



# SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION NEWS

TOMPKINS COUNTY SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT  
170 BOSTWICK ROAD • ITHACA • NEW YORK • 14850  
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## **Message from the Manager**

I would like to take this opportunity to introduce myself as the District Manager for the Tompkins County SWCD. I look forward to working with you, the residents of Tompkins County, to provide information and resources that will enable everyone to become better stewards of our environment. As a lifelong resident of the county and former student of TC3 and Cornell University, I have developed a passion to protect and pass on the natural resources of this community to the next generation in a better condition than I found them.

We have had many changes at the District including staff departures and a relocation from 1771 Hanshaw Road to 170 Bostwick Road (Second Floor) in January of 2014. With these changes we have had to reorganize some of our programs and services. We no longer are providing the tree and shrub sale or fish sales that have been provided in the past. You can still obtain information on how to access these resources from surrounding Soil and Water Districts or suppliers by calling our offices at 607-257-2340.

2014 has been a year of settling into our new location and reorganizing the District programs and services with the various staff changes. I am proud of the work the staff have put in this year to accomplish another year of hydrilla eradication efforts, agricultural conservation projects, grant writing, environmental clean-up events and general assistance to Tompkins County landowners throughout this past year. 2015 promises to be another great year of conservation efforts by the Tompkins County SWCD.

Best wishes for a 2015 full of conservation connections!

Jon Negley,  
District Manager

## **Agricultural Environmental Management Strategic Planning**

The Tompkins County SWCD coordinates and administers the local Agricultural Environmental Management (AEM) Program funded through the NYS department of Agriculture and Markets. The AEM program is a voluntary process whereby farmers and agricultural landowners can plan, implement and monitor best management practices that improve the quality of the environmental landscape in Tompkins County. A public meeting will be held in January 2015 to provide input to the Tompkins County AEM strategic plan for the next 5 years. If you are interested in providing input to the plan and wish to attend the meeting please contact Gene Aarnio at 607-257-2340 to register.

## **Agricultural Assessments**

The Tompkins County SWCD is accepting requests for soil group worksheets in conjunction with the 2014 Agricultural Exemption application filed with the Tompkins County Assessment office. All landowners who meet the eligibility requirements set by the State Department of Ag and Markets are able to file for this exemption. Once it is determined that you qualify for an agricultural exemption, 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 \$50.00 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, 2015 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.

## **Invasive Hydrilla Update**

The Cayuga Lake Watershed Hydrilla Project has been underway since fall of 2011. The Project was initiated following the discovery of the highly invasive aquatic plant species Hydrilla (*Hydrilla verticillata*) in the Cayuga Inlet in August 2011. The Hydrilla Task Force of the Cayuga Lake Watershed was formed to spearhead response and management efforts. The Task Force is comprised of numerous local, regional, and statewide groups and agencies, among which the Tompkins County Soil & Water Conservation District (TCSWCD) has been a primary stakeholder from the beginning.

As the primary permit holder, TCSWCD ensures that all the necessary permits are acquired for ongoing Hydrilla management activities. This includes Canal Corp. permits, and NYS Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) herbicide and wetland permits. TCSWCD also coordinates permit compliance activities with the City of Ithaca, Tompkins Co. Health Department, Community Science Institute, NYS Parks, and NYSDEC. These activities include public notification via herbicide signage posting throughout the entire Cayuga Inlet and Fall Creek treatment zones. TCSWCD also coordinates with Tompkins County Health Department and Community Science Institute to conduct post-treatment water quality sampling. Water quality monitoring activities help to ensure public safety by tracking herbicide concentrations inside and beyond the treatment zones. Water quality monitoring results are available to the public on the Tompkins County Health Department website (<http://www.tompkinscountyny.gov/health>).



## **2014 Tire Collection Event**

The Tompkins County Soil & Water Conservation District held a Tire Collection Day on Saturday, October 13th with the cooperation of the Caroline Highway Department. 1,500 tires were collected from county residents. The tires were then trucked to Liberty Tire Recycling in Lockport, a state permitted tire recycling facility. They reuse or recycle over 25 million tires a year and 99% of what is recycled stays out of landfills. The material is used to make rubber mulch, rubber mats, rubberized asphalt roads, and portable speed bumps.

## **William George Agency Implements Grazing Conservation!**

An ongoing project at the William George Agency was completed this year that addressed runoff and erosion concerns around Virgil and Egypt Creeks. Both Virgil and Egypt Creek flow into Fall Creek which is a drinking water source for Cornell University and popular trout streams. This project began in 2012 with the completion of an AEM grazing plan designed to address runoff and erosion concerns while making the entire grazing operation more sustainable, self-sufficient and economical. The practices were installed using significant funds from Farm Service Agency grants (CRP and GRP) and administered by the Natural Resource Conservation Service.

## **Barnyard pollution control successfully implemented in Caroline**

The Snofarm sits on the precipice of the West Branch Owego Creek sub-watershed. Owego Creek flows directly to the Susquehanna River and has been identified as a priority area for nutrient source reduction by USDA NRCS. The farmstead was situated in close proximity to a stream. Runoff from a feedlot on the farmstead lacked adequate clean water exclusion from a small waterway that eventually led to Owego Creek. Milkhouse waste was also flowing untreated and uncontrolled to the same waterway. The project supported the installation of 3 Best Management Practice (BMP) systems to address runoff issues from this area of the farmstead: 1) Barnyard Runoff Management System, 2) Waste Storage and Transfer System and 3) A Process Wastewater Management System. This project was completed in the spring of 2014 and the District would like to thank the dedication of Mr. Snow to ensuring its successful implementation.



**Covered feedlot with runoff control and clean water exclusion**

## **\$300,000 Announced for a Comprehensive Riparian Buffer Program to Conserve Water Quality in Chesapeake Bay Watershed**

*By Margaret Enloe, Mike Smith and Aaron Ristow*

This year the National Fish and Wildlife Program awarded \$300,000 to the Upper Susquehanna Coalition of Soil and Water Conservation Districts (USC) to develop a Comprehensive Riparian Buffer Program by offering fresh incentives to farmers that have previously been hesitant to participate in traditional federal and state buffer programs. This project builds on momentum from the USC Conservation Buffer Initiative (CBI) to address nutrient and sediment loading from Agriculture in the Upper Susquehanna River Basin in NY. The project will provide cost share options to install riparian buffers, livestock exclusion, grazing and other practices using the USC Grazing Initiative integrated approach.

The Upper Susquehanna Coalition is a network of 16 Soil and Water Conservation Districts in New York and 3 Conservation Districts in Pennsylvania that make up the headwaters of the Chesapeake Bay, including Tompkins County. Their mission is to protect and improve water quality and natural resources in the Upper Susquehanna River Basin with the involvement of citizens and agencies through education, partnerships, planning, implementation and advocating for water resources.

For more information about technical and cost-sharing assistance for conservation practices, including rotational grazing and riparian buffers, please contact the Tompkins County Soil and Water Conservation District @ (607) 257-2340 or [jonnegley@tcswcd.org](mailto:jonnegley@tcswcd.org).

## **District Receives DEC Funds for Water Quality Improvement Project**

The Tompkins County Soil and Water Conservation District received funding through the New York State Water Quality Incentives Program (WQIP) to address ongoing water quality impairments in a tributary to Enfield Creek that runs along Trumbulls Corners Road. The August 8th, 2013 rain event resulted in flooding and log jams in this tributary. The log jams caused the creek to shift its alignment into a previously stable stream bank. This caused large gravel deposits, smothering existing aquatic habitat, and changing the creek bed elevation to a height exceeding the road surface. \$157,203 has been awarded to the District to complete the necessary stream improvement practices and discourage further road flooding.

## **Tompkins and Cortland County Soil and Water Conservation Districts Receive Funding to Develop Local Soil Health Initiatives**

*By Joe Morrissey with edits*

State Agriculture Commissioner Richard A. Ball announced \$295,000 in funding that will help 13 County Soil and Water Conservation Districts in the Great Lakes and Mohawk River Watersheds develop soil health programs that will protect New York's lakes, streams and rivers from potential agricultural runoff. Cortland and Tompkins County received a \$25,000 award to stimulate the implementation of soil health practices through on-farm soil health testing and planning, implementation of cover crops and conservation tillage, and outreach with demonstration and user-groups. This assistance is awarded through the New York State Ecosystem Based Management (EBM) Program, which is funded through the Environmental Protection Fund (EPF) and administered by the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets.

Soil health is the capacity of the soil to function. Healthy soil has better infiltration, water storage and soil cover, which in turn allows crops to better withstand both storm events and droughts. It also protects the environment by reducing sediment and nutrient runoff, leaching and reducing the impacts of flooding. Soil health management involves a reduction in soil disturbance while maintaining a year-round living cover. Prescribed cover crops naturally produce the fertilizer for growing crops, reduce compaction, and stabilize the soil.

For more information about cost-sharing assistance for soil health practices and outreach events in your area, please contact the Tompkins County Soil and Water Conservation District @ (607) 257-2340 or [jonnegley@tcswcd.org](mailto:jonnegley@tcswcd.org).



### **Farewell Aaron!**

We bid congratulations and farewell to SWCD Program Specialist, Aaron Ristow, who has accepted a position in the Crop and Soil Sciences Section at Cornell University. Aaron will be greatly missed after 4 years of dedicated service to the District! He will be transitioning to his new job effective January 1, 2015. He can be reached after January 16th at: [ajr229@cornell.edu](mailto:ajr229@cornell.edu).



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Soil & Water Conservation Districts  
in New York State



*Providing Today, Protecting Tomorrow*

#### **Board of Directors**

- Vacant . . . . . Member at Large
- Dan Carey . . . . . Chair, Farm Bureau
- Alan Teeter . . . . . Vice Chair, Grange
- Jim Dennis... . . . . County Legislator
- Dave McKenna . . . . . County Legislator

#### **District Staff**

- Jon Negley . . . . . Conservation District Manager
- Angel Hinickle . . . . . Resource Cons. Specialist
- Gene Aarnio . . . . . Grazing Technician
- Aaron Ristow . . . . . Natural Resources Program Specialist/  
Ag-Team Coordinator (USC)

#### **USDA-NRCS**

- Patrick Barry . . . . . District Conservationist  
(Schuyler & Tompkins Counties)
- Justin Olsen . . . . . Soil Conservationist
- Lori Beach . . . . . Civil Engineer Technician (Area III)

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

Tompkins County Soil & Water Conservation District  
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### **Board Member Position Available**

With the retirement of Ronald Updike from the Tompkins SWCD Board of Directors after 26 years of dedicated service, the District is looking to replace his seat on the board as Member at Large. If you are interested in this position, please call our office and speak with the District Manager to obtain a copy of the application and further information.

***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.***