if some arrangement isn't in place to insure future reimbursements in a timely manner it could potentially impact the project.

Contractors, businesses providing materials and supplies will all need to be paid and neither the District nor the Town of

Caroline have resources to pay those bills and wait indefinitely for the state to live up to its contracted obligations.

Contractors and businesses cannot be expected to wait months for payment for services. That's not to say we are not sensitive to the financial problems the state is experiencing and we acknowledge that this situation is impacting everyone that is dependent on state funding.

Other good news is that the District finally received (early December) executed contracts and 25% of the state funds for the MS4 Stormwater grants, grants that go back as far 2004. At least now the designated MS4 municipalities can finally be reimbursed for a fraction of the stormwater work they have already completed. With the current fiscal condition timing for future payments is unpredictable. To Senator George Winner, Jr. and his staff we owe a thank you. His office worked on our and the municipalities behalf to achieve this level of movement on these two contracts (total state funds due \$534,240.00). Again we realize the remainder of the funds will more than likely be slow to be paid, but at least now there is a signed contract from the state.

The District also received one other executed contract (early December) and 25% of the state funds for a stream project on Boyer Creek in the Town of Caroline. This project will be in conjunction with a culvert replacement and will be used for stream stabilization of badly eroding stream banks downstream from the culvert.

Assemblywoman Barbara Lifton Secures LiDAR Funding

By: Craig Schutt, District Manager

The District, on behalf of Tompkins County, would like to thank Assemblywoman Barbara Lifton for securing \$15,000 in state funding for the County LiDAR Acquisition project. LiDAR (Light Detection and Ranging) data is collected by a sophisticated flyover and many laser beam returns from the ground which later translates into elevations and models. It is a highly technological data set utilized to develop 2 foot contour lines across the landscape, a higher resolution digital elevation model, generate percent slope data, 3D building footprints, develop hydrological and transportation break lines and other practical applications. The LiDAR data will update GIS databases and improve/correct errors in older databases. The data is detailed enough that it can be used with reduced, or in some instances in place of, in the field surveying for stormwater impact assessments, reducing costs to smaller developers, and assisting engineering and other municipal staff in assessing site conditions. It will also be used to update the old and obsolete Tompkins County flood maps. Recently the District in collaboration with the County Information Technologies Services signed a contract on behalf of the county and several municipalities, with PAR Government Systems Corporation to process the previously obtained raw data into the more useable products described above.

To this end there have been many contributors and supporters. Previously the District received a grant through FL-LOWPA (Finger Lakes-Lake Ontario Watershed Alliance) with additional funding from the above referenced Assemblywoman Lifton, and contributions from the Towns of Ithaca and Caroline and additional District funding combined to pay for the data acquisition. County funds were provided for the crucial quality assurance/quality control of the data. Crucial because without this, the data was not certified accurate and reliable, and this step had been completed before NYS DEC would begin the flood mapping, something that is now scheduled for 2010. The enhancements and useable products are now underway thanks to contributions from the City of Ithaca and the Towns of Dryden and Ithaca. PAR plans to have these done early in 2010 at which time the data will be available countywide.

The **Southern Tier Regional Envirothon** will be here before you know it, so be prepared! The date is set for April 29, 2010. If your high school would like to put together a team for competition, please contact Seth Dennis at the TCSWCD office ASAP. Teams that participated last year, make sure to get your registration forms turned in before April 1st. For more information about the Envirothon program visit www.nysenvirothon.net or www.envirothon.org. If you would like to donate to this program visit www.nyenviroed.org.

Fish Stocking

By: Jon Negley, Conservation Technician

Every year around late March to early April the Tompkins SWCD helps the NYS DEC stock local creeks with thousands of Brown Trout. This is a put and take fishery which means that most of the fish that are stocked each year get fished out by local and regional fishermen. In order to keep this practice going, volunteers are needed to distribute hatchery raised fish up and down the stream from various points that the stocking truck will stop at. If you are interested in helping with the effort please contact the office at 257-2340. We will give you some information about the events along with specific dates and locations as the time gets closer.



What is Continuous CRP?

The Continuous Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) allows participants to voluntarily enroll acreage in conservation practices that will reduce soil erosion, improve water and soil quality and provide wildlife habitat and food sources. Eligible participants enter into 10- to 15-year contracts in return for receiving annual rental and maintenance payments. Incentive and cost share payments for installing practices are also available. To be eligible, participants and acreage must meet certain requirements. If eligibility requirements are met, the FSA will accept enrollments of acreage into Continuous CRP. Landowners may enroll in the program at any time during the year. For more information on CRP enrollments in Tompkins County, please contact the USDA-FSA county office staff at:

USDA-FSA
First Niagara Building
1 North Main Street
Cortland, NY 13045
(607) 753-0851 ext. 2

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New Year's Resolution: Trying Cover Crops

By: Josh Hornesky, Soil Conservationist, NRCS

Are you looking for a New Year's resolution? Forget about giving up eating cookies or giving up a bad habit as we all seem to obey our resolutions for a month or two, and then go back to our same old ways. Instead, why not think about trying something new. Why not think about cover crops for the 2010 crop season? As many of you have already harvested, or, are just finishing up harvesting your 2009 crops it's never too early to think about next year's growing season. With diesel, fertilizer, and other petroleum based products increasing in price as of late it may be time to think about planting cover crops to help reduce some of those costs.

Cover crops in the past few years have started to become a more and more integral part of many conventional farms rotation. Organic farms have been using cover crops for a number of years to assist them in being certified organic compliant. Cover crops offer a wide variety of benefits to farms that in many cases "pay for themselves". These encompass benefits to the soil including, increasing soil organic matter and structure, soil microbial activity, and helping reduce soil erosion. Just protecting that precious top soil from eroding off fields with cover crops should be a huge reason to try using cover crops. In some cases to form just one inch of topsoil can take between 500-1000 years!

Cover crops can also help potentially reduce fertilizer costs. Leguminous cover crops have the ability to produce nitrogen. Depending on a number of factors leguminous cover crops can potentially produce 16 to 120 lbs of nitrogen per acre! Other cover crops such as annual rye grass have the ability to scavenge nitrogen and prevent it from leaching out of soil profile.

Certain cover crops have the ability to break through compacted soils. Oilseed radish produces a large tap root that is able to break through plow pan layers. Additionally, it leaves a tremendous amount of biomass on the surface. Buckwheat on the other hand also produces a tremendous biomass and helps in weed suppression, thus helping reduce herbicide and cultivation costs.

Continued...

The New York Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) just recently updated their Cover Crops specifications. Please see the table below that they utilize in helping farms meet the NRCS standard.

Crop	Min. Seeding Rate (lb/acre)	Seeding Depth (inches)	Latest Seeding Dates and Period Protected		
			Winter Cover ¹	Summer Cover	Fall Cover
Ryegrass, Perennial/Annual ²	15	0.25 - 0.5	Sept. 15	NA	Aug. 15
Rye Winter Annual Aroostook (Certified) Common ³	100 100	1.0 - 1.5	Oct. 5 Oct. 1	NA NA	Aug. 15 Aug. 15
Wheat, Winter Annual	100	1.0 - 1.5	Oct. 1	NA	Aug. 15
Oats	98	1.0 - 1.5	Sept. 15	June 15	NA
Sudan/Sorghum Hybrids	50	1.0 - 1.5	NA	June 15	NA
Millet	20	0.5 - 1.0	NA	June 15	NA
Buckwheat	60	0.5 - 1.5	NA	June 15	NA
Red Clover ^{4,5} (perennial used as an annual)	10	0.25 - .50	NA	June 1st	Aug. 15
Hairy Vetch ⁶ (alone or with winter rye or wheat)	30 vetch 70 small grain	1.0 - 1.5	Sept. 15	NA	Aug. 15

Although cover crops have a wide variety of benefits, careful thought must go into selecting the right crop. This must be based on the farms goals and objectives. Certain cover crops do certain things. Some will easily winter kill in New York State, others can play havoc on the crops planted following the cover crop, some cover crops are allelopathic. Planning ahead to achieve the desired goals is a must with cover crops.

If you are interested in cover crops your local NRCS office has conservation programs available that help in offsetting some of the costs associated with planting cover crops. For more information on cover crops and NRCS conservation programs please call your local NRCS office at (607)-257-2737 x 3

TURN MUCK INTO BUCKS

By: Josh Hornesky, Soil Conservationist, NRCS

Tired of getting stuck in that mucky field? Tired of spending time and money tilling, planting, and fertilizing, only to lose a crop to wet weather? If wet fields are getting you down, you have an alternative. Restore that wet field to a profitable wetland. The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is offering both technical and financial assistance to restore wet fields to wetlands, and offering a higher compensation rate for conservation easements placed on these wetlands. There is also a non-easement option that is available for restoring wetlands. You still control access to your land and have the ability to use or lease the property for hunting and quiet enjoyment. Say goodbye to headaches and hello to potential income. Enjoy the return of waterfowl and lots of other wildlife. Wetlands benefit almost all wildlife, including deer, turkey, ducks, and many songbirds. Under the 2008 Farm Bill, NRCS in New York State is being offered more money than ever before to implement the Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP). To learn more about the program and determine if your land is eligible contact your local NRCS office at 607-257-2737 x3.

Agricultural Assessments

By: Jon Negley, Conservation technician

The Tompkins County SWCD is continuing to accept requests for soil group worksheets in conjunction with the 2010 Agricultural Exemption application filed with the Tompkins County Assessment office. All owners of land who meet the eligibility requirements are able to file for this exemption. The following is a general list of requirements that need to be met before an application is accepted by the assessment office:

- Land generally must consist of **seven or more acres** that were **used in the preceding two years** for the production for sale crops of crops, livestock, or livestock products.
- The annual gross sales of agricultural products generally must average **\$10,000** or more for the preceding two years. If an agricultural enterprise is less than seven acres, it may qualify if average annual gross sales equal **\$50,000** or more. (Rented land under a 5 year agreement with other farmland or lands affected by a natural disaster and adverse weather conditions may not have to satisfy this requirement).

Horse boarding operations must meet the following requirements:

- At least seven acres supporting the commercial horse boarding operation
- Operation boards at least 10 horses regardless of its land holdings
- The operation receives \$10,000 or more in gross receipts annually in the preceding two years from fees generated through the boarding of horses and/or through the production for sale of crops, livestock, and livestock products

Once it is determined that you qualify for an agricultural exemption the first step will be to call the Tompkins County SWCD office and request a Soil Group Worksheet. We will then prepare a worksheet and associated map that will delineate your soil types, woodlands and any land that is not eligible (i.e. – residences and yards). This will be completed at a fee of \$35.00 for new worksheets and \$25.00 for any changes to an existing worksheet. This will then be attached to your application form RP-305 or RP-305-r which is filed with the Tompkins County Assessment office. The deadline for submission of this form is April 1, 2010 so please get your requests for Soil Group Worksheets in earlier than this date.

For more information on this program and to determine whether you are eligible for this exemption please visit <http://www.orps.state.ny.us/pamphlet/exempt/agassess.htm> or call the Tompkins County assessment office at 607-274-5517.

Working Together to Protect our Streams

By: Jon Negley, Conservation Technician

In an economic recession, when belts are being tightened and programs are being cut, the TCSWCD staff is working collaboratively with other agencies to reduce costs while still providing quality services to the people of Tompkins County. One example of this is a project that we worked on this past fall along Jackson Creek in Newfield. The Tompkins County Highway Department asked us to design some stream stabilizing structures in the creek channel to protect their bridge on Vankirk Road from undercutting. In return they offered services and equipment to work further downstream where the creek was threatening a house and causing severe erosion along a high bank. As a result of this partnership the only "out of pocket" expense was for rock needed in the structures. The District was able to secure funding for this expense through the Upper Susquehanna Coalition, so there was no expenditure made by the County or the District.

With a small grant and a willingness to work together a house was protected, sediment pollution in the stream was reduced and a bridge was stabilized. These types of collaborations are what is needed in the economic recession we are facing and the District is well positioned to foster this type of working relationship. Protecting infrastructure from the streams (and vice versa) in this county can be an expensive and seemingly impossible task, but a collaborative effort from all of the stakeholders helps reduce the burden and results in a better end product. We thank everyone who has helped us work to improve our streams this year and we look forward to doing even more in 2010.



NYSDEC Endorsed 4-Hour Erosion and Sediment Control (E&SC) Training

Darrel C. Sturges Resource Conservation Specialist, CPESC

Date: February 26, 2010
 Time: 9:30am—2:30pm
 Location: Brooktondale Fire Station
 786 Valley Road
 Brooktondale, NY 14886
 Last Day to Sign Up: February 22, 2010
 Cost: \$95.00/person

Lunch and Snacks will be provided at each training. Pre-payment is required by the last day to sign up. The SWCD accepts checks and credit cards. A **trainee form** must be filled out when you send in your payment. To get a copy of the trainee form, contact me at 607-257-2340 or at darrelsturges@tcsxcd.org.

Who Needs to Take the Course?

Under the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation's Stormwater Permit GP-0-08-001, all developers, contractors and subcontractors must identify at least one trained individual from their company that will be responsible for implementation of the SWPPP, and have at least one trained individual on site on a daily basis when soil disturbance activities are being performed. Also, developers must have a qualified inspector conduct regular site inspections in accordance with GP-0-08-001.

Information From the NYSDEC

By May 1, 2010, Trained Individuals (TIs) and certain Qualified Inspectors (QIs) will be required to complete 4 hours of erosion and sediment control (E&SC) training to demonstrate that each TI or QI is knowledgeable in the principles and practices of ESC. Training is required every 3 years after the initial 4-hour training. An owner or operator of construction sites in New York State shall have a QI conduct specific site inspections. Certain QIs who work on these sites - individuals working under direct supervision of a licensed Professional Engineer or licensed Landscape Architect of NYS - are required to complete 4 hours of E&SC training under the State Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (SPDES) General Permit (GP) for Stormwater Discharges from Construction Activity (Permit No. GP-0-08-001). TIs need training too. The Construction GP requires that an owner or operator shall have each contractor and subcontractor identify at least one TI as responsible for implementation of the Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP) and be on site on a daily basis when soil disturbance activities are being performed.

Thank you & Good Luck!

By: Seth Dennis. Education Coordinator

The Tompkins County Soil & Water Conservation District would like to say thank you and good luck to Adam Hills, who had been our Grazing Specialist for the past three years. Adam's last day was September 12, and he has returned to his home state of Pennsylvania. There, he is the new District Manager of Tioga County Conservation District, PA. We will miss having Adam's humor, and positive attitude around the office, and especially during tree sale time, where he has won many "Employee of the Month" awards. Best of luck to Adam and his new responsibilities. UPDATE! Tompkins County SWCD's Project Assistant Jake Bengueyfield has been officially promoted as the new Grazing Specialist, and will be taking over the reins from Adam. Welcome aboard Jake, and congrats on the promotion!



Adam Hills helping out at an education event. He always was a fan favorite...

Agricultural Nonpoint Source Abatement and Control Projects

By: Craig Schutt, District Manager

Considering reductions of funding to the program and the overall financial situation of NYS, the District is pleased to announce that it recently received notification of funding for two proposals submitted nearly a year ago for Round 15 of the program. Both farms are regulated CAFO farms and the projects will assist them in meeting compliance with their CAFO permits while reducing potential runoff to nearby waterbodies and ultimately to Cayuga Lake. One project is located in the Fall Creek Watershed and the other is in the Salmon Creek Watershed. Total state funding for the projects combined is \$759,725.00 (total projects costs > \$1 million). District staff are currently submitting Plans of Work for the projects for contract development. Implementation timelines for contracted BMPs (Best Management Practices) will be dependent on funding availability.

We have also been told that there may be a release of another Request for Proposals (RFP) for Round 16 early in 2010. Any farms interested in applying or having District staff discuss that option with you please contact the office as soon as possible. Staff may need to update or begin AEM worksheets whichever is the case to begin the process. AEM participation is a requirement of the program for any farm applying. For more information please contact the District at (607)257-2340 or stop in (1771 Hanshaw Road) and talk with one of the staff.

The Tompkins County SWCD "tire tossing crew" at Tire Collection Day held in Lansing on September 26th, 2009.



Rain Gardens

By: Jon Negley, Conservation Technician

The District has been busy this past summer designing and building its own rain garden at the Hanshaw Road office. We have installed two working gardens already. A third garden is being designed by a student at Cornell working on her senior thesis project. You are welcome to stop by and check out the gardens anytime at 1771 Hanshaw Road. If you are interested in building a rain garden at your own home to capture and filter stormwater runoff, please contact the office and talk with one of our technicians. These are a great way to reduce stormwater pollution and provide habitat for birds, animals and butterflies. The district tree sale is a great place to shop for native trees, shrubs and wildflowers for your garden. Look for our new butterfly packs this year too!



TOWN OF ITHACA SEEKS TO HONOR LOCAL CONSERVATION EFFORTS

The Conservation Board of the Town of Ithaca is seeking nominations for the 2009 Richard B. Fischer Environmental Conservation Award. Anyone can submit nominations. **Deadline is February 28, 2010.** Nominations should be sent to: Conservation Board of the Town of Ithaca, 215 N. Tioga Street, Ithaca, NY 14850. Nominees for the annual award may be individuals or groups, including but not limited to professional, governmental, and commercial entities, that have worked on a project or other activity contributing to the improvement of the Town's natural environment. Eligible activities include physical improvements, environmental education, enhancing environmental awareness, promotion of environmentally-sensitive practices, or effective enforcement of regulations benefiting the environment. Now in its seventh year, this award is named in honor of the late Richard B. Fischer, who, throughout his decades of residence in the Town of Ithaca, undertook by teaching and example to improve the quality of the natural environment within the Town, Tompkins County and the State of New York. For more information, visit the Town's website at www.town.ithaca.ny.us/Fischer1.htm or call 273-1747.

Bigfoot Baler Coming Soon:

By: Craig Schutt, District Manager

Tompkins County SWCD has been working with Lois Levitan, Senior Extension Associate at Cornell University, Cayuga County SWCD and others to bring the Recycling of Agricultural Plastics Program (RAPP) to our region. Lois has been working on the program for several years and through her efforts and others has secured NYS Environmental Protection Funds to purchase several Bigfoot Balers. One of which will be available for local use as a means for farmers to dispose of the plastic used for bale wrap, bunker silo covers, silage bags, twine and bale net as well as the plastic used in horticultural operations, and chemical containers. With the recent passage of the no open burning law in NY this program is more critical than ever. The law specifically bans burning of any plastic products. That in itself is good, because it is well documented that harmful toxins are released into the air when plastics are burned. Farmers increasingly depend on these plastics so this program is intended to provide them an avenue to dispose of those in an environmentally acceptable manner while also recycling them into other products. That's where the Bigfoot Baler fits into the picture.

It is our hope and Lois's that we will have a baler here locally by the spring to begin collecting plastic. The baler sits on and is operated on a trailer so the District can transport it to individual farms or to a common collection site. That is one of the details that are still developing, but it is the District's goal to provide the service in such a way to encourage as many farms to participate as possible. In anticipation of the kick off of the program there are some basic Best Management Practices that farmers need to follow to begin collecting plastic for recycling. There are two BMP sheets, one for Dairy and the other for Horticulture. Those can be viewed at the District's website at www.tcsxcd.org or at <http://environmentalrisk.cornell.edu/AgPlastics>. If for any reason you are unable to view these call our office at (607) 257-2340 and we will provide you with hard copies. More information will be made available as the program moves forward.




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 Ithaca, NY 14850

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WINTER NEWLETTER 2010

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- Jon Negley Conservation Technician

USDA - NRCS

- Patrick Barry District Conservationist
 (Schuyler & Tompkins Counties)
- Lori Beach Civil Engineer Technician (Area III)
- Josh Hornesky Soil Conservationist

*Board meetings are held monthly on the 2nd
 Monday at 12:30 P.M. in the District office. The
 public is always invited.*

Tompkins County Soil & Water Conservation District
 1771 Hanshaw Road
 Ithaca, NY 14850

Phone 607-257-2340 Fax 607-257-7896

www.tcswcd.org

The Tompkins County Soil & Water Conservation District and the Natural Resources Conservation Service prohibit discrimination in all their programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, gender, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, and marital or family status.