



Soil and Water Conservation News

United We Stand



Tompkins County Soil and Water Conservation District
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Volume 17, issue 1

www.tcswcd.org

January 2011

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Bigfoot Baler in Action!

The Tompkins County Soil & Water Conservation District recently put the new BIGFOOT Portable Plastic Baler in to action at a couple of farms in Tompkins County. We were one of six counties awarded with a NYS-DEC funded balers for agricultural plastics recycling. If you would like the Tompkins County SWCD to come bale your ag plastics, call our office at 257-2340 to schedule an appointment.



2011 Spring Tree Sale order form included in this newsletter!

All tree descriptions &
extra order forms on our
website, www.tcswcd.org.
Pick up day is April 22nd,
orders must be in by March
4th.



The Upper Susquehanna River and the Chesapeake Bay Pollution Diet

By: Aaron Ristow, Natural Resource Program Specialist & Ag-Team Coordinator (USC)

Utilizing a complex computer model, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) through the Chesapeake Bay Program (CBP) developed a total annual loading for nitrogen (N), phosphorus (P) and sediment, by state, that it considers to be the maximum quantities that the Chesapeake Bay can receive and meet water quality standards. This is called a Total Maximum Daily Load or "TMDL". It is like a pollution diet for the Bay.

In mid-December, 2010 EPA officials accepted the state's plan to clean up agricultural runoff and urban sewer systems in the New York portion of the Chesapeake Bay watershed and thus New York avoided federal regulations that would have cost billions to implement – for now. The plan will still require millions of dollars to implement, but it should be far less than what the state was facing just a few months ago. The "backstop" regulations were avoided in part because the final plan included a detailed description of the coordinated effort made through state agencies and local Soil and Water Conservation Districts that support conservation practices on farms through programs such as the Agricultural Environmental Management (AEM) program and the Agricultural Nonpoint Source Abatement and Control Program (AgNPS). Since 1994 New York State has invested in an environmentally sound voluntary incentive based program and has contributed \$90 million in State Environmental Protection Fund grants administered by Soil and Water Conservation Districts.

On December 31st, 2010 the EPA and states, including New York, agreed for Phase I of the TMDL to be completed and published in the *Federal Register*. There is still a gap between the state plan and the federal limit when it comes to nitrogen and wastewater treatment plants however, but the EPA will take a wait-and-see approach before placing any additional requirements on them. There is still time for evaluation, as the watershed states must submit Phase II of the plans in June of 2011. In the second phase nutrient and sediment allocations will likely be set at the county or small watershed scale. On the one hand the local allocations are intended to improve accountability and increase nutrient and sediment control actions. On the other hand, increased accountability leads to increased responsibility and it could mean hundreds of thousands or even millions of dollars that may be required from local governments to assist with implementing conservation practices on farms and upgrading sewer and waste water treatment plants.

For now, NY residents should expect business as usual as the Department of Environmental Conservation and other agencies implement the plan. If you have any questions please feel free to contact our office or visit www.u-s-c.org for links to information about the Chesapeake Bay Program.



Rain Barrels!

The Tompkins County Soil & Water Conservation District will once again be selling rain barrels at the Spring Tree & Shrub sale on April 22nd. The barrels are constructed at the TCSWCD and sell for the low price of \$45, or (\$48.60 w/tax) They are designed to collect, filter and store rain water runoff from rooftops via rain gutters so that the water may be re-used for other purposes such as watering plants, trees, and gardens. Pre-order yours today, as these are in high demand, and we only have a limited quantity at this time! You may use the order form enclosed in this newsletter, print a form at our website (www.tcsxcd.org) or call 257-2340 to place an order.

Save Paper! Save Postage! Would you like to receive our newsletter through your e-mail, instead of in your mailbox? Let us know that you would like to conserve! E-mail sethdennis@tcsxcd.org to sign up or call our office and ask for Seth, 257-2340.

Barley Straw Available

If your pond has been prone to algae problems the Tompkins County SWCD will have barley straw available at our Spring Tree Sale on April 22nd. The barley straw available is environmentally friendly and has had no pesticides used on it. You simply float the necessary amount of bales, according to your ponds size, onto the pond. The bales will sink and evenly distribute on the bottom. We generally suggest five bales of straw for every surface acre of pond. We are selling the barley straw at \$9.72 per bale (tax included). Orders need to be placed in advance by phone, no later than the 15th of April by calling (607)257-2340. Pick up for the barley straw will be April 22nd from 9:00am-6:00pm, at the TCSWCD office, 1771 Hanshaw Rd, Ithaca.

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Please remember our newsletter sponsors when you need the products and services they offer. Thank you!

Agricultural Assessments

By: Jon Negley, Conservation Technician

The Tompkins County SWCD is continuing to accept requests for soil group worksheets in conjunction with the 2011 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 or 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, 2011 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.

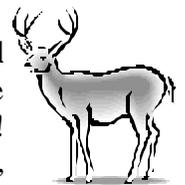
Spring Fish Stocking

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. This is a “kid friendly” event!



The Southern Tier Regional Envirothon

will be here before you know it, so be prepared! The date is set for April 28, 2011. If your high school or youth group 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.



Welcome to the office!

The Tompkins County Soil & Water Conservation District welcomes Jennifer Case and Sarah Cox.

Jen has recently started her new position as the Tompkins County SWCD Secretary/Treasurer. She joins the District after spending the last 10 years as a High School Business Teacher and coach at Groton Central School. Jen graduated from Groton before earning her Bachelor's Degree in Accounting from Roberts Wesleyan College, where she was also a member of the Varsity Basketball Team. She then earned a Master's Degree in Education from the University of New England. Before starting her teaching career, she worked in the Human Resources and Accounting Departments of Gutchess Lumber Company and Case Trucking.

Jen continues to be active in Groton's athletic programs. She is the Girl's Varsity Basketball coach, as well as a coach in the softball program there. She helps organize the girl's youth basketball program, and also operates a week-long youth basketball camp each summer.



Sarah is the new intern here at TCSWCD. Over the past month, she has been compiling all of the resources needed to proceed with the Fall Creek Watershed Management Plan. Recently earning a B.S. in Environmental Science from Ithaca College, she was eager to get some more experience in the environmental field. The TCSWCD sounded like a great place to start!

When not at her internship, Sarah is volunteering in the Discovery Space at the Sciencenter, working at Panera Bread and putting together applications for graduate school. She even finds time for some hobbies such as running and cycling. Sarah is looking forward to her first winter as part of the Cayuga Nordic Ski Club and can't wait for the snow to start accumulating.



NRCS Natural Resources Conservation Service

By: Josh Hornesky, Soil Conservationist, NRCS

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) has announced that the cut off for receiving Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) applications has been extended until January 21, 2011. For those that have never heard of CSP, it is a voluntary conservation program that offers payments to producers who maintain and manage a high level of conservation stewardship on their land and are willing to adopt higher levels of stewardship. In New York State eligible lands include cropland, pastureland, and non-industrial private forestland.

Although producers may submit an application to enroll eligible land in CSP on a continuous basis, the period when received applications are processed starts on January 21st. Interested applicants are encouraged to use the CSP self-screening checklist to determine if the new program is suitable for their operation. The checklist highlights basic information about CSP eligibility requirements, contract obligations and potential payments.

The checklist is available on the NRCS Web site at http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/new_csp/special_pdfs/CSP_Producer_Self-Screening_Checklist.pdf. For sign-up details or additional conservation program information, contact your local NRCS office at 607-257-2737 x3 or, visit http://www.ny.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/new_csp/index.html.

NOT a Hershey's Kiss...

You may have seen the big blue guy pictured below throughout Tompkins County at events, parades, and schools. However, this is not a Hershey's Kiss! This is Ronny Raindrop®, the Soil & Water Conservation District mascot in New York State. He loves to educate young people about the importance of water, water conservation and protecting our water. If your school, youth group of young people, or event would like to have Ronny Raindrop® come for a visit & give a presentation, please contact Seth at the TCSWCD office at 257-2340. This is another free service provided to Tompkins County by the Tompkins County SWCD.

