



# Cortland County Soil and Water Conservation District

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## NEWSLETTER

FALL 2006 \* VOLUME 11, ISSUE 4

*SWCD...established to promote the conservation and wise use of our county's natural resources*

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## 60th Anniversary Conservation Tour and Luncheon

On October 4, 2006, Cortland County SWCD held its 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Conservation Tour and Luncheon. The tour provided SWCD with an opportunity to show community leaders our conservation progress. The first stop on the tour was the Eldridge Dairy Farm in Cuyler. In 2003, this farm completed an AEM Tier 3 Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plan. The plan identified numerous practices for future implementation. Later that year, the farm implemented a Heavy Use Area Protection and Silage Leachate Management project to improve conditions around an existing ag bag storage area. In 2004, the farm implemented two access roads and a stream crossing to improve existing conditions around the main barn area and allow better access for manure spreading to hilltop fields.

The second stop on the tour was the Town of Truxton, where participants viewed hydroseeding on road ditches and roadbanks, completed recently and several weeks prior. Local municipalities often clean road ditches every year to maintain open water conveyances. Once these road ditches are disturbed, they are a mechanism for increased land-water linkages, conduits for rapid runoff, and an internal source of sediment and other contaminants. Hydroseed is a mixture of water, grass seed, fertilizer, tackifier, and mulch. Hydroseeding helps prevent soil erosion by providing vegetative cover that acts as a bio-filter which removes contaminants from stormwater and has a root structure which holds soil in place. The sites seeded earlier in the summer were well established with thick vegetation. A brief hydroseeding demonstration took place at the Highway Garage. While there, participants viewed the new Truxton Highway Department Salt Storage facility. Cortland County SWCD provided cost-share assistance for this facility. The covered salt storage facility allows the highway department better access to de-icing materials and helps to protect water quality by eliminating runoff pollution from the uncovered salt.



The third stop on the tour was the Twin Oaks Dairy Farm in Truxton, operated by the Arnold Family. In August 2006, Twin Oaks was awarded the Agricultural Environmental Management (AEM) Award for their continued participation in the AEM program and for being responsible environmental stewards. The Arnolds have implemented numerous BMPs, examples of these include: Alternative Water Supply, Barnyard Water Management, Conservation Tillage, Laneway Improvement, Riparian Buffers, Diversions, Integrated Crop Management, Nutrient Management, Manure Storage, Prescribed Grazing Management, Petroleum Product Storage/Spill Prevention, and Silage Leachate Control. Two of the BMPs that were highlighted on the tour were Manure Storage and Lane-way Improvement. The last stop on the tour was Newton Water Works in Homer. Cortland County SWCD worked cooperatively with the Village of Homer over the last several years to repair eroding streambanks. Most recently we were able to help replace several areas of failed streambank stabilization structures in Newton Water Works in 2004 and 2005. SWCD provided funding for project materials, as well as design and technical assistance to obtain necessary permits to work in the stream. All disturbed areas were hydroseeded by SWCD immediately after completion of the projects. The tour concluded with a luncheon at the Grange Building, where Rich Batiuk, Associate Director for Science with the U.S. EPA Chesapeake Bay Program, was the keynote speaker who spoke about Cortland County's connection to the Bay and how important Cortland County SWCD efforts and the implementation of best management practices are to the restoration of the Bay.



## SWCD/Twin Oaks Dairy Recognized With State AEM Award!

Cortland County SWCD was recognized in August at the Empire Farm Days by the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets, Empire State Potato Growers, Inc., and American Agriculturist Magazine for our efforts to promote and implement the Agricultural Environmental Management (AEM) Program in the county. This award recognizes extraordinary efforts of both an individual farm family and their supporting SWCD.

New York's AEM program has become the framework for delivery of agricultural programs and services to assist farmers in their continued voluntary stewardship efforts statewide. With the support of local SWCD's utilizing AEM, the state's farming community is doing its part to conserve and protect our state's water quality and natural resources. Cortland County has been a leader in AEM activity in the state, promoting agricultural environmental assessment through the Farm\*A\*Syst program in the mid 90's before AEM was even created. SWCD staff are active in implementing AEM locally, with every dairy farm completing AEM Tier 1 and 2 and a total of 218 farms engaged in the program. Staff also participate in state level capacities on the AEM Steering committee, and technical and education sub-committees. In 2004, SWCD created an AEM promotional video and distributed it statewide.

Along with SWCD, the Arnold Family of Twin Oaks Dairy, LLC was recognized with the Agricultural Environmental Management Award for their efforts to implement AEM on the farm. The Arnolds operate a 140 cow organic dairy with 250 head of cattle and nearly 700 acres. They grow mainly hay, corn and pasture with some small grains on rolling, highly erodible hill land and flat river bottom land in the Tioughnioga River Watershed. They were the Cortland County Conservation Farmers of the Year in 1988 because of their efforts to implement erosion control and other conservation practices. The Arnolds were one of the pilot participants in the Cortland County Farm\*A\*Syst program and have continued to be engaged in the program. They completed a CNMP in 2003 and continue to implement nutrient management and other best management practices on the farm.

Twin Oaks Dairy, LLC and the Arnold Family have a long standing reputation and commitment to natural resource conservation and environmental protection on their farm. They are recognized leaders in the industry and have employed many unique and innovative practices over the years, including ICM, cultivating, elimination of antibiotic use, conservation tillage, rotational grazing, and organic dairying. They have approached these concepts with an open mind and a sound plan, and have been successful. The farm maintains over a 21,000 pound herd average.

The Arnolds' commitment to environmental stewardship is exhibited not only on the farm, but in their daily lives. For over twenty years, Rick and Kathie have lived in an earth sheltered, passive solar home. They have a composting toilet, wood space / hot water heater with a catalytic converter and solar pre-heating in the summer, compact fluorescent lighting, gravity spring flow water, and energy efficient appliances. In 2003, they installed a photovoltaic system which provides a large share of the power to their home.

These producers are always willing to share their experiences and knowledge with others. They are often the subject and location for farm tours and workshops. They have shown a continued commitment to the principles and practices of the AEM program and exemplify good agricultural and environmental stewards. Congratulations to the Arnolds and Cortland County SWCD for a job well done!



Awards Presentation at Empire Farm Days in August



## Conservation Field Days

On September 21, and September 22, 2006, approximately 600 sixth grade students from Cortland, St. Mary's, Virgil, Homer, Truxton, Marathon, Marathon Christian Academy, Cincinnati, and McGraw schools visited Camp Owahta for Conservation Field Days. Conservation Field Days are sponsored by Cortland County Soil and Water Conservation District and

Cornell Cooperative Extension of Cortland County. They take place each year to introduce students to a variety of environmental conservation topics, and to further develop appreciation of Cortland County's natural resources. Students attended presentations about various topics, including where our water comes from, firearm safety, wastewater treatment, map & compass, green power & you, energy conservation, soil conservation, water/boat safety, composting, wildlife, maple syrup, household hazardous waste and forestry. Students also participated in fun interactive games. We thank all of the students and the presenters for taking part in this event and for their commitment to conservation education. Additionally, we thank all individuals, organizations and businesses who donated to our conservation education fund.

## Cortland County River Clean-Up

The 10<sup>th</sup> Annual River Clean-Up, sponsored by the Cortland County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD), was held on September 30, 2006, and SWCD would like to thank everyone who made the clean-up possible. This year's clean-up was opened to any waterway in Cortland County, and clean-ups took place along Otter Creek, Dry Creek, and the Tioughnioga River. Approximately 100 volunteers participated and the garbage removed weighed in at over 1,000 pounds. The clean-up would not have been possible without the help from sponsors which included the Cortland County Business Development Corporation, P&C Foods, Wal-Mart, K-Mart, Wendy's, Contento's, the City of Cortland Department of Public Works and the Town of Homer Highway

Department. This year, we had volunteers from Randall School ROTC, New Visions—Recycle Earth, Cortland High School, SUNY Cortland, Lime Hollow Nature Center, as well as a number of volunteers from the City of Cortland and the Town of Homer. Again, thank you to all sponsors and volunteers for your involvement in helping clean up Cortland County's waterways.



New Visions-Recycle Earth Group

America Recycles Day is November 15, 2006. Remember to reduce, reuse and recycle everyday, not just Nov. 15th!

For more information about recycling, visit [www.americarecyclesday.org](http://www.americarecyclesday.org)



America Recycles Day—*"It all comes back to you"*

## Summer Rains Have Aquifers Topped Off

This time of year, groundwater levels are generally at their lowest. They are generally highest in April and May. The large amount of rainfall we have had over the summer has resulted in aquifer levels that are well above normal.

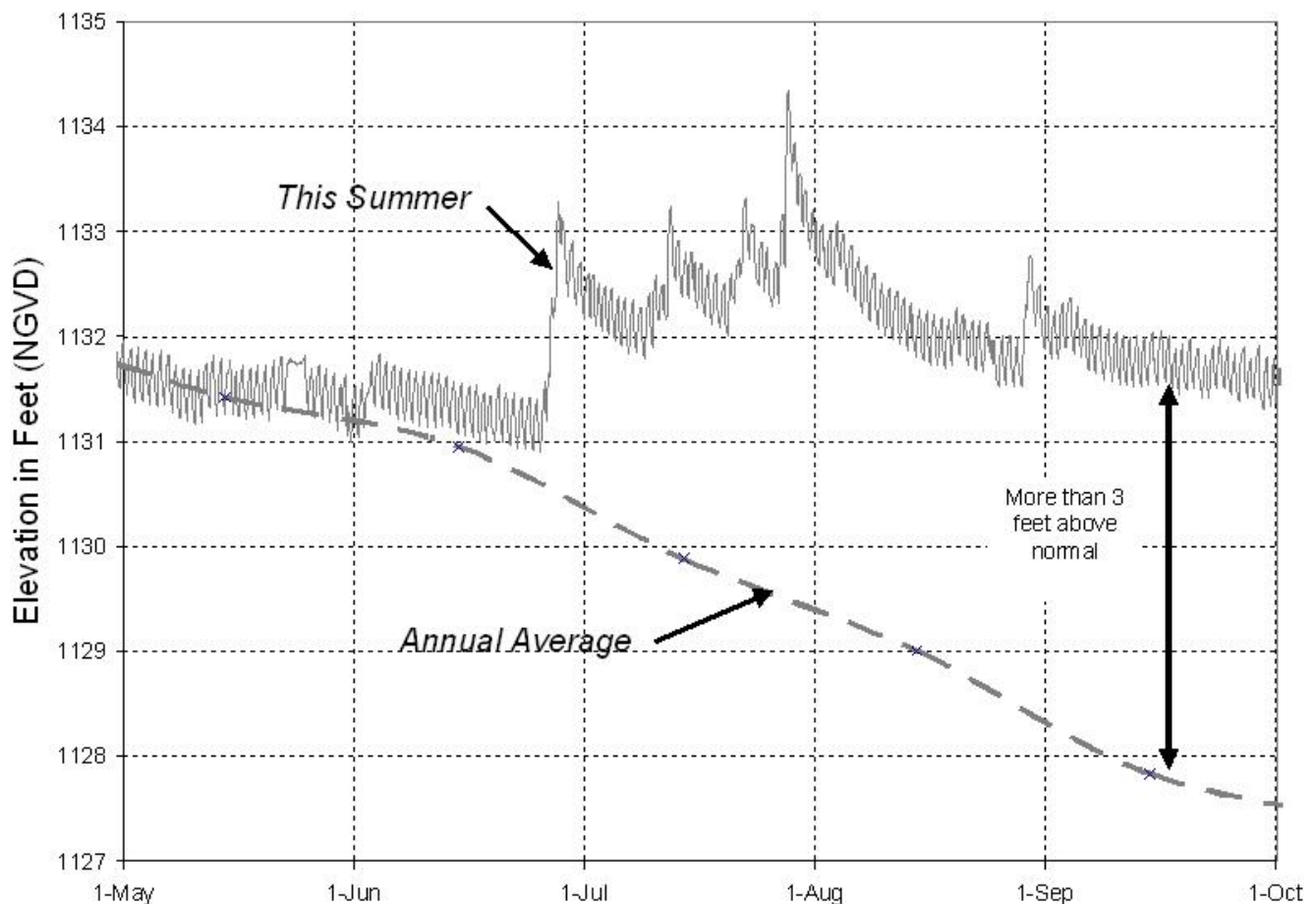
The accompanying graph shows that groundwater levels are more than three (3) feet above normal at the Cortland Water Works. The Water Works is where the City of Cortland public supply wells are located. These wells tap the Otter-Dry Creek aquifer. We expect that other aquifers in the county are experiencing similar conditions.

If you look closely at the graph, you can see daily spikes in the aquifer level at the Water Works. When the City pumps are running, the water level drops by about ½ foot as up to several million gallons of water are withdrawn. When pumping stops, the aquifer level recovers after a few hours.

From a water supply perspective, it is a good thing that our aquifers are fully “recharged”. But there is usually another side to the story. Homes with basements that are susceptible to water problems may have had a worse summer than normal. High groundwater levels can also increase the potential for flooding problems when a big rainstorm hits. And farmers may have experienced a variety of difficulties in their fields this summer.

### Aquifer Levels at the Cortland Water Works


Summer 2006



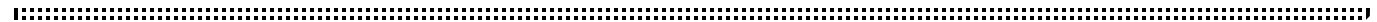
# VENISON DONATION COALITION

Needy people throughout New York State can now benefit from our healthy deer herds and a successful hunting season. The Venison Donation Coalition enables hunters to help feed the hungry by donating their legally tagged and properly field-dressed deer. Deer can be taken to a local processor where the meat is processed and packaged according to law. Meat is then picked up by food banks for delivery to soup kitchens, food pantries and needy families. Local processors participating in the program this year are Dave's Archery (749-5714) and Doug's Custom Meats (749-2978), both located in Homer, New York. You must call ahead of time for free processing of any deer you wish to donate. For more information regarding this program, log on to the Venison Donation Coalition website at [www.venisondonation.com](http://www.venisondonation.com).





*Did you know that one deer provides approximately 160 servings of highly nutritious ground venison to those in need?*



## Fall Safety Tips



Living in Central New York, we are all used to major weather changes accompanying each new season. As we deal with cooler temperatures and therefore engage in different activities, we need to make sure that we think about safety! During the fall season we also, unfortunately, need to think ahead for the winter. Thinking ahead should include cleaning our chimneys and furnaces. It is important to have chimneys inspected and cleaned on a regular basis. Furnaces should be cleaned and inspected before each heating season. Additional safety tips to consider include: burning seasoned woods (dryness is more important than hardness); burning smaller, hotter fires (they will burn more completely and produce less smoke); do not burn cardboard boxes or trash; do not keep storage around your furnace, and clean your furnace filters regularly. Remember that gas furnaces and fireplaces produce carbon monoxide. Install a carbon monoxide detector as a safety measure. Changes in the season also produce some beautiful scenery for us to take in. This time of year is perfect for hiking and picnics, but even these activities can be hazardous if we are not careful. Before going outside for a hike, be sure to check the weather forecast. Have a safe and happy fall!



### STAFF NEWS

SWCD welcomes Dan Chaize, who is the District's Americorps intern for this fall. Dan recently received his bachelor's degree in geosciences from SUNY Stony Brook and is currently enrolled at SUNY Cortland, beginning his master's in secondary science education. He hopes to eventually teach overseas at an established American international school. When he's not in class, at SWCD, or doing laundry, Dan enjoys making vector art, jogging and reading transcripts of political press briefings.

## ***Grazing News.....***

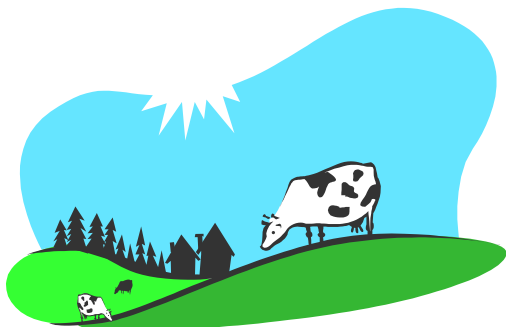
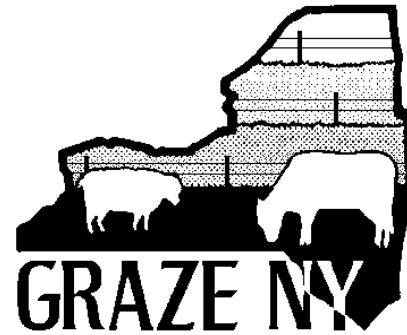
Pasture Management Tips: Reprinted from the *GLCI Gazette*, (October 2006)

It's almost transition time! For some, it may already be that time of year when your animals begin to make the transition back on to stored feeds for the winter. Regardless, the transition will be much smoother if there's some planning done on both the pasture management side and the feeding management side.

On the pasture side, it's important to walk your paddocks and estimate how much forage is available, or how quickly the growth rate is slowing. Here's how: Estimate the dry matter availability in several paddocks at least once a week, using a pasture stick or rising plate meter. Be sure not to measure those that have been grazed within the last few days. Add up how much dry matter is available in those paddocks, and either divide by the number of paddocks or by the total number of acres in those paddocks. The next time you measure the dry matter available, follow the same procedure - if your final number is less than it was the first time, you know growth rate is slowing and you need to begin feeding stored forages and/or making paddock sizes bigger. Doing this will help you avoid the train wreck of suddenly discovering you've run out of grass, and haven't had time to transition new feeds into the diet. Even if you think you've got "the grazier's eye" for pasture growth, you can still get caught with the surprise of very little grass left.

On the feeding side, it's best to start supplementing with hay, haylage, or baleage first. Pasture is a protein forage, and so are hay crop forages. This will cause the least disruption to the bacteria in the rumen as they shift their populations towards those that digest stored, higher fiber feeds more efficiently. Start with just a few pounds, and then gradually begin to increase it as your pastures are slowing down. In a dairy situation, where corn silage may be fed through the winter, it is best to hold off on introducing (or re-introducing) it until the first shift to hay crop forages has been on-going for a week or two - milk production will hold better with a more gradual move towards the winter diet. Of course, if you've been feeding some stored forages throughout the grazing season, the dietary transition may not require as much planning.

The big question is always "how short do I leave the pastures going into winter?". In what may be a surprise to some, the answer is 2 inches! According to Darrell Emmick, NRCS NYS Grazing Land Management Specialist, a shorter residual has the advantage in the spring, because the soil warms up sooner and thus so will the grass. If a higher residual is left, it forms a thatch through the winter that insulates the soil. What about the potential for winter-kill? After a killing frost the grass generally will not try to regrow again, and the root reserves are in place for use when those soil temperatures rise in the spring. The only plants that might be set back are those that were grazed in the day or two before the frost, and didn't have time to begin the process of storing carbohydrates and building root reserves. However, whether that becomes a problem or not really depends on what kind of a winter we have. So the bottom line is- it is far better to graze it down to 2 inches and get an earlier green-up in the spring, than to leave it all taller on the chance that some of it might be hurt.



*The GLCI Gazette is an email newsletter that has a nice calendar of events, pasture management tips and other grazing information. It is sent to your email once a month. To subscribe, send an email to [karen.sullivan@ny.usda.gov](mailto:karen.sullivan@ny.usda.gov) and in the subject line type the word "subscribe" and you will be added to the distribution list.*



Rod Bain, a reporter with USDA Radio News, traveled to Cortland County recently to interview farmers in the Chesapeake Bay Watershed. Several farmers were interviewed about their awareness of their farms' affect on the Chesapeake Bay and how they are changing their farming practices to have a positive influence. All of the farmers have participated in the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) in order to improve areas of the farm that needed it the most. Everyone interviewed was aware that the Tioghnoga River is at the headwaters of the Chesapeake Bay and what we do in Cortland County has a direct effect on the bay. The stories will be broadcast sometime in the next month, so keep your ears open.



### SERVICES

#### AGRICULTURAL LAND CONSERVATION

☼  
EQUIPMENT RENTAL

☼  
CONSERVATION EDUCATION

☼  
FISH STOCKING PROGRAM

☼  
HOMEOWNER ASSISTANCE

☼  
LIVING SNOW FENCE

☼  
SEEDLING PROGRAMS

☼  
SITE PLAN REVIEWS

☼  
SOIL GROUP WORKSHEETS

☼  
SOILS INFORMATION

☼  
STREAM DISTURBANCE PERMIT ASSISTANCE

☼  
STREAM STABILIZATION ASSISTANCE

☼  
URBAN CONSERVATION

☼  
WATER QUALITY MANAGEMENT

☼

*CONTACT OUR OFFICE FOR MORE INFORMATION*

## Photo Entries Wanted



Amateur photographers of any age can participate in a photo contest to raise money and awareness for the 2007 Canon Envirothon. Prizes include cameras, framed photos, and event mementos. For entry forms and to get details about the Envirothon, visit [www.nysenvirothon.org](http://www.nysenvirothon.org), or contact Sharon Frost via telephone at (631) 727-2315, ext. 3, or via email at [sharon.frost@co.suffolk.ny.us](mailto:sharon.frost@co.suffolk.ny.us).

### COMING SOON!!



Look for the SWCD 2007 tree seedling and shrub sale information in the winter newsletter. Several new varieties will be offered including Red Pine, Eastern Mountain Ash, Black Walnut, Hybrid Poplar, Forsythia, and Blackberry. Order forms will be sent out in early January. If you are interested and would like to receive one, contact the SWCD office at 753-0851, ext. 3. We will be happy to add you to our mailing list.

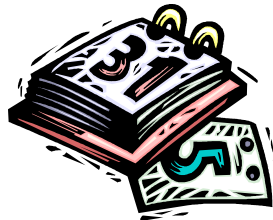
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## Calendar

### Board of Directors:

Michael McKee - Legislator  
Carl Ritter - Treasurer  
Eleanor Ritter - RC&D Representative  
Patrick Snyder - Member at Large  
John Steger - Legislator  
Eugene Wright - Chairman



### SWCD Staff:

Amanda Barber - Manager  
Andy Breese - Natural Resource Conservationist 1  
Daniel Chaize - Americorp Intern  
Melanie Dewey - Secretary to the Board  
Jean Foley - Conservation Assistant  
Pat Reidy - Water Quality Specialist  
Stacy Russell - Natural Resource Program Specialist  
Darrel Sturges - Conservation Assistant  
Jean Swisher - Account Clerk

### NRCS Staff:

Darrell L. Emmick - State Grazing Land Management Specialist  
Suzette Kocher - District Conservationist  
Elena Steele - Soil Conservationist

- 11/10/06 Office Closed for Veteran's Day
- 11/14/06 Board Meeting (1 p.m.)
- 11/15/06 America Recycles Day
- 11/23/06 Office Closed for Thanksgiving
- 12/12/06 Board Meeting (1 p.m.)
- 12/25/06 Office Closed for Christmas Holiday
- 01/01/07 Office Closed for New Year's Holiday
- 01/09/07 Board Meeting (1 p.m.)
- 01/15/07 Office Closed for Martin Luther King, Jr. Day



Have a safe and happy  
holiday season!!

