CONSERVATION QUARTERLY

Winter 2025/2026

Onondaga County Soil & Water Conservation District

Highlighting Farms of the North

Cicero Pumkin Patch

Cicero "Pumkin" Patch, located at 7169 Island Road in the Town of Cicero, is owned and operated by Chet and Linda Dudzinski. The farm has been in the Dudzinski family since 1922 and spans approximately 55 acres, making it a longstanding and familiar part of the local agricultural landscape.

The farm specializes in pumpkins, gourds, Indian corn, and other seasonal fall crops, offering a classic "all things Halloween" experience for visitors. One of its most unique products is broom corn, a historic crop once used to make brooms, which Chet refers to as a rare product these days. In addition to crops, the farm offers free entry, a corn maze, scenic photo opportunities, and a popular hayride to "Hermitville," an iconic attraction staffed by local kids. This has become a cornerstone of the local landscape.

The property's history runs deep. The farmhouse in which the Dudzinski's live dates back to 1855, with later additions from the early 1900s. Chet's grandfather purchased the farm in 1922 and raised livestock, later passing it on to his son, who grew field corn and buckwheat. Through generations, the family has chosen to preserve the farm's traditional feel rather than modernize or expand.

Chet and Linda are committed to keeping the farm affordable and accessible, choosing not to charge admission so families of all means can enjoy it. They keep operations intentionally simple to manage costs and maintain safety, offering refreshments from the local Mario's Bakery and focusing on low-key, family (and pet!) - friendly fun during the fall season.

Like many farmers, Chet has faced challenges related to weather, particularly with weed and pest control during dry years. As a certified applicator, he understands how unpredictable conditions can impact effectiveness, making each growing season a lesson in patience.

Beyond the farm, Chet has been deeply involved in the Cicero community, serving on the town board for ten years (including six as supervisor), the Onondaga County legislature, and the Onondaga County planning board. He has also been a member of the South Bay Volunteer Fire Department for 35 years, reflecting a lifelong commitment to public service.

Looking ahead, Chet would love to see his land put into Farmland Protection as a working farm long into the future. While content to remain the same size, he takes pride in seeing multiple generations involved and would like the property to continue as a "forever farm." Cicero "Pumkin" Patch is open seasonally from September through Halloween and remains a cherished fall destination rooted in tradition and community.

Awards and Recognition

Carley Farms wins Conservation Farm of the Year Award

By Aaron Buchta, Program Manager

Carley Farms, LLC has been selected as the 2025 Conservation Farm of the Year for its long-standing commitment to conservation and responsible growth within the Oneida Lake watershed. Owned and operated by Dan Dimon, Carley Farms is a dairy operation producing milk, corn silage, hay, soybeans, and pasture-based forage on approximately 1,375 acres. District involvement began in 2013 when Dan Dimon assumed management of the farm, then a 60-cow dairy, and over the past twelve years the operation has expanded to milk 215 cows while making significant investments in conservation. Best management practices implemented through federal, state, and local programs include prescribed and rotational grazing with livestock exclusion from surface waters, heavy use area protection, and a Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plan developed in 2013. In 2022, the farm installed a 1.5-million-gallon manure storage system providing six months of storage capacity and addressing manure and milking center wastewater, followed by silage leachate control installed in 2025. Hundreds of acres of cover crops are planted annually, and additional self-funded improvements (roof open holding areas, extension of barnyard roof, eliminating livestock heavy use areas and reduced runoff). The farm also emphasizes strong neighbor relations by accommodating landowner preferences on rented acreage, including permanent hay fields and restricted manure application areas. This award recognizes Carley Farms, LLC for its dedication to water quality protection and sustainable agriculture in the Oneida Lake watershed.

Fabius VFD wins Municipal Partner of the Year Award

By Mark Burger, Executive Director

The Fabius Volunteer Fire Department has been recognized for providing emergency services protection to its community for the past 102 years. This award recognizes the department's response to an overturned tractor trailer hauling liquid dairy manure at Bailey and Keeney Roads on April 22, 2024. Fabius VFD first responders secured the scene, safely extricated the operator, mitigated hazards, and provided emergency medical assistance. They then transitioned into spill response mode to protect Fabius Brook, a premier trout stream in Onondaga County, from manure flowing downslope. Working with a local farmer, responders constructed multiple dikes using wood chips to prevent additional runoff, operating under the Unified Incident Command System led by Assistant Chief Lance Wheatley. The department's immediate response efforts helped mitigate environmental impacts and protect water quality for the community. In addition to emergency response, Fabius VFD has supported broader preparedness efforts. On September 19–20, 2019, the department assisted the Onondaga County Animal Response Team (OnCART) with training exercises at Highland Forest County Park, including development of a mud pit to simulate a horse rescue scenario. Following the tragic loss of Tyler Memory and Nate Doody in June 2024, members of the Fabius Volunteer Fire Department also provided Honor Guard services as Tyler Memory, an active member of the Tully Volunteer Fire Department, was laid to rest. For these reasons, the members of the Fabius Volunteer Fire Department are recognized for their long-standing commitment to public safety, environmental protection, and service to the community.

Awards and Recognition *cont*.

Anyela's Vineyard wins Environmental Steward Award 2025

By Eric Jensen, Resource Conservation Specialist

Anyela's Vineyard has been awarded the Skaneateles Lake Watershed Ag Program (SLWAP) Environmental Steward Award. Owned by James and Patti Nocek, the farm was nominated for its outstanding efforts to enhance conservation and has participated in the NYS Agricultural Environmental Management (AEM) program since 2000.

Highlights of Best Management Practice implementation include progressive agricultural planning prior to vineyard establishment; installation of stormwater and sediment control basins, runoff structures, and subsurface trellis drainage; and development of a whole farm plan, including a nutrient management plan in 2009. The farm also utilizes Integrated Pest Management (IPM) with regular crop scouting and targeted pesticide applications, installed a Cornell NEWA weather station in 2022 to support IPM forecasting, and applies straw mulch each fall to reduce soil erosion.

Anyela's lives up to its philosophy of minimizing unnatural inputs while maximizing product quality, safeguarding the environment, and conserving natural resources. The farm also participates in community events and promotes positive neighbor relations. This award recognizes decades of environmental stewardship within the Skaneateles Lake watershed. Thank you for all your efforts.

Do I Really Need All That Salt?

By Mark Burger, Executive Director

Doctors often tell us to cut back on salt—and the SWCD agrees, though for a different reason. Excessive salt usage can run off into streams and lakes, causing excessive chloride levels. These levels are toxic to fish and other aquatic life. Adding more salt doesn't make ice melt faster; it just creates more pollution.

The good news is that a little salt goes a long way. One 12-oz coffee cup of salt can treat a 20-foot driveway or up to 10 sidewalk squares. After clearing the snow, simply scatter the salt evenly and let it do the work. If any salt remains after the storm, just sweep it up and reuse it. Your environment—and the fish—will thank you!

Executive Director Mark Burger Demonstrates just how much space 12 ounces of salt can cover.

Skaneateles Lake Watershed News

Wood duck boxes were installed at wetland project sites in the Skaneateles watershed. Predator guards were attached to help improve the chance of a successful hatch by preventing egg-eating raccoons and other predators from entering the nest box.

Senator Mannion Facilitates SAM Grant For Spill Cleanup Equipment

By Eric Jensen, Resource Conservation Specialist

The Onondaga County Soil & Water Conservation District worked with NYS Senator Mannion's office to apply for NYS State and Municipal Facilities Program (SAM) funding to purchase a tow behind Sweeper Vacuum trailer and a storage shed. We started the application process in June 2022 and installed the shed in October 2025 and are scheduled to receive the trailer unit in November. This equipment will meet local needs and will allow the district to mitigate/cleanup farm fertilizer spills on paved roads across the county in a timely manner, as part of our agricultural spill response program.

The trailer unit is designed to be towed to the site with a pickup truck. The gasoline-powered vacuum unit can cleanup any dry fertilizer on paved surfaces as it is pulled over the area. The spilled pellets can be removed to the farm and utilized at the farm while local water quality is protected from potential nutrient pollution.

The unit has trailer lights as well as a safety beacon. A garage style shed is in place to store the trailer unit while not in use to protect it from the weather and always be ready to respond to an emergency. The District is thankful to SAM grant funding and NYS Senator Mannions' office for this opportunity to come into reality.

For more information, contact the Onondaga County Soil & Water Conservation District office location at 6680 Onondaga Lake Parkway, Liverpool at (315) 457-0325.

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50th Anniversary

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District Equipment For Rent:

Aquatic Mower

Unparalleled Power and Endurance:
Powered by a 12-volt battery(not included), the Aquatic Mower can effortlessly operate for up to 6 hours. Its industrial-strength design enables it to tackle even the most stubborn aquatic vegetation. With a cutting width of 4 feet and a cutting depth of up to 5 feet, it covers large areas in record time. The reciprocating motion of the top and bottom blades effortlessly slices through the vegetation.

The Aquatic Mower – Everything You've Ever Wanted in One Powerful Underwater Weed Cutter

- Electric battery-powered heavy-duty lake weed cutter
- Can mow and cut through all types of aquatic vegetation
- Boat-mounted
- 48 pounds; made of heavy duty aluminum and steel
- Adjustable mounting bracket allows for easy control of the unit

Info from: https://weedersdigest.com/aquatic-mower-motorized-lake-weed-cutter/

Email info@ocswcd.org or call the office at 315-457-0325 for more info or to rent the aquatic mower.

FOR RENT
from Onondaga County SWCD

$100 Delivery/Set up Fee *on all equipment*
*Rentals inside Onondaga County & SLWAP only

Contact OCSWCD: *(315) 457-0325*

12' Esch 5612 No-Till Drill

$15.00/Acre

- Small Grains
- Cover Crops—winter rye, wheat
- Small Seeds—alfalfa, clover
- Buffer Strips
- Soybeans
- 5.5" Rows—(11" rows available)
- 2 - Seed Boxes

Note: No charge for any buffers, field borders or filter strips installed inside Skaneateles Lake Watershed

- 100 HP minimum - Tractor Required
- 2 pairs Hydraulic hose connections - Required
- Certificate of Insurance - Required
- Recommend - 4 mph planting speed

*** A $100 cleaning fee will be charged on invoice if equipment is **NOT** returned clean; including mud between coulters, and seed boxes.*

2025 RATES

Tree Planter For Rent

-Small 3-point hitch tree planter

-Similar to a one-bottom plow; should be able to be pulled with a 30+hp tractor

-Rate of $20/day and a delivery fee of $75 if needed

-For more information or to schedule a rental, please contact Teresa at (315) 457-0325 or email at tlink@ocswcd.org

Onondaga County Soil and Water Conservation District

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Carina Coleman-Gridley, *Administrative Assistant*

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Skaneateles Lake Watershed Agricultural Program

Watershed Agricultural Program Review Committee (WAPRC)

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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.*