Barbland Dairy LLC receives the "Farm of the Year" award. This farm proves that environmental stewardship doesn’t have to be limiting to success and growth. Chip Engst, Luke Huysman, and Bret Bossard, partners in Barbland Dairy, LLC have been actively involved in taking care of the land while building a strong agricultural enterprise.

The farm was started in the 1940s as a potato farm, adding 30 milking head in the mid-1950s. When Chip returned from college to work on his father’s farm in the 1970s, that number grew to 300 cows. With the addition of Luke and Bret as partners in 2006-2007, the farm grew over 5 years from 900 to 1600 mature cows (1,000 in Onondaga), and to 2,600 acres (1,500 in Onondaga County). They operate a second milking facility in Chenango County and acres in Onondaga, Madison, Chenango, and Cortland counties.

Every September, Animal Science and Ag Business majors from Cornell come to learn about the farm, and each spring classes from the Hamilton and Tully schools come to the farm shop to learn about welding and PTO safety. Luke and Scott Potter team up at Career Day at Fabius-Pompey school and teach students in grades 6 through 9 about working in agriculture. This year the farm provided 6 cows for the New York State Fair’s Dairy Cow Birthing Center from August 28-30.

Barbland Dairy partners have worked hard to enhance employee morale and retain quality employees. They built a soccer field at the farm where their team of employees hosts the CNY Latino League. Their dedication to protecting natural resources and being a positive agricultural business for their employees and community has earned them 2014 Conservation Farm of the Year.
The Onondaga County Soil & Water Conservation District prohibits discrimination in all its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, gender, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, and marital or family status.

### NORTH COUNTY FARMERS MEETING A SUCCESS

By Eva Stachekler, District Technician

The Onondaga County Soil and Water Conservation District (District) is pleased to report the success of the first ever North County Farmers Meeting, held on November 18, 2014, and hosted in-part by the Town of Clay. The landscape of northern Onondaga County has been undergoing a dramatic transformation as prime agricultural land is subdivided and converted to residential housing lots at rates that threaten to overwhelm local infrastructure. Municipal leadership in the Town of Clay has recognized the value in preserving some of the agricultural character of its once rural landscape as issues such as storm water management and local food security continue to take the forefront in sustainable community development.

The District organized the meeting with the goal of facilitating an environment where farmers and landowners could meet with local agencies and organizations to discuss their specific needs and to begin addressing those needs with continued education, funding programs, and constructive discussions in order to keep their land in agriculture and their farms in business. The District promoted the Agricultural Environmental Management (AEM) program which is a voluntary, incentive based program that enables farmers to make strong business decisions while conserving the State’s natural resources. The Oswego County Soil and Water Conservation District was also available for those whose land runs into the neighboring county.

Also at the meeting were representatives from the USDA’s Natural Resource Conservation Service and Farm Service Agency, Cornell Cooperative Extension of Onondaga County, the Syracuse-Onondaga County Planning Agency, and the New York Agricultural Land Trust all of which promoted services ranging from conservation practices to farmland protection to tax benefits. Please feel free to contact any of these organizations if you have questions or would like more information on managing your agricultural land.

### AGRICULTURAL ASSESSMENTS

Application Due - March 1, 2015

By Jeremiah Eaton, Resource Conservation Specialist

Make your appointment with the Onondaga County SWCD office before February 20th, 2015 to allow for timely service. The Agricultural Assessment Program was established under Agricultural District Law to provide a means of preserving farmland. It is designed to provide a partial exemption from taxation for farmland where pressures from competing land uses cause the market value of the land and the assessment to exceed the economic value of the land.

The Onondaga Co. SWCD completes Soil Group Worksheets (SGW) for landowners applying for an Agricultural Assessment. There is a $30 charge per parcel, effective starting January 1, 2015. To begin this process, call 315-457-0325 to schedule an appointment. Please have a copy of your current tax bill for each parcel when you call. Once the SWCD completes the SGW, you will be notified by phone that your worksheet is ready to pick-up. You can then send the SGW along with the rest of the agricultural assessment application (RP-305) to your Town Assessor.

For more information, contact your Town Assessor or visit the Office of Real Property Services website at www.orps.state.ny.us.

**District employee Alan Masters works with landowners Terry and Roy Engels to answer land use questions**
A barnyard runoff management system was implemented this fall at the Blume Again Dairy Farm in the Town of Elbridge. The construction includes a covered feeding area, roof water management, cattle laneways, and high tensile fencing that will allow the landowners to better manage several animal groups on the farm.

To reduce size and overall cost, the covered feeding area was designed to accommodate one third of the total animal herd at any given time. In this way, the farm can rotate different animal groups in for feeding while cleaning the vacated housing areas. This system will help the farm discontinue the use of an unconfined barnyard and ultimately reduce the non-point source runoff leaving the farm during the winter months.

Cost-share funding for this project came from the NYS Environmental Protection Fund.

BLUME AGAIN DAIRY
BARNYARD RUNOFF MANAGEMENT

By Ryan Cunningham, Resource Conservation Specialist

Looking for Soil Health Mini-Grant Participants

By Alan Masters, Resource Conservation Specialist

The District received a $25,000 mini-grant through the NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets and is looking for farm participants that would like to try the Cornell Soil Health Test along with planting winter cover crops. The District will be targeting acres in the Skaneateles and Otisco Lake watersheds as well as farms in the Onondaga County Sanitary District. Limited financial assistance is available for the soil health tests and for a partial reimbursement for your installed fall cover crops (2015 & 2016). Planning for the cover crops should start before your corn is planted this spring! Interested Skaneateles watershed farms should contact Eric Jensen; all other farms may contact Alan Masters or Aaron Buchta at (315) 457-0325.
Covanta has generously donated $5,000 to the Central New York Regional Envirothon. In its 18th year sponsorship to the CNY Regional Envirothon, Covanta has demonstrated its commitment to environmental education among local high school students. Besides its financial support, Covanta provides staff to participate as station guides, presentation judge or scoring tests on the day of the event.

The CNY Regional Envirothon is a privately funded program for high school students to learn more about our natural environment. Envirothon got its start in 1979 in Pennsylvania under the name of Environmental Olympics. In 1988 the name was changed to Envirothon and by 1990 New York State had signed on. Since then, the Soil and Water Conservation Districts of Onondaga, Cayuga, Madison, and Chenango counties have hosted the Envirothon at the local level. Envirothon is a series of hands-on tests in which teams of high school students compete to solve environmental problems in five subject areas - aquatics, forestry, soils, wildlife, and a current environmental issue. Each team is also required to give an oral presentation based on the current issue, which for this year is "Urban & Community Forestry."

The Envirothon is a privately funded program designed to encourage students to learn more about our natural environment. Together, Covanta and CNY Regional Envirothon continue to dedicate themselves to environmental education – strengthening the students for future leadership roles in our community.

Located in Jamesville, NY, Covanta is an “Energy-from-Waste” facility that provides sustainable waste disposal long term and renewable energy for Onondaga County including Syracuse. ‘To provide sustainable waste and energy solutions to ensure no waste is ever wasted’ is Covanta’s mission statement and their motto is ‘Powering Today. Protecting Tomorrow’.

**$5,000 DONATION TO CNY REGIONAL ENVIROTHON**

By Maggie Connelly, Secretary

Volunteers?

We’re always looking for volunteers to help us set up and clean up; work the registration table, station guide or test runner. It’s a great day for all. Snacks and a local lunch provided. Please contact me at the Onondaga County Soil & Water Conservation District, mconnelly@ocswcd.org, or you can call at 315-457-0325.

When: Wednesday, April 29th
Where: Highland Forest County Park, Fabius, NY

**CELEBRATING 30 YEARS**

John and Nancy Hourigan of Hourigan Dairy Farm of Elbridge, LLC were among 40 farms across the State to receive the New York State Dairy of Distinction Program’s 30 year certificate.

Congratulations!

**REMINDER**

If you are trying to reach the District office after hours and for an emergency, please call Mark Burger directly at 315-415-5057.
Since May 1, 2010, the NYS DEC SPDES General Permit for Stormwater Discharges from Construction Activity requires that “prior to the commencement of construction, an owner or operator shall have each contractor and subcontractor, that has been identified as being responsible for implementation of the Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP), identify at least one employee from their company (Trained Contractor) that has received 4 hours of endorsed E&SC training. The Trained Contractor must be on site on a daily basis when soil disturbance activities are being performed and will be responsible for implementation of the practices included in the SWPPP.”

With permission from the NYS DEC in Albany, the Onondaga County SWCD (District) has updated many of the photographs in the presentation so that contractors, who are attending this training for the second or third time, will not have to see the same “old” presentation. The District is also trying to make the training more interesting by doing hands on demonstrations during the training with silt fence splicing, manufactured check dams, and water deflectors.

The District sits on a committee with the NYS DEC and other Soil & Water Conservation Districts from around NYS with a goal of overhauling the entire presentation. It is likely that in the future, the training will include some up to date information on Green Infrastructure practices. We will keep you posted of new developments with this training as they become available. Until then, stay safe and compliant out there! To register for a class locally, please call Melissa at the Syracuse Builders Exchange in Syracuse at 315-437-9936 x25.

DEC CLASS GETS FACELIFT
By Mark Burger, Executive Director

Full house.

ONONDAGA COUNTY SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

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Craig Dennis, Vice-Chair, Practical Farm Rep.
Annette Raus, Farm Bureau Representative
Wayne Norris, Treasurer, Grange Rep.
Brendan Whelan, At-Large Representative
David Knapp, County Legislative Rep.
Derek Shepard, Jr., County Legislative Rep.

Staff:
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Maggie Connelly, Secretary
Gwyn Olenych, Account Clerk II
Doug Fisher, Program Manager
Alan Masters, Resource Conservation Specialist
Jeremiah Eaton, Resource Conservation Specialist
Aaron Buchta, Resource Conservation Specialist
Eric Renfer, Resource Conservation Specialist
Eva Satschmiler, District Conservation Technician
Roland Ivers, Volunteer

Phone: 315-457-0325
Fax: 315-457-0410
E-mail: info@ocswcd.org
Website: www.ocswcd.org

SKANEATELES LAKE WATERSHED AGRICULTURAL PROGRAM

Watershed Agricultural Program Review
Committee (WAPRC)
Mike McMahon, Chair, Cortland Co.
Steven Corman, Vice Chair, Cayuga Co.
Jim Greenfield, Onondaga Co.
Ed Tidd, Onondaga Co.
Eric Brayman, Onondaga Co.
David Perry, Cortland Co.
Vacant, Cayuga Co.
Rich Abbott, City of Syracuse
Dale Kehoe, Counsel

Staff:
Mark Burger, Program Manager
Ryan Cunningham, Design & Implementation
Eric Jensen, Farm & Nutrient Mgmt Planner

Phone: 315-457-0325
Fax: 315-457-0410
E-mail: slwap@ocswcd.org
Website: www.ocswcd.org

GREEN UP THE COUNTY
2015 Tree & Shrub Sale

There's still time to place an order. ORDER TODAY!
If you haven't picked up an order form, call us at 315-457-0325
and we'll send you one, or download and print a form off our website at www.ocswcd.org
Orders are due by March 9th. Spring is just around the corner!

By Mark Burger, Executive Director

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Implementation of water quality improvement projects continued into the autumn months for the Skaneateles Lake Watershed Agricultural Program. A barnyard runoff management project and a reinforced grassed waterway were installed at the Badman Dairy Farm in the Town of Niles.

The barnyard project focused on heavy use area protection for transition zones near the dairy facility. The landowners use a traditional concrete barnyard for animal feeding and manure loading during wet times of the years, however steep slopes mixed with precipitation increase manure runoff from areas adjacent to the barnyard. The new gravel heavy use area provides for the safe transition of animals to pasture while giving the landowners a solid surface to clean while collecting manure. This ultimately allows better manure management and reduces barnyard runoff into nearby tributaries.

A reinforced waterway was also implemented on the farm in an effort to convey stormwater runoff into road ditches while reducing crop field erosion. Reinforced matting was used to stabilize the soil which reduces cost by avoiding expensive rock rip rap placement.

Existing condition of the barnyard.

New barnyard and heavy use area.

Our vision - The Skaneateles Lake watershed will be an environmentally sound region, where a viable agricultural industry and others benefiting from the lake work together harmoniously to improve and maintain a high standard of water quality.

Our mission - To carry out a cost-effective, innovative program for the farming community that upholds the high drinking water quality standards of Skaneateles Lake.
On December 11th, the Skaneateles Lake Watershed Ag Program held its annual meeting with 39 people attending. Two panels of speakers presented, one on Farm Safety and another on Farmer Participation in the Community. The event drew representatives from 12 farms representing over half of the lake’s watershed acreage.

The first panel presented their farm experiences and decision points with each of the topics. Jim Carabba presented farm safety surveys available through New York Center for Agricultural Medicine and Health (NYCAHM). Danielle Volles spoke on OSHA safety plans and training employees. Craig Richards covered working with local volunteer fire departments. Erin Hull encouraged farm emergency preparations. The panelists also answered questions from the audience.

The second local farmer panel opened with Chris Fesko and Brian Reeves speaking on ‘Serving on a Board’. Nancy Hourigan shared on ‘ag education for realtors’. Andy Hourigan’s points on farms using social media to inform the public were presented. Luke Hysman shared about migrant labor relations with an on-farm soccer program.

A ‘local foods’ soup and sandwich luncheon was catered by Vernak Farms. After the lunch meal, Mark Burger, Program Manager, presented the 2014 ‘Environmental Steward of the Year’ award to John F. Tucker & Sons dairy farm. The award recognizes the farm’s high level of conservation excellence over the years. Mark Tucker, his wife Elaine, their son Stephen, and Mark’s brother Kirk Tucker were present to receive the award.

For more information contact Ag Program Manager, Mark Burger. Tel: (315) 457-0325 or email: mburger@ocswcd.org or visit our office location at 6680 Onondaga Lake Parkway, Liverpool, NY 13088. Visit our website at: www.ocswcd.org
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