



Cortland County Soil and Water Conservation District
100 Grange Place, Room 202, Cortland, NY 13045
Phone: (607)756-5991 www.cortlandswcd.org

NEWSLETTER

SUMMER 2009 * VOLUME 14, ISSUE 2

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

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SWCD Newsletter Now Offered Electronically

In an effort to conserve paper, time, and money resources the SWCD is offering electronic copies of our newsletter. The newsletter and other SWCD information is also available on-line on our newly completed website at www.cortlandswcd.org. If you would like to receive our e-newsletter via email or the website, please let us know so we can remove you from our paper mailing list. If you would still like to receive the newsletter in paper form no action is needed.

Gone But Never Forgotten

Cortland County SWCD has been fortunate for more than twenty years to have had the loyal service of two very special people; Carl and Eleanor Ritter. This year we have suffered the loss of both these faithful stewards as first Carl, and then Eleanor lost battles with cancer.

Carl was a hardworking partner in a dairy operation in the county for over twenty years, while more recently he and Eleanor had taken up raising beef cattle. Carl was a SWCD Board member since 1983, serving as the Farm Bureau representative. Eleanor became the SWCD representative to RC&D in 1994. Carl and Eleanor represented the SWCD at numerous regional and state meetings, they made countless trips to Albany to educate our state legislators about SWCD programs, priorities and needs. They were always there, from tours and open houses to monthly board meetings, they could be relied on to support the SWCD.

An emigrant from the Netherlands in 1955, Carl had an accent that he worried would keep people from understanding him. He would sometimes suggest that someone else more eloquent than him be the messenger for the SWCD. But Carl was passionate about agriculture and he believed in soil conservation, so when he spoke, people listened and understood. Carl loved to take you to the side to elaborate on his position and share a story or two from his past that helped to make his point. He and Eleanor made a great pair, her sharp wit and quick tongue rescued many an unsuspecting soul from one of Carl's stories, as she would remind him that they had things to do or that they wouldn't have time to get their dish of ice cream if he didn't hurry along.

Eleanor embraced her role as the RC&D representative, eventually serving in various committee and executive committee roles. She was an advocate for programs and initiatives that would help maintain our rural communities. She never minced her words, but she expressed her true and honest perspective and you always knew where Eleanor stood.

The selfless service and contributions of Carl and Eleanor Ritter to Cortland SWCD are already missed, but we know that they are together in another place, probably on a double-seated bulldozer with plenty of time to enjoy another dish of ice cream.



2009 Cortland County Envirothon

The **2009 Cortland County Envirothon** took place on Friday May 8, 2009, at the 4-H Camp Owahta in Solon. The Envirothon was a one-day outdoor competition for local high school students that tested their knowledge in soils, aquatics, forestry, wild-life, and current issues. This year there were eight teams of five students from local schools. Team G.O.A.T., one of the OCM Boces teams, took first place this year and represented Cortland County at the New York State Envirothon on May 27th & 28th at Keuka College.



Congratulations to this year's team, who took 12th place out of 54 teams. The Cortland County Soil and Water Conservation District would like to thank all of the participating teams, their chaperones and teachers, volunteers and those who took time out of their busy schedules to help out with this year's event.

2009 Cortland County Water Festival

The 18th Annual Cortland County Water Festival took place on June 7, 2009, at the Cortland Water Works. The Water Festival was a fun, educational, outdoor event featuring tours of the Waterworks and the aquifer, water education and games for kids, a drinking water taste test along with displays and information about local water resources. This year's coloring contest winners received a Savings Bond from local Banks.

Coloring Contest Winners were:

Daycare/Pre-K Coloring Contest:

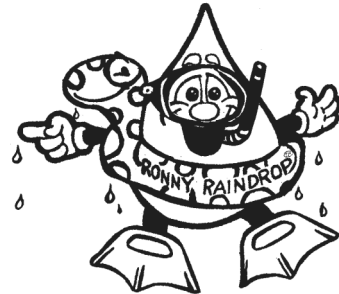
- Winner- Jake Calabro, St. Mary's School
- Second- Ryan Eaton, Appleby Elementary School

K-2nd Coloring Contest:

- Winner- Danielle Adams, Virgil Elementary School
- Second- Danielle Froelich, Cincinnatus Elementary School

3rd-6th Coloring Contest:

- Winner- Evelyn Ripley, Cortland Christian Academy
- Second- Holli Morrison, Appleby Elementary School



Backyard Backpack



This summer, the SWCD has continued the backyard backpack educational packets and soon fall backpacks will be available also. The goal of the backyard backpack is that children, teachers, parents and afterschool programs can come in and borrow the Backyard Backpack or activities out of it to use with children. The backpacks contain educational activities ranging from weather, animals, forestry/plants and other fun activities to teach children in those respective areas.

Rain Barrels



The Cortland County SWCD is piloting a rain barrel program for the local community. We will be constructing barrels from food grade plastic containers that will be available for sale on a first come, first serve basis. Rain barrels provide a cost effective way to supplement water usage from city/well water for our gardens and other outdoor home use. Not only do they provide a benefit to homeowners, but they also provide added alleviation of our storm water system.

Collection of rainwater is by no means a new idea. For thousands of years, especially in arid regions, rain collection for human consumption and use has been vital to survival. Rain barrels are an alternative to rising costs of municipal water and are healthier for your plants as the water is naturally soft and untreated with chemicals.

Rain barrels are rather easy to install and are refilled surprisingly quickly during rain events. Amazingly, just an inch of rain on a 1000 square foot roof will produce approximately 600 gallons of water. Rain barrels are a great way to make your home “greener” and save you money as well. Barrels can be linked for additional storage and you can even hook up a drip watering system for your flower or vegetable gardens.

To find out more information on the SWCD rain barrel program, stop in or call us at (607)756-5991

CLEAN SWEEP NY

PESTICIDES AND SCHOOL CHEMICALS DISPOSAL PROGRAM SCHEDULED

CLEANSWEEPNY IS AN ENVIRONMENTAL BENEFIT PROJECT that provides for the environmentally safe and economic collection and disposal of unwanted or unusable pesticides, school chemicals, golf course chemicals, and elemental mercury and mercury-containing devices (e.g. manometers and thermometers). CleanSweepNY funding was originally earmarked for the benefit of New York agriculture. Farmers and former farm owners can bring unwanted pesticides to CleanSweepNY events at no charge and with no quantity limit. For all others (excluding home owners),

CleanSweepNY will accept 100 pounds or less of unwanted pesticides free of charge from these sources: non-agricultural certified pesticide applicators, retail establishments, commercial or home & garden pesticide holders, golf courses, schools, marinas, cemeteries and others. A nominal fee of \$1.35 per pound will be charged for each pound of pesticides over 100 pounds. The rates are substantially lower than typical fees for privately negotiated legal disposal. A pricing sheet is posted on the webpage.

Funding for this environmental benefit project is administered by the Natural Heritage Trust.

A FALL 2009 CLEANSWEEPNY collection targeting Broome, Cayuga, Chenango, Cortland, Madison, Onondaga, Oswego, Tioga and Tompkins Counties will build on the success to date. The collection will occur during the week of November 2, 2009. When arrangements have been finalized, collection site locations will be posted at <http://www.cleansweepny.org>. Holders of pesticides and chemical materials who are located in other counties may also participate if they register and transport their materials to the collection sites.

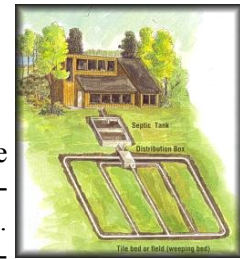
CleanSweepNY services are not available to homeowners. Information about household hazardous waste collections can be accessed at <http://www.dec.state.ny.gov/chemical/8780.html>.

PRE-REGISTRATION & INFORMATION Pre-registration is mandatory to participate in CleanSweepNY and can be done by calling 1-877-793-3769 or by e-mail to info@cleansweepny.org. Fall 2009 Registration deadlines are October 2nd for holders of unlabeled or unknown products and compressed gas cylinders, and October 23rd for all other participants.

Septic Maintenance Workshops

Cortland County residents can receive a coupon good for a \$100 rebate on septic system maintenance including, but not limited to, the pumping and inspection of their septic system by attending a workshop on septic system maintenance during August.

The Septic System Workshops will focus on how homeowners can better manage their septic systems. Which includes: how a system functions, current system standards, maintenance requirements and schedules, trouble shooting, and system failures. Homeowners will receive a packet to help them with their own septic system maintenance.



The workshop is sponsored and funded by the Cortland County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) with presentations provided by the Cortland County Health Department, Division of Environmental Health.

Four sessions have been scheduled for August. The workshops will be held from 7-8 p.m. at the following locations:

Homer Town Hall – Wednesday, August 19
 Willet Town Hall – Friday, August 21
 New York State Grange Cortland – Thursday, August 27

Septic maintenance must take place in Cortland County and rebate is limited to one coupon per homeowner per property.



14th Annual Cortland County River Cleanup



The Cortland County River Cleanup is just around the corner and is slated for Saturday, September 26, 2009. Groups of any size are urged to sign up and register with the Cortland County SWCD.

Pickup of garbage and cleanup materials will be provided by the SWCD. For more information and to register your group please contact the SWCD at (607)756-5991. Registration is important because it allows the SWCD to better organize the event, supply materials and provide necessary information.

When registering your group of volunteers please have the cleanup location, time of cleanup, and number of volunteers. The SWCD will provide each volunteer group with a garbage drop-off location,

Participation in the River Clean-up is strictly voluntary and any relationship to Cortland County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) and the County of Cortland is that of a volunteer. Volunteers will not conduct themselves as, or claim to be an employee of SWCD or the County, demand or apply to or for any right or privilege applicable to an employee, including, but not limited to, Workers' Compensation coverage, unemployment insurance benefits, Social Security coverage, or retirement membership or credit. Furthermore, it is understood that participation in the River Clean-up is done at the participant's own risk. All attempts to use common sense and stay away from heavy and/or sharp objects will be made. It is understood that SWCD, the County, and any of its Departments, Agencies, and their employees or representatives will be held harmless for any claim that may be brought against any person, volunteer or group.

Emerald Ash Borer Found in New York State



Photograph credit: David Cappaert,
<http://www.forestryimages.org/>

June 17, 2009 marked the first confirmed sighting of the Emerald Ash Borer in New York State. Known to have spread to 13 states and 2 provinces surrounding the Great Lakes Region since its discovery in Michigan in 2002, the Ash Borer was reported in Randolph, Cattaraugus County. As yet, the Ash Borer has not been reported in Cortland County, but residents are urged to be aware of the potential for infestation. The Ash Borer has the potential for devastating White Ash (*Fraxinus americana*), which is among the state's most important timber trees, along with other ash species. The NYS Department of Environmental Conservation has issued a quarantine on Cattaraugus and Chautauqua counties in western New York which restricts movement of ash trees, ash products and firewood in this area.

The ash borer can be identified by its emerald-green wing coverings, and a coppery red or purple abdomen. The average size is about one-half inch long. Adults also leave a distinctive "D" shaped hole in the bark where they exit. The ash borer larvae burrows tunnels in the phloem just below the bark of the tree, disrupting water and nutrient flow. This eventually girdles and kills the branches, and eventually the tree. Other signs of infestation include: canopy dieback, yellowing, extensive shoots from the trunk and roots, and browning of leaves. Trees may also have woodpecker damage from the birds eating larvae from inside the tree. The primary way that the Ash Borer is spread is through the transportation of firewood and other wood products. For more information, feel free to contact us at: (607) 756-5991, or visit: <http://www.dec.ny.gov/press/55725.html> to read the DEC Press Release regarding the Emerald Ash Borer.

NATURAL GAS EXPLORATION

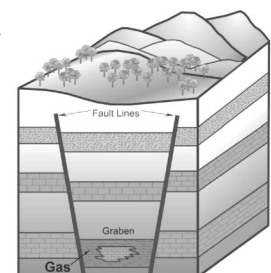
KNOWLEDGE IS POWER

The "Marcellus Shale Gas Play" has sparked the interest of energy companies across the globe. Beneath Cortland County sits a valuable resource, the Marcellus Shale rock formation, which in its entirety is estimated to contain 500 trillion cubic feet of natural gas. Energy companies have moved into the area quickly snatching up land leases for mineral rights and gas exploration. While the leases and gas wells are sure to have a positive economic impact for the land owners and for the region, it is important to examine these leases carefully in order to become educated on the terminology, ways to protect the environment through the lease, what others in the area are financially realizing through the execution of their leases and about ways to protect your interests in your property.

The Marcellus shale region extends approximately 575 miles from New York down through Pennsylvania, Ohio, and West Virginia and there are some small portions which extend into Maryland, Kentucky, Tennessee and Virginia. The rock layer has a thickness of up to 900 feet and is found between 4,000 feet and 8,500 feet below the earth's surface. The Marcellus holds, in its pores, an abundance of natural gas estimated at 500 trillion cubic feet, of which 50 trillion cubic feet is extractable.

What landowners need to realize is the importance of education when it comes to leasing their land. The landman may say "this is a standard lease", "it's not going to get any better than this", "so and so down the road just signed and it's only a matter of time" however, this is just not true. There is no such thing as a standard lease. Everything in the lease with the exception of a clause giving the landowner 48 hours to back out of the signed contract is negotiable. The first thing in the lease is usually a signing incentive, such as X dollars per acre, then there are the royalties (a portion of the proceeds of any gas actually captured and taken out of the formation); and while these are the big financial drivers, the landowner must do his/her homework. What are signing bonuses going for now in their area? What are some royalties being negotiated locally? And it doesn't stop there.

Feel free to stop by the SWCD and pick up some informational brochures on gas exploration, leasing, regulations and more.



Farm Service Agency Update

County Committee Election: In Cortland County this year, farmers in Solon, Taylor, Freetown, Cincinnatus, Marathon and Willet will be electing their FSA County Committee member for a three-year term. Nomination forms were due back to the FSA office by August 3rd, and ballots will be mailed to all eligible voters this fall. Contact the FSA office if you have any questions.



The crop reporting deadline was moved to August 14th this year. Farmers who do not report their acreage to FSA by August 14th may late-file their report for a nominal fee.

August 14th is also the deadline to enroll into the 2009 Direct and Counter-Cyclical Program (DCP). Producers may also choose to take the new Average Crop Revenue (ACRE) option for this program, as authorized by the 2008 Farm Bill. Contact the Farm Service Agency for more information.

The Livestock Indemnity Program (LIP) for the 2008 Farm Bill began on July 13, 2009. This program provides compensation to producers who have incurred livestock deaths in excess of normal mortality rates due to adverse weather events such as blizzards, disease, extreme cold or heat, or floods between January 1, 2008 and October 30, 2011. The program is solely based on an individual producer's losses, thus it is imperative that producers who experience such a loss maintain records and verifiable documentation.



The FSA office is located at the new USDA Service Center at 1 North Main Street in Cortland. Call 607-753-0851, ext. 2 if you have any questions.

Cortland County Landowners Group Forming



Got Gas? If you are a property owner in Cortland County, then deep below the earth's surface sits a rock formation known as the Marcellus Shale. Within this shale sits an abundance of natural gas which has sparked the interests of gas companies around the world. The Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) is assisting with the formation of a landowners group. By banding together landowners, groups have the ability to develop the best possible gas lease compatible with their ownership goals. The lease serves as a tool to protect you and interests in your property, the environment, and maximizes bonus payments and royalties. A landowner group will assist with educational seminars, keeping members up to date on upcoming events and news in the industry; it will serve as a networking tool and most importantly, it forms contiguous tracts of acreage, which while enticing to the gas companies, also provides great leverage and bargaining power.

By having a large land base in the landowners group, the group is able to negotiate better and more environmental protections into their lease, clauses to protect the private property rights, and has the ability to realize larger land bonuses and royalty payments than if an individual were to lease on his/her own. If you already have a lease, you can still join the landowners group. Leases run out and having X number of acres that run out in 1 year, X number of acres that run out in 2 years etc. all looks favorable to the gas companies as many of the expiring leases will sign on with the existing lease that a gas company signs with the landowner group members. Even if a landowner has a lease, the networking and educational opportunities alone, are well worth the involvement in a landowners group.

The SWCD is in the beginning stages of assisting with the formation of a landowners group. To date, we have had a small meeting of 15 interested landowners who had attended some of our educational seminars. If you are interested in joining a Cortland County Landowners Group, please contact the SWCD at 607-756-5991 or email Shawn Murphy at shawn.murphy@cortlandswcd.org. In these beginning stages it is difficult to move forward without good leadership so we ask that anyone with a desire to serve on an executive or steering committee please contact the SWCD.

Spruce Up America

This year, SWCD sponsored six Spruce Up America projects. In the program, students and teachers work in cooperation with a community group or civic organization to plan a tree planting project. Spruce Up America offers a unique way for students and adults to learn the importance of trees and caring for our environment through hands-on experience. A total of 700 seedlings were planted at the six sites throughout the county. Students and staff from the following schools were involved: two groups from Cortland, BOCES New Visions Program, McGraw, Marathon and Virgil. Tree planting stock and guidance was provided by SWCD.



STAFF NEWS

SWCD would like to thank Lacey Pitman, who started May 18th as a Summer Intern. Lacey is a Marathon Central School graduate and she is now entering her 2nd year at SUNY Oswego, where she is majoring in meteorology. In 2007, Lacey was crowned the NYS Maple Queen. In 2008, Lacey was also crowned the 2008/2009 NYS Timber Producers Queen. During her spare time, Lacey enjoys making maple syrup, helping her grandfather prune Christmas trees and storm chasing.



SWCD thanks Aaron Buchta who worked at the Cortland County SWCD as an AmeriCorps intern and a conservation assistant this past July. Aaron is working through the CNY RC&D and splitting his time between three different Soil and Water Conservation Districts; Otsego County, Cortland County, and Madison County. Aaron is majoring in Renewable Resources at SUNY Morrisville, and hopes to pursue a career in the natural resources/environmental conservation field. In his spare time he enjoys gardening and spending time outdoors fishing, hiking, and camping.

SERVICES

- AGRICULTURAL LAND CONSERVATION
 - ☀
 - 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 and Water Conservation District
100 Grange Place, Room 202
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Phone: 607-756-5991
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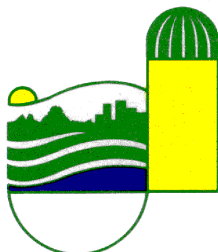
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Board of Directors:

Tracey Evanick - Member
Michael McKee - Legislator
Patrick Snyder - Member at Large
John Steger - Legislator
Eugene Wright - Chairman

SWCD Staff:

Amanda Barber - Manager
Barbara Miner - Account Clerk
Shawn Murphy - Conservation Assistant
Jared Popoli - AmeriCorps Intern
Patrick Reidy - Water Quality Specialist
Aaron Ristow - Natural Resource Conservationist
Stacy Russell - Natural Resource Program Specialist
Russell Smith - Natural Resource Conservationist



Calendar

EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES FOR THE MONTHS OF

AUGUST, SEPTEMBER AND OCTOBER

08/19/09	Homer Septic Workshop
08/20/09	Board Meeting (7:00 p.m.)
08/21/09	Melody Lake Septic Workshop
08/27/09	Cortland Septic Workshop
08/27-09/07/09	New York State Fair
09/07/2009	Office Closed (Labor Day)
09/11/09	River Clean-Up Registration Deadline
09/17/09	Board Meeting (7:00 p.m.)
09/17 - 09/18/09	Conservation Field Days
09/26/09	River Clean-Up
09/28 - 10/08/2009	Conservation Skills Workshop (Staff Training)
10/12/2009	Office Closed (Columbus Day)
11/02/09	Clean Sweep Drop Off

