

## **Cortland County Soil and Water Conservation District**

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## NEWSLETTER

WINTER 2010 \* VOLUME 15, ISSUE 1

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

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## Attention: Homer, Preble and Scott Residents

Homer, Preble and Scott residents are invited to participate in the development of an agriculture and farmland protection plan for their towns. Developing such a plan requires a town to take stock of its agricultural resources and identify ways in which farming is important to the town. The plan makes recommendations on how the town can prevent the loss of farmland and support the business of agriculture. Visit http://www.cortlandswcd.org/survey.htm to complete a short survey that will provide the planning steering committee with valuable feedback about the perspectives of town residents.

Homer's Town Supervisor Fred Forbes said: "Farms are vital to Homer, Preble and Scott in many ways. Agriculture, the largest single land use within the three towns, produces food, employs people and pays taxes. Many farms in the three towns also buffer natural resources, maintain rural character and provide the scenic landscapes that enrich the quality of life for all residents. Protecting agricultural lands and supporting the business of farming is a priority for Homer, Preble and Scott."

The Towns were awarded a grant from New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets (NYSDAM) to assist in the development of the joint plan. Each Town Board appointed several individuals to serve on the steering committee to oversee the development of its agriculture and farmland protection plan and hired American Farmland Trust (AFT) as a consultant to help in the development of the plan. AFT is a national nonprofit organization that works to protect farmland and improve the economic viability of agriculture.

For more information on this effort please contact the respective town representative:

Town of Homer Representative, Dan Weddle (607) 749-7220 Town of Preble Representative, Peter Knapp (607) 749-2336 Town of Scott Representative, Janice Degni (607) 753-5215

## PLANT FOR A GREENER AND CLEANER TOMORROW

Benefits of planting a tree include: energy conservation, increased property value, improved air quality, aesthetics, storm water reduction, wildlife habitat, food

Trees are at the root of energy, water and soil conservation efforts. Properly planted they can provide impressive savings on energy bills by shading and creating windbreaks. Trees also clean the air by removing dust and greenhouse gasses such as carbon dioxide which cause global warming. Planting trees can even improve property values and make your home and community a greener, more pleasant place to live. All information regarding species, ordering, and distribution are included with the order form. So think "Spring" and place your order today. SWCD is now accepting credit card payments for the Annual Tree and Shrub Sale.



## AEM PARTNERS RECOGNIZED FOR PROMOTING NY AGRICULTURE

Management
The '2009 Districts in the News Awards' were presented by State
Agriculture Commissioner Patrick Hooker on Monday, October
19th at the New York Association of Conservation Districts An-

nual Meeting in Lake George. More than 235 print articles and 15 TV news and radio broadcasts were submitted by 22 Soil and Water Conservation Districts for this year's awards, which are now in their fourth year. Cortland County SWCD strives to encourage the media to print and broadcast agricultural related stories while providing them with their expertise as a reliable source of information. Through the media, the SWCD provides information on workshops, programs, and stories which help our community to have a better awareness of agriculture and conservation in Cortland County. Over 30 stories in print and radio have been generated by the SWCD over the past year demonstrating that they have a solid position, and play an important role to both farmers and the community.

Cortland County SWCD along with Madison County SWCD and Schuyler County SWCD received Gold Awards for their continuing positive relationship with the media in their respective areas.



The following programs are now being offered under continuous sign-up. At present we don't have any specific cut off and ranking dates.

## Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)

EQIP - Livestock Waste, Grazing and Cropland

EQIP - Forestry Incentive

EQIP - Organic Initiative

#### Chesapeake Bay Watershed Initiative (CBWI)

Cropland including cover crops , Grazing and Livestock Waste

## Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP)

Grasslands

### Agricultural Management Assistance Program(AMA)

Irrigation

#### Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP)

Wetland enhancement/restoration

### Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)

We have completed the first round of sign-ups and evaluation of the Conservation Measurement Tool (CMT) for CSP. 3 landowners in Cortland County completed the application process. During the month of December the NRCS will be conducting the field verification process for these applicants.

A second round of sign-ups is planned for early this year. Watch for the announcement to sign-up.

#### Other

Throughout December and into early January we will be conducting contract reviews for those of you who have an active program contract with us. We are hoping to have this completed before our next quarterly audit. Please watch your mail, e-mail or voicemail for any correspondence from us so we can get any problems/concerns taken care of before the audit hits.

# CCSWCD Teams Up With Local Partners to Promote Cover Crop Program in Upper Susquehanna Watershed

Cover crop benefits in agricultural systems have been widely recognized. The gains depend on a number of factors but in general include improvements in long-term soil health through the increase of organic matter and supply of nutrients to the following crop, greater nutrient cycling through an increase in microbial activity, a reduction of erosion, weed suppression, pest cycle interruption, and attraction of beneficial insects. Furthermore, cover crops can improve water infiltration into the soil which may compensate for the water that they use and act as a buffer in dry years.

Despite the potential benefits of cover crops as a management practice, wide spread adoption in Cortland County and surrounding areas has not been realized due to challenges in establishing them within our existing cropping systems.

In response, our district, a member of the Upper Susquehanna Coalition, has partnered with the USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and Cornell University to establish a working group to address these challenges and develop a program that will make it easier for farmers to adopt cover cropping as a management practice in the future.

In the short term, the group will focus on cover crop use in corn silage cropping systems. The goals of this new effort are to develop a network of farmer cooperators in which ideas can be exchanged among farmers, researchers and practitioners. Research ideas get shared and prioritized, on-farm trials get implemented, and action plans can be developed to address constraints identified through research. Other goals include developing methods to reduce the cost of cover crop seed, promote opportunities for state and federal cost sharing of cover crop practices, and developing a system for tracking cover crop acreage across the Upper Susquehanna Basin and New York State. Importantly, the group aims to reach and partner with people who may be interested in contributing their time to this group to help achieve the goals stated above. One way they can do so is through a farmer survey to target research needs.

Currently, the NRCS is promoting cover crops and has increased funding in the Chesapeake Bay Watershed through the Chesapeake Bay Watershed Initiative (CBWI) and includes the Upper Susquehanna Basin. The CBWI cost share rate has recently been increased for cover crop implementation. If you have questions or are interested in participating in the CBWI program, the farmer survey, or with the work group in any way, please contact our office at 756-5991.

#### **SOIL GROUP WORKSHEETS**

Landowners filing for an agricultural assessment in 2009 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 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 Monday, 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 Service at 753-5040. Contact the SWCD to make an appointment for your SGW today at 756-5991.

## Cortland SWCD Hydroseeding

This year, the Cortland SWCD assisted numerous county municipalities with reducing soil erosion on many of their work sites. The SWCD aided the Towns of Cortlandville, Virgil, Harford, the Village of McGraw, Cortland County Highway Department, Skaneateles Lake Watershed Agricultural Program and the City of Cortland's Department of Public Works with numerous projects. Projects ranged from seeding road ditches, road shoulders, retention basins, parks and mine reclamation. The largest project of the hydroseeding season was the reclamation of an abandoned gravel pit for the Town of Virgil. The site was used for



many years by various municipalities until it closed down in the early 1990's. Since then, the mine has been sitting idle, with the Town of Virgil still holding the Permit. Reclamation totaled over 7 acres of which needed to be graded to a more natural topography. Well on it's way to returning wild, here are a few pictures from the reclamation.



## 13th Annual Cortland County River Clean-Up

The 13<sup>th</sup> Annual River Clean-Up, sponsored by the Cortland County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD), was held on September 26, 2009. SWCD would like to thank everyone who made the clean-up possible. This year, we had volunteers from SUNY Cortland, Here We Grow Child Care Center, McGraw Schools, New Visions Environmental Science Careers Class, as well as a number of volunteers from the City of Cortland, the Town of Cuyler, the Village of Homer, and the Village of McGraw. Once again, this year's clean-up was opened to any waterway in Cortland County with clean-ups taking place along Factory Brook, Smith Brook, Dry Creek, Mosquito Creek, Otter Creek, Casterline Pond and the Tioughnioga River. Over 200 volunteers participated and the garbage removed weighed in at over 2,000 pounds. The clean-up would not have been possible without the help from sponsors including Wal-Mart, Wendy's, Contento's, City of Cortland Depart-



ment of Public Works and the Village of McGraw Highway Department. Again, thank you to all sponsors and volunteers for your involvement in cleaning up one of our most important natural resources.

## 2009 Conservation Field Days

This years conservation field days were held at Camp Owahta on September 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup>, 2009. There were a total of 17 stations operated by 21 local natural resource specialists. There were approximately 600 students from 12 area schools who were educated on various topics ranging from forestry, soils, composting, wetlands and green energy, just to name a few. The SWCD would like to thank all presenters and schools for helping make this event a success and Cornell Cooperative Extension for the use of their facility.

# STAFFNEWS

## **SWCD Congratulates**



Jared served the Cortland SWCD as an AmeriCorps volunteer for the past year and was hired on by the SWCD as a Conservation Assistant in October. He will be helping municipalities and landowners in Cortland County with stream issues as well as other tasks. Jared graduated from SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry in 2006 with a bachelors degree in Environmental Studies. After graduating Jared volunteered with the National Park Service in Glacier National Park for a summer. He also worked for a year in South Carolina for Clemson University running an environmental education camp for area schools before moving back to Cortland County. Originally from Homer, Jared is aware of many of the issues being faced by our local communities. In his spare time he enjoys fishing, hiking, camping, and spending time with his niece. Jared looks forward to continuing to serve the Cortland County community.

#### **NYS DEC Burn Ban**

### **DEC Open Burning Regulations**

The Department of Environmental Conservation recently finalized regulations that would restrict "open burning" in New York State. These new regulations went into effect on 10/14/09. The final regulation addresses a number of the concerns raised by New York Farm Bureau in the Department's earlier proposal. While this proposal allows the burning of many agricultural waste components for disposal, it would still prohibit the burning of plastic in the state. Funding from New York State Environmental Protection Fund has been provided to offset the costs of an agricultural plastics recycling program – for more information on the specifics of this program and go to:

www.nys aes. cornell. edu/recommends/RAPPP Summary-Cornell Guidelines 2008 Oct 27. pdf



## **SERVICES**

AGRICULTURAL LAND CONSERVATION

CONSERVATION EDUCATION

FISH STOCKING PROGRAM

HOMEOWNER ASSISTANCE

LIVING SNOW FENCE

SEEDLING PROGRAMS

SITE PLAN REVIEWS

SOIL GROUP WORKSHEETS

SOILS INFORMATION

STREAM DISTURBANCE PERMIT ASSISTANCE

STREAM STABILIZATION ASSISTANCE

**URBAN CONSERVATION** 

WATER QUALITY MANAGEMENT

CONTACT THE SWCD FOR MORE INFORMATION

Cortland SWCD 100 Grange Place, Rm. 202 Cortland, N.Y. 13045

Phone: (607)756-5991

Non Profit Org. US Postage PAID Permit #28

## \*2010 TREE SALE ORDER FORM ENCLOSED\*

Please contact our office if you wish to be added to our e-newsletter list or added/removed from our mailing

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 Mike McKee - Legislator Patrick Snyder - Member at Large John Steger - Legislator Eugene Wright - Chairman

#### SWCD Staff:

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

Russell Smith - Natural Resource Conservationist





## Calendar



01/01/10 Office Closed for New Year's Day

01/12/10 Board Meeting (1:00 p.m.)

01/18/10 Office Closed for Martin Luther King, Jr. Day

02/09/10 Board Meeting (1:00 p.m.)

02/15/10 Office Closed for George Washington's Birthday

03/09/10 Board Meeting (1:00 p.m.)

03/09/10 - 3/12/10 Water Quality Symposium

03/19/08 AEM in Working with the Media Workshop

04/02/10 Tree Orders Due

04/13/10 Board Meeting (1:00 p.m.)

04/22/10 Tree Pick-Up





