



Onondaga County Soil & Water Conservation District

CONSERVATION QUARTERLY

COVANTA

Powering Today. Protecting Tomorrow.

By Maggie Connelly, Secretary

At a meeting of the CNY Regional Envirothon on January 11th, Covanta Business Manager, Kathleen Carroll and her Administrative Assistant Luisa Rotella presented a check for \$5,000 as sponsorship for this year's competition. Covanta (then Ogden Martin) made its first commitment to the CNY Regional Envirothon in 1998 with a \$25,000 donation to cover a five year span, and has continued to support the program with \$5,000 every year up through 2017, a total of \$95,000!

Since 1991, the Soil & Water Conservation Districts in New York State have been hosting Envirothon. High schools compete to solve environmental problems in an outdoor setting. Winning teams receive cash awards, plaques, and trophies. Scholarships are awarded to the overall winning team, which moves up to compete at the State level, and possibly on to the international competition. The CNY Regional Envirothon is made up of soil & water conservation districts from Onondaga, Cayuga, Madison, and Chenango counties.

The event is sponsored largely by private donations that help cover costs such as food, t-shirts, cash awards, plaques, trophies and scholarships for high school students who participate in the competition. There are five levels of contribution: Bronze (\$5 - \$49), Silver (\$50-\$499), Gold (\$500 - \$999), Platinum (\$1,000 - \$1,999), and Diamond (\$2,000 and up). Sponsors have their company name listed in our brochure and on t-shirts that every student and volunteer will wear the day of the competition.

THANK YOU



The committee receives the "Big Check" from Covanta.

CALLING ALL VOLUNTEERS

The CNY Regional Envirothon Committee is always looking for reliable and committed volunteers to help us out the day of the event.

This year's competition is being held at Onondaga County Parks' Beaver Lake Nature Center in Baldwinsville on Wednesday April 26th. The day begins around 8:30am. and wraps up around 2:30pm. Do you know someone who would enjoy spending the day outdoors? Please call Maggie Connelly at the Onondaga County Soil & Water Conservation District, (315) 457-0325.



"Promoting excellence in the wise use of our urban/suburban natural resources."

DISTRICT UPDATES

OTISCO LAKE WATERSHED TIRE COLLECTION PROJECT A SUCCESS

By Aaron Buchta, Resource Conservation Specialist

The District's tire collection has exceeded expectations in both number of interested farmers and quantity of tires recycled through the Otisco Lake watershed in Onondaga County. By collecting the waste tires from the participating farms, we helped to reduce the number of disease carrying pests such as rodents and mosquitoes. Mosquitoes breed in the stagnant water that collects inside tires and they pose a concern since they can carry West Nile Virus and other diseases. In addition, large tire piles are a risk if they catch fire and release thick black smoke and other pollutants in the fire runoff water.

Approximately 7 land owners recycled tires on their farms in the Otisco Lake watershed. Our proposed number of tires to be recycled (1,000) was exceeded to an estimated number of 2,600 tires which was 26.18 tons. The tires were recycled at Seneca Meadows landfill in Waterloo, NY. The facility has the technology to chip/shred the tires into an aggregate that is used in place of stone for leachate collection in their landfill system and collects gas to produce electricity. Other uses for tire-derived aggregate in place of stone include: roadside fill projects, foundations, and septic leach fields.



A special thanks to the Onondaga County Water Authority for funding this project in the Otisco Lake watershed, along with a big thank you to Riccelli Trucking, Inc., Seneca Meadows, and the participating land owners (especially the Volles farm and Cates farm) for hosting the tire drop-off locations.

TIPS IF YOU HAVE A MANURE SPILL

By Mark Burger, Executive Director

Nobody ever starts out their day by planning to have a manure spill. But, when it happens what you do during and after the spill can change the outcome. (Hopefully you and your staff have already developed a response plan).

STOP ALL MANURE HANDLING ACTIVITY AND SWITCH TO SPILL RESPONSE MODE.

Next, follow the four-step spill response process (promoted by the District and SLWAP since 2004).

- 1. Cut off source.**
- 2. Contain any spilled waste (if safe to do so).**
- 3. Call emergency contacts:**
 - **911 for Fire/EMS (if life safety hazard exists)**
 - **NYS DEC (315)426-7500 (F-F 8AM-4PM) or 1-800-457-7362 (nights/weekends)**
 - **Call you Soil and Water Conservation District:**
 - ◇ **Onondaga County SWCD (315)457-0325**
 - ◇ **Cayuga County SWCD (315)252-4171 ext. 3**
 - ◇ **Cortland County SWCD (607)756-5991**
- 4. Continue addressing spill if safe to do so.**

During the response it is important to make sure that the clean-up is adequate to meet the goals of the agencies involved. These typically can include: the NYS DEC Division of Water, NYS DEC Environmental Conservation Officer, and the municipal highway official (if the spill occurred on a road). Failure to stop the manure handling activity can give a perception that you don't care or are not taking the event seriously.



What happens after the spill response is as important as the spill response itself

Next up is the hardest part and that is winning back the neighbors and the relationship that you hopefully had with them prior to this event occurring. The first recommendation is to go door to door to the affected neighbors and discuss with them what has happened. Explain what went wrong, how you fixed it so that it will hopefully not happen again, and apologize for any inconvenience that you caused them. If the spill happened on a road and neighbors had to drive their vehicles through the manure, purchase some car wash tokens and give them out (in person) so that the neighbors can get their cars cleaned up and their garages will not smell like manure.

Long Term Cultivation of Neighbor Relations

It is highly recommended that you continue your neighbor relations efforts annually. The biggest goal here is to be a face in the community that the neighbors know, trust, and can talk directly to. Some proven practices that other farms have used with great success include:

- ◆ Simply knock on your neighbor's doors and introduce yourself-the old fashioned way.
- ◆ Issue a farm newsletter to neighbors to provide farm info and make yourself accessible.
- ◆ Offer free sweet corn, pumpkins or ice cream vouchers as a "thank you" to neighbors.
- ◆ Create an event where farm staff can donate food and/or time to a local food pantry.
- ◆ Simply contact your neighbors and let them know when you are working near their house.
- ◆ Participate in your local parade, hand out cheese as a "thanks" for being good neighbors.
- ◆ Ask to speak at your local town board meeting, or better yet, get on the board.
- ◆ Volunteer to read an ag book during "Ag In The Classroom" or visit your local school to share what a farmer does.
- ◆ Hand out business cards with a picture of the farm, **YOUR MISSION STATEMENT**, and cell phone number.
- ◆ Sponsor local sports team and provide tee shirts and banner with a positive ag message.
- ◆ Create a post card for your farm and use as "Thank you's" and correspondence.
- ◆ Donate to local charities, reoccurring programs are most visible and remembered.
- ◆ Buy lunch for local law enforcement or fire department as a "Thank You" for their service.
- ◆ Host a "farm dinner" at your home to allow others to casually learn more about you and your operation.
- ◆ Host an open house on the farm annually where neighbors can stop by the farm.
- ◆ Offer farm tours, publicize this free service on social media and with local tourism.

Thank you to NY Animal Agriculture Coalition and Northeast Dairy Producers for support material for this article.

**IN CASE OF AN AG SPILL
EMERGENCY, PLEASE CALL
MARK BURGER
315-415-5057**

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.

EAB IN THE HIGH SCHOOL

By Eva Sztecmiler, Resource Conservation Specialist

I recently had the opportunity to visit Durgee Jr. High School in Baldwinsville and spent part of my day talking to some of the students about the County's Ash Tree Management Strategy and what roles the District and my job play. During my time at the school, I gave my presentation to four different classes each of which consisted of about 15-20 eighth and ninth graders. All of the students were part of Mr. Russ Allen's Living Environment class, otherwise known as Regents Biology. Mr. Allen had previously taught about invasive species, so the students were prepared to apply those lessons to the real world applications I shared.



District employee, Eva Sztecmiler, demonstrates pesticide injections to students at Durgee Jr. High School in Baldwinsville. Photo Credit: Kelly Cary, School Information Officer.

We began with a brief refresher on the biology and ecology of emerald ash borer (EAB) which are important to understand when trying to manage this invasive pest. The key here is recognizing that throughout the insect's life cycle, it is during the larval stage that it causes the most damage and ultimately kills the ash trees. We also explored the three components of the County's Management Strategy: removing trees that are or will become hazardous upon being infested with EAB, injecting ash trees that provide high function and values in County Park settings with pesticides in order to prevent death by EAB, and planting new, non-ash trees to help restore what is to be lost.

Towards the end of the presentation, the students were invited to the back of the classroom for a demonstration of the pesticide injections. A log was used in place of a tree and water was used in place of actual pesticides. Students were reminded of the role that the larvae play and were able to see firsthand how the pesticide is applied in order to work *with* the tree's biological system and take advantage of the insect's life cycle to best manage the pest efficiently and safely. At the end, students were invited to look at EAB displays that were borrowed from SUNY-ESF and ask any questions they might have had. While some students shared their own life experiences, such as having family members in the tree removal industry, others were interested in hearing more about what type of education and certifications it takes to do such a job.

MUNICIPAL PARTNER AWARD

By Doug Fisher, Program Manager

Onondaga County Soil & Water Conservation District has recognized the Town of Camillus Highway Department as the **2016 Outstanding Municipal Partner** recipient for the 2016 construction season. The Highway Department implemented a fairly large project that restructured, by narrowing, many Town roads in 2016. One of the direct results of this project was an increase in grassed area adjacent to the highways. Onondaga County Soil & Water Conservation District was able to work with the Town Highway Department to hydroseed these areas to help with the grass establishment. A total of 5 acres of disturbed soil was protected as a result of this project.



District employees Doug Fisher and Jeremiah Eaton present the award to Town of Camillus Highway Superintendent Paul Legnetto at the Onondaga County Highway Association Annual Luncheon.

"It is our vision to live in a society in which future generations will have natural resources necessary to sustain and enrich their quality of life."



NEED ANSWERS AND SOLUTIONS
FOR NUISANCE GEESE?

The Oneida Lake Association has a **FREE** seminar for you!

Goose Problems/Solutions for Oneida Lake Property Owners

With special thanks to USDA Wildlife Services, Cornell University, New York State DEC, and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Saturday, March 25, 9 a.m.-12:30 p.m.
P.V. Moore High School, 44 School Drive
Central Square, NY 13036

Free and open to the public: Come and network with OLA members, Oneida Lake property and business owners, municipal officials, school and park managers, and your neighbors! Share your experiences and Q&A with the experts!

Learn about geese and what you can do: Canada Goose biology and behavior, the legal framework, role of government in goose management, options for homeowners/land managers, a Goose Dog demonstration, and more!

To learn more e-mail info@oneidalakeassociation.org

ONONDAGA COUNTY SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

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AGRICULTURAL ASSESSMENTS

APPLICATION DUE- MARCH 1, 2017

By Jeremiah Eaton, Resource Conservation Specialist



Tax exemption on agricultural land.

cultural 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.

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

SKANEATELES LAKE WATERSHED AGRICULTURAL PROGRAM

ANNUAL MEETING TALKING POINTS

“Tile Drainage Research” and “Environmentally Conscious Farming in CNY”

By Eric Jensen, Resource Conservation specialist

On December 8th, the Skaneateles Lake Watershed Ag Program (SLWAP) held its 21st annual meeting. Six exhibitors had displays to share information on their environmental stewardship programs.

Dr. Larry Geohring of Cornell University presented the tile drainage research updates in the morning and an afternoon farmer panel presented on environmentally conscious farming in CNY. The event drew representatives from across CNY. Of the 70 participants, 14 were from the Skaneateles Lake watershed farms representing 63% of the watershed acreage. Current laboratory and field studies conducted through Cornell University have demonstrated how field surface water runoff contains significantly higher levels of phosphorus and lower nitrates compared to drain tiles, while drain tiles contain higher levels on nitrates and lower levels of Phosphorus. When a ‘controlled drainage’ system is installed on ‘gently sloped’ fields, a 40 – 80% reduction in nitrates was observed with no reduction in crop yield. When manure is applied to the fields, phosphorus loss is greatly reduced when it is incorporated into the soil. Drain tile bio-reactor research has shown a 40 – 60% reduction in nitrates in the treated water. Research continues at various locations around New York State and at one local farm.

The afternoon local farmer panel opened with Dirk Young, Mike McMahon, and Jim Greenfield presenting how each of their family farms have evolved over the years into today’s environmentally conscious farms. They also revealed how they are working with and responding to the community and neighbors’ concerns about their farming activities. Concern for their role in the community to feed us 3 times per day, maintain

the open vistas we appreciate and how the next generation can carry on in this rapidly changing world was a high priority. Various situations regarding neighbor relations were discussed with reasonable solutions that worked for them.

CONTINUED IMPROVEMENT in all farming operations was the underlying theme for success.

The SLWAP’s mission is to carry out a cost-effective, innovative program for the farming community that upholds the high drinking water quality standards of Skaneateles Lake. The SLWAP is a cooperative effort between the City of Syracuse, Skaneateles Lake watershed farmers; the Soil & Water Conservation Districts and Cornell Cooperative Extension associations of Onondaga, Cortland and Cayuga counties, and the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service. Principal funding is provided by the City of Syracuse.



Karl Czymmek, Senior Extension Associate - PRODAIRY, moderates a farm panel “Agriculture & Farming in the Finger Lakes” with (l-r) Jim Greenfield, Mike McMahon and Dirk Young, all farm producers in the Skaneateles Lake watershed.



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.

COVER CROP SIGNS

By Eric Jensen, Resource Conservation specialist



You may have noticed some new signs in the agricultural landscape this past fall. Cover crop signs were installed in some of the fields near roads. These signs were placed there to educate the passing public that cover crops are 'Conservation at Work' in the cropland of the watershed. The conservation practice of cover crops is not new or new to the watershed, but it is gaining in momentum because of the benefits it brings to the ag lands in soil health. Farmers are becoming more aware of both the soil health and environmental quality benefits and are endeavoring to utilize it on a wider scale than in previous years.

The biggest goal of planting cover crops is to protect the barren cropland from soil erosion during the months after harvest before the next spring crop planting. Planting cover crops also improves soil organic matter, rainfall infiltration, and overall soil health and organism activity. All these benefits combine to enhance the water quality of Skaneateles Lake. Skaneateles Lake Watershed Ag Program is proud to work with our local farmers and this cover crop program signage was funded by the City of Syracuse.

SKANEATELES LAKE WATERSHED AGRICULTURAL PROGRAM

Watershed Agricultural Program Review Committee (WAPRC)

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



IF YOU HAVE QUESTIONS OR WANT MORE INFORMATION ON COVER CROPS, PLEASE GIVE US A CALL AT THE SKANEATELES LAKE WATERSHED AG PROGRAM, (315) 457-0325 OR VISIT OUR OFFICE AT 6680 ONONDAGA LAKE PARKWAY, LIVERPOOL, NY 13088.

The Skaneateles Lake Watershed Agricultural Program is a cooperative effort between the Soil & Water Conservation Districts and Cornell Cooperative Extension Associations of Onondaga, Cortland and Cayuga Counties, the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, the City of Syracuse, and Skaneateles Lake watershed farmers. Principal funding provided by the City of Syracuse.



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