



Cortland County Soil and Water Conservation District

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NEWSLETTER

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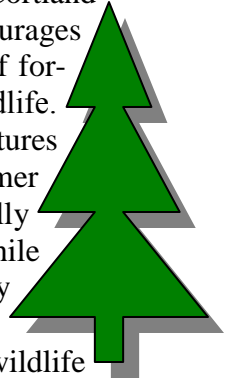
SWCD...established to promote the conservation and wise use of our county's natural resources

Trees: Beautiful and Beneficial

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The benefits of trees are many and varied. The Cortland County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) encourages everyone to plant trees and shrubs and be good stewards of forests' trees. Trees provide benefits to both humans and wildlife. Trees create windbreaks and provide shade. These two features will help keep houses warmer in winter and cooler in summer which will, in turn, provide energy savings. Trees, especially evergreens, make great hedges and can provide privacy while also beautifying a property. Trees also improve air quality by removing carbon dioxide and dust from the air.



Trees provide valuable homes, food, and protection for wildlife. They attract all sorts of wildlife from rabbits to songbirds. Nut trees are very popular with both wildlife and humans. During the autumn when nuts fall to the ground a wide variety of animals will come to harvest them. Rabbits, deer, raccoons, and squirrels gather to eat or store the nuts. The SWCD is selling trees and shrubs once more this year. All information on species available, cost, distribution, and ordering **are included with this newsletter.**

See enclosed SWCD Tree and Shrub Order Form. Pull out insert and order your plant materials today!

Workshops Scheduled

Cortland County SWCD sponsors Rural Landowner Workshops each spring to educate landowners on various conservation topics. Coming up:

Monday, February 28, 2011 "Gas Leases: What to do if Your Lease is Expiring" Cost is free.

Saturday, March 26, 2011 "Bluebirds and Habitat." Cost is \$13.00 and all participants will take home a bluebird nesting box.

Monday, April 25, 2011 "Forest Ecosystems and Management" Cost is free.

Register by calling 756-5991. Watch the paper for more details. If there are other topics you are interested in learning about please let us know. We are always looking for ideas!



Bluebird boxes and kits are sold by SWCD for \$13. For more information contact SWCD at 756-5991.

Save the Date!

AG SUMMIT

February 18, 2011 8:30 am-2:30 pm
Ramada Inn, Cortland

Topics will include: alternative energy, dairy rations during a fiscal crisis, forestry opportunities, and local ag promotion/direct marketing.

Soil Group Worksheets

Landowners filing for an agricultural assessment in 2011 must file applications with their local assessor by March 1st. To complete an application for an agricultural assessment, landowners must have a Soil Group Worksheet (SGW) prepared by the Soil & Water Conservation District (SWCD) for each tax parcel they intend to enroll. Landowners who have previously had an SGW completed for a tax parcel do not need a new one unless the total parcel acreage changed.

Landowners participating in the program for the first time, or those who need a revised SGW, should make an appointment with our office now. The worksheets should be completed as early as possible. All appointments must be made before Friday, February 18th. When calling, the landowner should have the appropriate tax map number, location, and acreage for each parcel. This information can be found on the most recent parcel tax bill. A fee of \$25.00 will be charged for each SGW, new or revised.

Agricultural land does not automatically receive an agricultural assessment. Landowners must apply each year to remain eligible. For more information, contact your local assessor, or Real Property Tax Services at 753-5040. Contact the SWCD to make an appointment for your SGW today at 756-5991.

Spotlight SWCD Programs By Rebecca Hammer-Lester

The Soil & Water Conservation District (SWCD) offers a wide variety of services. These services all aim to preserve and/or improve the quality of our soil and water in Cortland County. We offer programs to benefit both the agricultural and nonagricultural communities.

The agricultural conservation services we offer include soil group worksheets, soil information, and technical assistance. Soil group worksheets are required for agricultural land assessments. The worksheet divides land into agricultural, agricultural woodland, and non-agricultural land by acreage and then provides information on soil types for all agricultural land. The SWCD also offers soil information including maps of soil types and information about the qualities of different soil types for all lands for your assessor.

Agricultural land conservation covers a wide range of programs from prescribed grazing to silage leachate control. These programs all have the aim of making farming economically and environmentally sustainable. Prescribed grazing is a powerful technique used to control the intake of vegetation by grazing animals to prevent overgrazing. One type of prescribed grazing plan is rotational grazing. Rotational grazing is the practice of subdividing a pasture into smaller paddocks and rotating the animals between paddocks on a regular schedule. This allows the grass time to recover while it is being rested. It also encourages the animals to evenly harvest the field. Rotational grazing can be used for all ruminants. The benefits of rotational grazing include lower food, fuel, veterinary, and equipment costs for the farmer. Additionally, prescribed grazing lessens the chance of overgrazing and improves the quality of forage available. Other services we include technical assistance for stream stabilization, establishing living snow fences, fish stocking, and seedling programs. We also provide urban conservation services. As with the agricultural programs the aim of these programs is to preserve and/or improve the quality of our soil and water.

Living snow fences provide many benefits. A living snow fence is a line of trees and/or shrubs whose primary purpose is to stop blowing, drifting snow. Living snow fences are typically planted along the border between a field or yard and a road or driveway. By strategically planting trees and shrubs much of the snow can be kept off of roads and driveways lessening the need for both plowing and salting. This can save a town or individual both time and money. Living snow fences also provide a variety of other benefits including improved wildlife habitat, improved water storage and drainage, reduced erosion, visual screens, and energy conservation.

These are just a few of the many programs and services offered by the SWCD. For more information about

The Secret World of Wildlife **By Rebecca Hammer-Lester**



(A red fox in pursuit of a meal)

We all know that during the winter many birds migrate south and many other animals hibernate. What some people might not realize is how many animals remain local and active. Deer, coyotes, chickadee, foxes, and red tail hawks all make their summer's and winter's homes in the area and remain active year round. Deer can be seen primarily at dawn and dusk when they are most active and go in search of food. In the winter deer will eat corn that remained in the fields, apples, and low hanging branches on trees or shrubs. If it is a particularly hard winter or the deer are overpopulated they will strip the bark from trees, which may kill the trees. Trees that have had the bark stripped all the way around the trunk are said to be girdled.

Foxes are consummate omnivores and will eat a variety of things depending on what is available. In the winter the die off of green plants leads foxes to rely more heavily on animals as a food source. Popular prey species include mice, voles, and rabbits, all of which are still active in the winter. Foxes will also eat carrion. In order to find this food in winter foxes will listen for the sound of mice and voles moving through their tunnels under the snow and will track them or dig into the tunnel to catch them.

A great way to fight the winter doldrums is to get outside and go looking for wildlife or the signs they leave. The best time to watch for many animals is dawn or dusk. Deer and foxes are both at their most active at this time. In addition to looking for animals you can also look for their tracks and scat. One of the great things about winter wildlife watching is that if the snow is shallow or packed wildlife tracks are easy to identify and follow. SWCD has winter education resources available for distribution and to borrow. Call today for some fun youth and family activity materials.

Staff News



Rebecca Hammer-Lester recently completed her AmeriCorps term at SWCD. Rebecca came to us due to her interest in water resources and conservation. She has a B.S. in Geology from the University of Vermont. She grew up just north of Cortland County in Eaton, NY. After leaving the SWCD Rebecca hopes to find a job in government or industry that combines her love of geology, hydrology, and sustainability. We wish her the best of luck wherever life takes her!



Michael Catalano joins our team as our new AmeriCorps Technician. Mike has a Bachelor of Science in Environmental Studies and Political Science from Gettysburg College and is looking forward to serving his community and planet while at SWCD over the next year. We welcome Mike and look forward to the next year.

Farm Service Agency Update

The new Conservation Loan Program, a partnership between NRCS and FSA, is available. Loan funds are available from FSA for the following purposes:

- Install structures to address soil, water and related conservation
- Establish forest cover for sustainable yield timber
- Install water conservation measures
- Install waste management systems
- Adopt any other emerging or existing conservation practices, techniques or technologies, as noted by NRCS, which may require the purchase of equipment
- Facilitate a farm operation's transition to organic or sustainable agriculture

Sign-up is underway for the 2011 Direct and Counter-Cyclical Program (DCP) for producers with established base acres with FSA. To avoid the rush before the June 1st deadline, it is recommended that participants sign up for DCP and update their FSA eligibility forms now.

For questions on any FSA program, please call the office at 607-753-0851 ext. 2

Cortland SWCD
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2011 Tree & Shrub Order Form Enclosed

ALL PROGRAMS AND SERVICES OF CORTLAND COUNTY SWCD AND USDA ARE OFFERED ON A NONDISCRIMINATORY BASIS WITHOUT REGARD TO RACE, COLOR, NATIONAL ORIGIN, RELIGION, SEX, AGE, MARITAL STATUS, OR DISABILITY. CORTLAND COUNTY SWCD AND USDA ARE EQUAL OPPORTUNITY PROVIDERS AND EMPLOYERS.

Board of Directors:

Tracey Evanick - Member
Ray Parker - Legislator
Patrick Snyder - Member at Large
John Steger - Legislator
Eugene Wright - Chairman

SWCD Staff:

Amanda Barber - Manager
Michael Catalano - Conservation Intern
Barbara Miner - Account Clerk
Shawn Murphy - Conservation Assistant
Jared Popoli - Conservation Assistant
Pat Reidy - Water Quality Specialist
Stacy Russell - Natural Resource Program Specialist
Russell Smith - Natural Resource Conservationist

Calendar

01/11/11 Board Meeting (3:00 p.m.)
01/17/11 Office Closed for Martin Luther King, Jr. Day
02/08/11 Board Meeting (3:00 p.m.)
02/21/11 Office Closed for George Washington's Birthday
02/28/11 Gas Leases Workshop
03/08/11 Board Meeting (3:00 p.m.)
03/26/11 Bluebirds and Habitat Workshop
04/01/11 Tree Orders Due
04/12/11 Board Meeting (3:00 p.m.)
04/21/11 Tree Pick-Up (**Cortland County Fairgrounds**)
04/25/11 Forest Ecosystems and Management Workshop



The Cortland County Soil & Water Conservation District is online. You can find us at www.cortlandswcd.org. Right now you will find copies of the Tree and Shrub order form and an electronic copy of our newsletter. **If you would be interested in receiving an electronic copy of the newsletter and other email notices please call (607) 756-5991 and tell us your email address.**