



Cortland County Soil and Water Conservation District

100 Grange Place, Room 202, Cortland, NY 13045
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SWCD...established to promote the conservation and wise use of our county's natural resources

NEWSLETTER Spring 2006 * Volume 11, Issue 2

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SWCD Celebrates 60 Years in Cortland County

1946-2006

A. Barber



This year marks the 60th Anniversary of the Cortland County SWCD. We will be undertaking a number of special projects and activities this year in recognition of this occasion and in honor of the past employees, directors, and landowners who have contributed to the conservation of our natural resources over the past 60 years. On May 1, 1946, the Cortland County Board of Supervisors determined that the conservation of soil and natural resources were of public concern. They declared the County of Cortland to be a Soil Conservation District pursuant to the Soil Conservation District Law of the laws of 1940, and appropriated three hundred dollars in funding for operations. On May 1, 2006, we will be holding an Open House at the District Office. We will have posters, displays, memorabilia from over the years, and door prizes. We are also planning a tour this fall and recognition dinner. Special promotions and outreach will dovetail with our normal activities during Soil and Water Stewardship week and throughout Water Week. Stay tuned for more information and be sure to put "May 1st – SWCD Open House" on your calendar now. We'd love to have you visit!

NOTICE:

A NEW ROUND OF WATER QUALITY IMPROVEMENT GRANT FUNDING IS EXPECTED SOON. CONTACT THE OFFICE BY MAY 15TH TO BEGIN THE PROCESS. AEM PARTICIPATION IS REQUIRED.

TREE SEEDLING SALE

J. Swisher

Cortland County SWCD's annual sale of tree seedlings, ground covers and wildflowers is underway. Every year, we like to offer different species or bring back popular ones so you can have a great variety of trees and flowers to enhance your property. If you have not ordered already, make sure to get the order in before it is too late. Items are selling fast! The deadline to place an order is April 7, 2006. All trees and seeds are pre-ordered. Pick-up is scheduled for Thursday, April 20, 2006 at the Cortland County Fairgrounds from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Call the SWCD office for more information or to request an order form.





Free Workshop!!!!
Saturday, May 6, 2006

Cortland County Rural Landowner Workshop

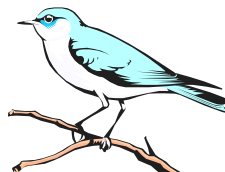


Helping you make the most of your land

NYS Grange Building, 100 Grange Place, Cortland

- 8:00 am Registration, Coffee, and Donuts
- 8:15 am Cultivation of Forest Mushrooms for Beginners
Jim Ochterski, Cornell Cooperative Extension
- Jim Ochterski will explain and demonstrate the basic steps of inoculating and cultivating forest mushrooms for fun and profit.
- 9:15 am Wetland Wildlife: The World of Frogs and Salamanders
Melissa Yearick, Upper Susquehanna Coalition, Wetlands Specialist
- Melissa Yearick will show us the often overlooked wildlife in wetlands such as frogs and salamanders.
- 10:00 am Short Break
- 10:15 am The Eastern Bluebird, New York's Official Bird. When did you last see one?
Niles F. Brown, Cortland County Bluebird Coordinator, New York State Bluebird Society
- Learn how you can increase the likelihood of seeing bluebirds on your property.
- 11:00 am Invasive Plants – Aliens Threaten Cortland County Landscapes!
Krissy Faust, Cornell Plantations, Wildflower and Natural Areas Gardener
- Invasive plants are spreading and crowding out our native plants. Learn to identify these plants and hear about a variety of control methods.

This valuable free program is made possible through a grant to the Cortland County Soil and Water Conservation District. To register, contact SWCD at 753-0851, Ext. 3.



A LESSON IN PETROLEUM BULK STORAGE ON FARMS

Guest Editorial by Mike McMahon*

McMahon's E-Z Acres, a dairy farm located in Homer, NY, recently experienced a fuel spill from a saddle tank on a silage truck. The event happened during the early morning hours of October 18, 2005. A new driver inadvertently filled a bad tank, and the tank drained out overnight losing about 100 gallons of diesel fuel. That night, we received an inch of rain followed by an inch of rain the next day and another half inch the day after that. The rain was the result of the tail end of a hurricane, and by daylight on October 19, 2005, the fuel had been washed in every direction. With continuous rain for almost four straight days, I decided that nothing could be done and the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) was not notified. On the morning of October 22, 2005, however, someone put a call into the DEC Spill Response Hotline and it was that day that I met Spill Response Specialist Kevin Kemp. Mr. Kemp checked the surrounding driveways and lawns and found petroleum sheens and affected grass and stated we would have to hire a hazardous material contractor to do remediation. To date, 300-400 tons of soil and driveway material has been removed to an on-site trench dug to specs of 40' x 100' x 18" and lined with three layers of 6 ml plastic. Next, the farm's current storage tanks were inspected. The farm has two 500 gallon tanks for on and off-road diesel and a 275 gallon tank for gasoline. When asked to produce registration documents, I countered with the assumption that since none of our tanks was 1,100 gallons or more, they did not qualify for registration or containment.

It was then I learned that the DEC looks at the total cumulative on-site capacity and we were clearly out of compliance. Furthermore, having this much storage outside triggered inspection of all heating fuel tanks on the premises, as well. The final ball dropped when I learned that a 275 gallon underground tank that I had discontinued use of the previous summer was included in our total on-site capacity. This tank was completely pumped out, with all the pipes having been removed and replaced with plugs. I did not feel that knowledge of this tank was pertinent since it was no longer in use. This also proved to be a costly mistake.

The Petroleum Bulk Storage (PBS) requirements follow this story and all of them were met in full compliance within twelve days of the DEC's first visit. However, that did not seem to have any bearing on the resulting fine negotiated on January 20, 2006, given the fact that the law had been in effect for twenty years. In a hearing before the compliance attorney for the DEC, a fine of \$25,000.00 was levied against my farm. It broke down as follows: \$10,000 for not reporting the spill, \$10,000.00 for the tanks being out of compliance, and \$5,000 for failing to acknowledge the out of service underground tank, which has since been removed. I have, however, been allowed to "work off" \$5,000 of the fine by giving five presentations across the state about my experience. It is my hope that people who read this article will take stock of their own storage facilities and call the DEC to check their compliance level or visit the DEC website for more information.

Aboveground Storage Tank compliance requirements (1,100 gallons or more) are as follows:

- Impermeable containment able to hold 120% of the tank capacity
- Containment must have a drain with a locking valve
- Tanks must be painted with no signs of corrosion tank
- Tanks must have an official number
- Tanks must state the product within each tank
- Tanks must have the universal symbol for the product stored
- Tanks must list both the design and working capacity (90%-95%)
- Tanks must have a visible sight gauge
- Tanks must have a filling warning device (vent whistle)
- DEC tank registration form displayed at the storage site
- Monthly inspection checklist for tank, pumps and piping

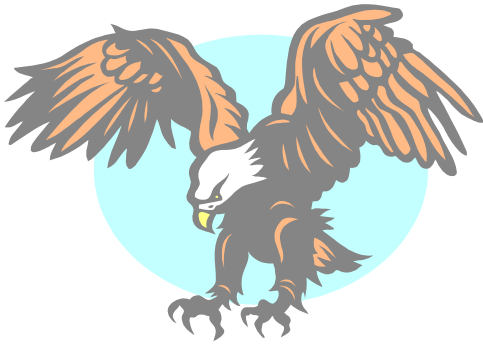


These requirements also apply to any other tanks such as fuel oil on the property or any contiguous properties owned by the same entity.

**The views and opinions expressed in the article above are not necessarily those of the Cortland County SWCD.*

Eagle Sighting

P. Reidy



On March 8, 2006, Darrel Sturges spotted an adult bald eagle above our Grange building, spiraling several hundred feet above the West Branch of the Tioughnioga River, providing several minutes of interesting viewing. Darrel also spotted an eagle over Song Lake last summer while water quality monitoring, and an eagle reportedly took up residence at the County landfill for about a week a short time ago.

We do not know if there is a nesting pair in the Cortland area, or if they are just passing through, but the presence of eagles is a good sign for the environment. You can find out more about eagles at the New York State DEC website: <http://www.dec.state.ny.us/website/dfwmr/wildlife/endspec/eaglehud.htm>.

Recognizing a Bald Eagle (taken from the web site): "Sometimes it's easy to spot a bald eagle. Its striking white head and tail and the sheer size of its wingspan (6-7 feet) makes it hard to miss. However, it is not until an eagle reaches maturity at about five years that the white plumage develops. Younger (immature) bald eagles are chocolate brown and mottled with white. For this reason, it is important to learn the size, shape and flying posture to correctly identify bald eagles."

"As an eagle flies toward you, its wings are held straight out, unlike the more common turkey vulture, which soars with its wings in a V-shape. As the eagle passes overhead, you'll notice that the feathers at the tips of its wings are widely separated. Its relatively short tail is usually fanned open."

"Wintering eagles begin arriving in December; the highest concentrations peak in January and February; most are heading back to their nests by mid-March."

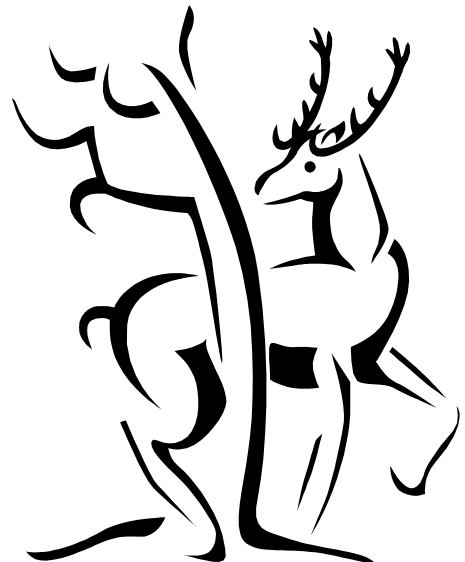
You can report eagle sightings to DEC, although they say not all need to be reported. Call DEC's Endangered Species Unit [518- 402-8924] if you see adult eagles between April 15 - June 15. (This could lead to the discovery of new nesting pairs.)

Four or more eagles in one location, especially after 3 p.m., could reveal a significant winter roost site.

DEC RELEASES STATISTICS FROM 2005-06 DEER HARVEST

New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) Commissioner Denise M. Sheehan recently announced the results of the 2005-2006 deer hunting seasons, including deer harvest, information on Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD), and hunter safety statistics. During the 2005 season, hunters harvested slightly more than 180,200 total deer, including 89,000 bucks and approximately 91,200 antlerless deer. The total deer harvest for 2005 represents a 14 % reduction from the 208,000 deer taken in 2004 and is the lowest total deer take since 1994. Declines in 2005 were expected following an intentional 35% reduction in Deer Management Permit (DMP) availability, an action intended to rebuild and stabilize the deer population in many areas of the State.

For more information, visit: <http://www.dec.state.ny.us/website/press/pressrel/2006/200622.html>



FSA News

Rob Gallinger, County Executive Director

Producers with "General Sign-Up" Conservation Reserve Program contracts scheduled to expire between 2007 and 2010 are being offered the chance to either extend the contract or re-enroll it, depending on the specific nature of the contract. Eligible producers have been contacted by letter and have until the April 14, 2006 to notify the FSA office if they accept the offer. Expiring CRP must be in full compliance, will be inspected by FSA, and is subject to a compliance visit fee. FSA has also announced a new General Sign-Up for the Conservation Reserve Program. The enrollment period runs from March 27, 2006 through April 14, 2006. Eligible cropland must be highly erodible, must meet cropping history requirements, and offers will be ranked against other offers across the country. The percentage of offers accepted into CRP will depend on the number of offers nationwide. Producers are reminded that sign-up for the 2006 Direct and Counter-Cyclical Program (DCP) is underway right now. A good way to avoid the rush is to come in now if you participate in the program. The deadline for 2006 DCP is June 1, 2006.

The Milk Income Loss Contract (MILC) program has been extended through September 2007.

The biggest change to the program is that the payment rate has been lowered to 34% of the difference between the Class I price (northeast) and the target of \$16.94. Previously, the rate was 45% of the difference. Payment production is still capped at 2.4 million pounds for each fiscal year. There are payment rates starting in December 2005. Producers will have the opportunity to pick their start month as before, even if it has passed. Sign-up is underway and runs through May 17, 2006. Finally, a re-cap of the 2005 Corn Loan Deficiency Payments (LDP's) shows that approximately 220 LDP's have been paid in Cortland County, for over 1.4 million bushels or converted bushels from silage, totaling nearly \$600,000 in payments.



It's definitely a busy time for FSA programs, so if you have any questions, feel free to contact the office at 753-0851, Ext. 2.



S. Kocher

Spring is officially here! Soon the days will be longer, the snow will melt and the fields will be turning green.

Now is the time to start thinking about what you will be planting this year. To help you determine what fields will be corn and what ones will be hay, refer to your Food Security Act (FSA) Plan. If you have any questions or need a revision, please give our office a call.

If you have an existing program (EQIP, AMA or CRP) contract with us, it is time to think about the work you will do this summer. Contractors' schedules fill up quickly so the time to contact someone is now. If you need a contractor's list, please give our office a call.

All program application dates have closed for this year. If we have any new sign-up periods this year we will either send out a postcard or put a notice in the SWCD or FSA newsletters.

CORNELL LOCAL ROADS PROGRAM

"Pavement Maintenance" Workshop

Road Master *OPTIONAL Course*

Who should attend:

Highway superintendents who select pavement maintenance, evaluate options, and analyze cost. The class will cover selection of the proper maintenance activity to correct or prevent pavement problems. How to perform various maintenance options will be illustrated.

Instructors:

The April sessions will be taught by David P. Orr, P.E., the Senior Engineer for the Cornell Local Roads Program. Formerly the Deputy Highway Superintendent for Yates County, David has over fifteen years of road-related experience. Chris Blades, Vice President of A.L. Blades and Sons, Inc. will be teaching the May sessions.

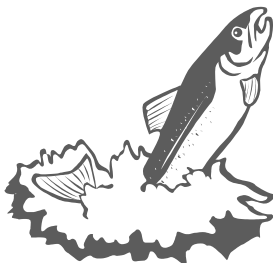
Course topics:

- ** Why roads fail prematurely ** Repair techniques ** Pavement distresses ** Patching
- ** Choosing the right repair ** Crack repairs ** Surface treatments

The registration fee is \$40, and includes lunch, breaks and course materials. Preference is given to local highway and public works employees, and are limited to 3 per organization. The schedule for this workshop is as follows:

April 4—Steuben County	April 25—Jefferson County	May 9—Cattaraugus County
April 5—Tioga County	April 26—Oneida County	May 10—Niagara County
April 6—Delaware County	April 27—Cayuga County	May 11—Monroe County

To register for these programs contact Cornell Local Roads Program at 255-8033, or log onto their website to download a registration form at www.clrp.cornell.edu.



TROUT FINGERLINGS AVAILABLE FOR PONDS

Rainbow trout fingerlings (five - seven inches) can now be ordered through the SWCD for stocking private ponds. Orders must be received by Friday, April 14, 2006. Delivery will be made to the SWCD office parking lot on Saturday, April 29, 2006 at 1:30

P.M. Order forms and instructions for pick-up can be obtained by calling (607) 753-0851, Ext. 3, or by writing to: Cortland Co. SWCD, 100 Grange Place, Rm. 202, Cortland, NY 13045.

Water Festival

The 15th Annual Cortland County Water Festival will take place on June 3, 2006 from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. The Water Festival is a fun, educational outdoor event featuring tours of the Waterworks and the aquifer, water education and games for kids, a drinking water taste test, displays and information about local water resources. During the month of May, information will be sent to schools and announced in local newspapers.

ENVIROTHON 2006

The 2006 Cortland County Envirothon is quickly approaching. This year's event will take place on May 4, 2006, at the 4-H Camp Owahta in Solon. The Envirothon is a one-day outdoor competition for local high school students that tests their knowledge in soils, aquatics, forestry, wildlife, and current issues. This year's current issue is "Water Stewardship in a Changing Climate". The winners of the Cortland County Envirothon will represent the County at the NYS Envirothon on May 24th & 25th at SUNY Oswego.

The Envirothon is funded by local sponsors, businesses and organizations. Financial sponsorship allows local students the opportunity to learn about the environment as well as compete to represent the County at the State Envirothon. Donations purchase the plaques awarded to the winning teams and the Envirothon t-shirts presented to each participant. All funding contributions to support the Envirothon are greatly appreciated. If you are interested in sponsoring your local high school students, please contact our office for more information. Financial sponsors are publicized on the Envirothon t-shirts.

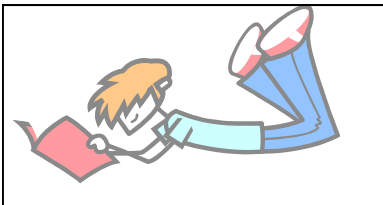


New Children's Book Sends Farmers' Market Message Home

"A Visit to the Farmers' Market" is now available from Brain Child Books. This easy-to-read, 22-page full-color picture book for children provides nutrition education while promoting the benefits of shopping at local Farmers' Markets. Beautifully designed and economically priced, "A Visit to the Farmers' Market" is perfect for distribution to Pre-K-1 classrooms, WIC programs, health fairs, clinics,



community events, Farmers' Markets, and anywhere you want to reach children and families with messages about healthy eating. For more information, visit: www.brainchildbooks.homestead.com.



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

Cortland County Soil & Water Conservation District
100 Grange Place, Room 202
Cortland, NY 13045

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*Providing Today - Protecting Tomorrow.
...established to promote the conservation and wise use of
our county's natural resources.*

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WWW.CORTLANDCOUNTYSWCD.COM

Please contact our office if you wish to be added/removed from our mailing list.



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NRCS Staff:

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Suzette Kocher - District Conservationist
Elena Steele - Soil Conservationist



Calendar

04/11/06 Board Meeting (1:00 p.m.)
04/20/06 Tree Pick-Up
04/22/06 Earth Day
04/28/06 Arbor Day
04/28/06 WQCC Meeting
04/29/06 Trout Pick-Up
04/30/06 to 05/07/06—Soil and Water Stewardship Week
05/01/06 Anniversary Open House
05/04/06 Cortland County Envirothon
05/06/06 Rural Landowner Workshop
05/07/06 to 05/13/06—Water Week
05/11/06 Board Meeting (7:00 p.m.)
05/25/06 WQCC Meeting
05/29/06 Office closed for Memorial Day
06/03/06 Cortland County Water Festival
06/08/06 Board Meeting (7:00 p.m.)
06/23/06 WQCC Meeting
07/04/06 Office closed for Independence Day