



Cortland County Soil and Water Conservation District

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

NEWSLETTER

Summer 2006 * Volume 11, Issue 3

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CINCINNATUS HIGH SCHOOL WINS LOCAL ENVIROTHON

M. Dewey



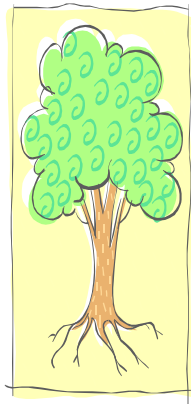
Cincinnatus Team with Problem Solving Judge John Steger

The 2006 Cortland County Envirothon was held on May 4, 2006, at Camp Owahta in Solon. Each year, local high school students compete in this outdoor environmental competition which tests their knowledge in six subject areas: soils, forestry, aquatics, wildlife, current environmental issues, and problem solving.



SWCD sponsors the event with assistance from local businesses, organizations and individuals. Exams were administered at each station by local resource professionals from various agencies, with RSVP volunteers as proctors. Teams from Cincinnatus, Homer, Marathon and OCM BOCES participated. Students rotated through six stations, one set-up for each subject area, and worked as a team to complete test questions. The problem solving question required each team to take a position on a fictitious environmental problem and work together to support and defend their position in a brief oral presentation. This year's problem solving issue was "Water Stewardship in a Changing Climate", and teams had to give a presentation as though they were an advisory committee to the Governor. Their presentation needed to include information relating to the priority water quality and quantity problems associated with climate change and make recommendations to address these issues. Each team did a great job with their presentations and the highest scoring team in each category was as follows: Soils – Homer 1; Forestry - Cincinnatus; Aquatics – Marathon Blitzkrieg; Wildlife – Homer 2; Current Environmental Issues – Homer 1; and Problem Solving – Marathon Blitzkrieg.

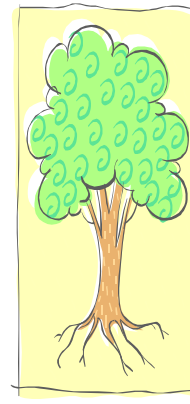
Congratulations to the team from Cincinnatus High School, who took first place for the third year in a row with the highest combined score in all categories and who went on to represent Cortland County at the New York State Envirothon at SUNY Oswego on May 24th & 25th! Kurt Schmidt supervised the Cincinnatus team which included Joey Klingenberg, Jacob Brown, Kurtis Brown, Franklin Dirig and Stephanie Schroeder.



STUDENTS SPRUCE UP AMERICA

M. Dewey

This year, SWCD sponsored four 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 270 trees and shrubs were planted at the four sites throughout the county. Students and staff from the following schools were involved this year: one group from Homer, two groups from OCM BOCES, and one group from McGraw. Tree planting stock and guidance was provided by SWCD.



WATER FESTIVAL

M. Dewey

The 15th Annual Cortland County Water Festival was held on June 3, 2006 at the Cortland Water Works. The festival received a decent turnout despite the unfavorable weather conditions. This free event featured a variety of educational, water-related displays and activities, including tours of the aquifer, groundwater demonstrations and the Water Wizard game. There was also a face painting table, bubble tables, coloring tables, miniature golf, duck races and a sandbox for the kids. Also, hundreds of students from area schools entered the coloring, poetry, and poster contests. The winners each received a \$50 savings bond. The savings bonds were donated by Alliance Bank, HSBC Bank, First Niagara Bank and Tompkins Trust Company. The winners of the contests were as follows:

Pre-K Grade Coloring Contest

Leah Reiner, Homer Nursery School

K-2nd Grade Coloring Contest

Lexington Stoyell, 2nd Grade, St. Mary's Elementary

3rd – 6th Grade Coloring Contest

Jessica Mitchell, 6th Grade, Homer Intermediate School

3rd – 5th Grade Poetry Contest

Caitlin Serowik, 4th Grade, Appleby Elementary – Marathon

3rd – 5th Grade Poetry Contest

Ian Smith, 3rd Grade, St. Mary's Elementary

6th – 12th Grade Poster Contest

Kimberly Buhl, 6th Grade, St. Mary's Elementary

6th – 12th Grade Poster Contest

Samantha Ackley, 6th Grade, St. Mary's Elementary



The face painting table, a popular attraction at the Water Festival.

In addition to the above contests, individuals were able to answer various questions in the Dripal Pursuit game for a chance at a \$50 savings bond. The answers were found at various locations throughout the Water Festival. This year's winner was "The Waldbauer Family".

Several folks also participated in the Water Taste Test, which featured samples from seven different municipalities. Of the 99 votes submitted, Homer came in first with 27 votes, and Cortlandville came in second with 23 votes.

GRAZING IS GREAT IN NEW YORK STATE!!

J. Foley

What is Prescribed Grazing Management?

Prescribed Grazing Management (PGM) is a plan for grazing that is tailored to the needs and goals of the individual farm, along with its livestock, soils, vegetation and topography. The most commonly prescribed system is the rotational grazing system. Rotational grazing systems differ from conventional grazing in that livestock are moved frequently (every ½ to 7 days) through paddocks (pasture divisions) based on forage quality, quantity, and livestock nutritional needs. This approach to livestock and pasture management provides a “rest and recovery period” for growing plants, which provides livestock with better nutrition and enhances pasture productivity. The advent of improved technology for fencing and watering systems has allowed more livestock producers to manage successful grazing systems. Farm management objectives and existing conditions (livestock type, number, class, soil type and pasture health) for individual operations are blended with the recommended frequency, intensity, timing, and duration of grazing events to formulate a sound grazing plan.



Ecologically sound management of grazing lands has been demonstrated as a way to provide farmers, rural communities, and our nation with economic, environmental, and social benefits.

Economic Benefits

- Lowering harvest costs by substituting livestock grazing for machine harvesting
- Lowering overall feed costs by increasing feed quality and quantity per acre of pasture and extending the grazing season
- Lowering investment costs for housing and machinery
- Improving herd health, thereby lowering cull rates and health treatment costs
- Reducing labor costs
- Reducing the need for expensive, year-round manure facilities/equipment

Environmental Benefits

- Clean water and air for people, wildlife and fish along with increased wildlife habitat
- Healthy stands of vegetation and root mass reduce soil erosion and nutrient runoff, improve water infiltration and reduce atmospheric CO₂ (carbon sequestration)
- Rapid decomposition of naturally deposited manure keeps nutrients in the soil and out of streams and lakes
- Less machinery use equates to less fuel used and lower greenhouse gas emissions
- Reduced dependence on chemicals for cropland; less chemical & fertilizer use

Social Benefits

- Suitable for small, medium, and large farms, and any type of livestock
- Sustainable land use
- Supports local communities
- Improved community view of agriculture
- Scenic beauty and open space
- Low-cost forage to produce food and fiber
- Grass-fed animals produce healthy food

Assistance Available

SWCD can offer a wide range of assistance to producers interested in starting or improving a rotational prescribed grazing management system

- **Technical:** system planning, fencing design & layout, water system design, pasture management
- **Educational:** pasture walks, workshops, conferences, myriads of information/photos available on all aspects of pasture & grazing management (fence, water, forages, etc.), & reference samples of some fencing & watering materials
- **Financial:** Various funding sources can be accessed by qualifying Landowners through the SWCD & USDA agencies for implementing grazing systems
- **Tools & Supplies:** SWCD has several grazing related tools & supplies available for producers to use or rent

For more information on Prescribed Grazing Management and/or for planning assistance, contact Jean Foley.

New Model of the Homer-Preble Aquifer

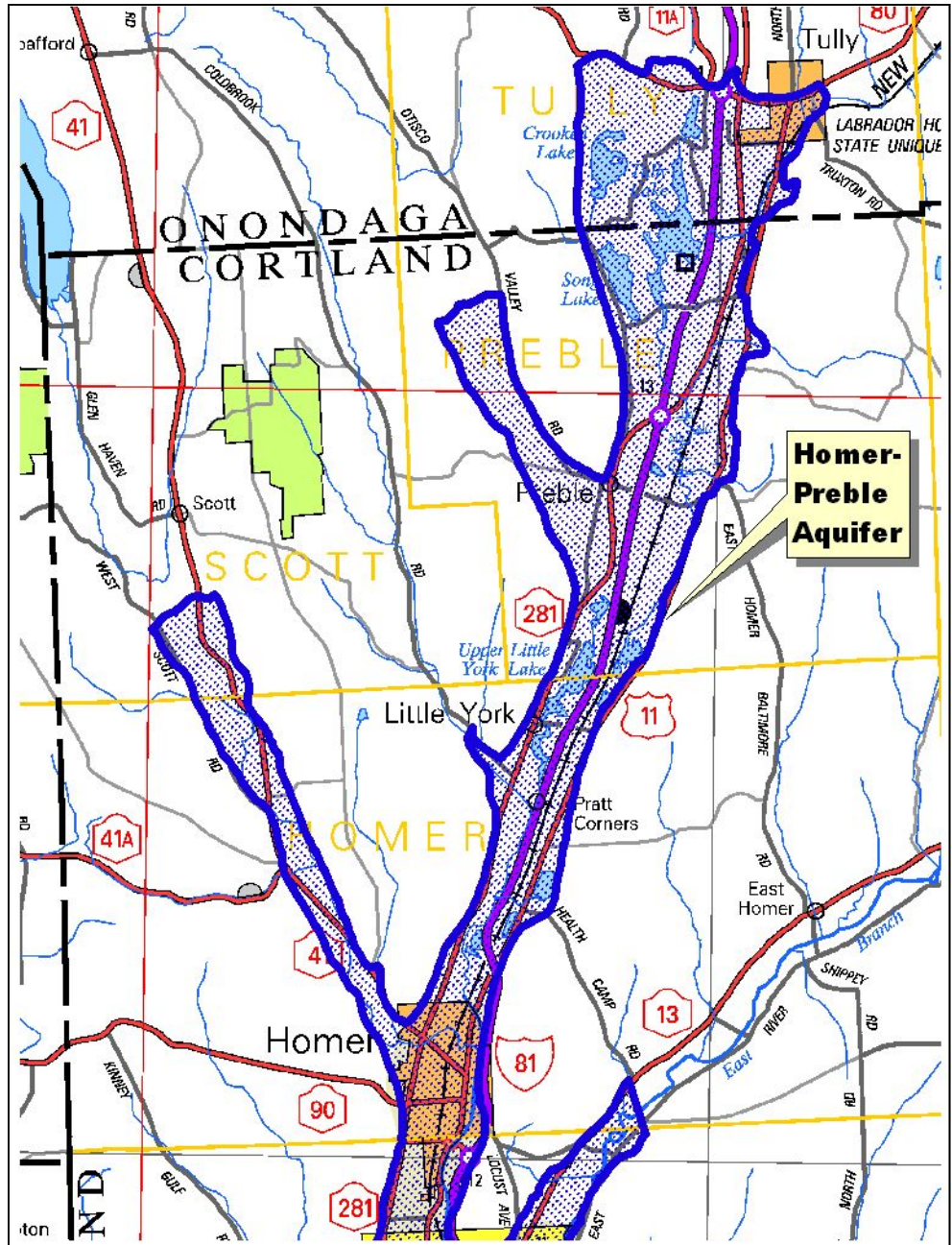
P. Reidy

As part of an ongoing effort to better understand the groundwater resources of Cortland County, SWCD engaged the services of the United States Geological Survey to develop a groundwater flow model of the Homer-Preble aquifer. This model has recently been completed. Todd Miller of USGS was the principal developer of the model.

The model will help the county better manage the extensive and valuable Homer-Preble aquifer in a number of ways. It can be used to determine how pollutants move in groundwater. It can also be used to accurately determine the specific source areas for public water supply wells. The first use of the model will be to determine the source area for the Village of Homer supply well.

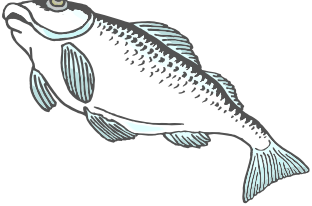
A large amount of existing information was compiled and new information collected to build the model. In addition to using data from existing wells, several new wells were installed. Several seismic-refraction surveys were conducted to help define the depth to bedrock in the region. Many groundwater level measurements were made and streamflow gauging was conducted. Water levels and streamflow data were used to calibrate the model, ensuring it accurately represents the aquifer. Water quality monitoring was also conducted.

The Homer-Preble aquifer model complements the Otter-Dry Creek aquifer model that was previously developed by USGS. Together, these two models provide tools to evaluate most of the Sole Source Aquifer that provides drinking water to well over half the county.



REMINDER

Bass orders were due June 30th.
 Orders need to be picked up on Saturday, July 15, 2006,
 at 1:30 p.m. at the NYS Grange Headquarters located at
 100 Grange Place, Cortland.
 Please don't be late, as the hatchery will not wait.



FARM SERVICE AGENCY UPDATE

Rob Gallinger, County Executive Director



Cortland County farmers that participate in Farm Service Agency (FSA) programs such as the Direct and Counter-Cyclical Program (DCP), Commodity Loans and Loan Deficiency Payments (LDPs) and the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) are reminded to file their annual acreage report by July 17th, 2006 to avoid late penalties. The deadline for reporting small grain acreage has passed, but producers may still file a late report for a small penalty.

FSA offers continuous sign-up for Conservation Reserve Program contracts involving riparian buffers and filter strips on both cropland with tilling and row-crop history and pastureland. Much of Cortland County falls into a Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) area that offers higher rental payments due to high-priority watersheds. Eligible land in either of these categories must have a water-course or water body running through or adjacent. Producers or land owners may contact FSA, NRCS or SWCD for more information on this beneficial program. To date, there have been 83 approved Continuous CRP contracts and 49 CREP contracts in Cortland County.

CRP participants are reminded to take the New York "primary nesting season" dates into consideration before performing mowing. All mowing conducted in accordance with the conservation plan on CRP land should be conducted after July 15th to ensure that wildlife nesting is not unnecessarily disturbed.

Finally, the County Committee election process is underway. Farmers in the townships of Solon, Freetown, Taylor, Cincinnatus, Marathon and Willet will be voting on their representative to the Committee between November 3rd and December 4th. Any eligible voter in Cortland or Tompkins County can nominate an eligible candidate who resides in one of the above townships. Nomination forms are available through FSA and must be returned by August 1st. County Committees make decisions that have significant impacts on our local agricultural sector and therefore are a vital part of FSA.

If you have any questions regarding any FSA programs, feel free to call the FSA office at 607-753-0851, ext. 2. Office hours are 8:00 AM to 4:30 PM, Monday-Friday.



Suzette Kocher,
District Conservationist

Quite a few applications were received for the various programs for the 2006 season. Here is a breakdown...

<u>Program</u>	<u>Applications received</u>	<u>Funded</u>
AMA	11	6
EQIP	10	2
WHIP	1	3
WRP	1	1

AMA = Agricultural Management Assistance Program
EQIP = Environmental Quality Incentives Program

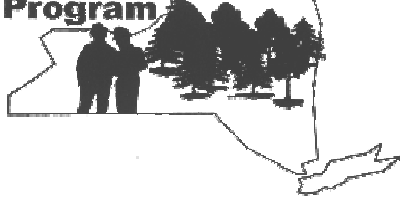
WHIP = Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program
WRP = Wetlands Reserve Program

Now that the weather is cooperating, construction has started on various projects. Under construction are...

- | | |
|--|-----------------------------------|
| Shallow wildlife watering facilities | Heavy use protection areas |
| Manure holding areas | Barnyard water management systems |
| Diversion w/ livestock laneway & crossings | Fencing |

If you participate in any of the above programs and are thinking about starting your project, give our office a call and Elena or I will gladly meet with you and if you wish, your contractor, to make sure everything is in order. Watch in future newsletters for the next sign-up dates for the programs.

NY Master Forest Owner/COVERTS Program



The NY Master Forest Owner/COVERTS Program is looking for candidates to participate in the 2006 NY Master Forest Owner/COVERTS Volunteer Program. The goal of the MFO/COVERTS Program is to provide private, nonindustrial forest owners with the information and encouragement necessary to manage their forests to enhance ownership satisfaction. A volunteer workshop is scheduled to run from Sept. 13th – Sept. 17th at Cornell University's Arnot Teaching and Research Forest in VanEtten, NY.

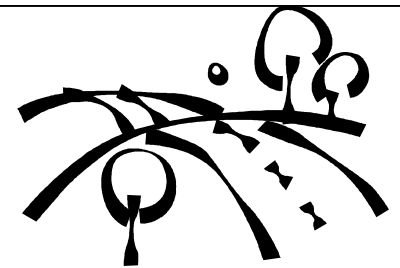
Applications for this workshop are due by August 28th. Volunteers can commute daily, or accommodations are available free at the site. There is a \$50 fee for attendance of the 4-day training. The workshop combines classroom and outdoor

field experiences on a wide variety of subjects including: tree identification, finding boundaries, forest ecology, sawtimber economics, wildlife and sawtimber management, communication techniques, and a visit to a nearby sawmill. For further information, please visit: www.cornellmfo.info or contact the MFO Office at 607-255-2115.

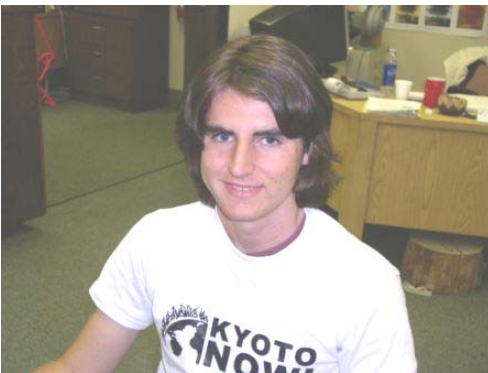
ENVIRONMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS IN MAINTAINING DIRT AND GRAVEL ROADS **FREE SEMINAR**

July 11, 2006 - 8 a.m. to 3 p.m.
Marathon American Legion

Management activities of local highway officials are coming under closer scrutiny from environmental agencies. Join Soil and Water Conservation Districts from the surrounding area and Pennsylvania to discuss how to better manage dirt and gravel roads in an environmentally sensitive manner. This training program will be conducted by professionals from Bradford County, PA, and will cover how roads interact and interplay with natural systems, stormwater management and roads, drainage, road materials, and road maintenance. Lunch and training materials are provided, and the workshop is free to the first 40 registrants. Contact Cortland County SWCD to reserve your spot today.



STAFF NEWS



NRCS welcomes Tyson Buerkle, who started May 30th as a Summer Intern. Tyson attended high school in McGraw, NY and will be going into his third year at the Cornell College of Agriculture and Life Sciences where he majors in Natural Resources. Tyson enjoys playing soccer, playing the guitar, hiking, and gardening in his free time.

SWCD welcomes back Shaylah Reagan, who is interning as a conservation aid this summer. Shaylah attended Cortland Jr. Sr. High School and is now attending SUNY Fredonia where she has achieved deans list every semester. She is a double major in international studies and political science. Shaylah founded and chaired SUNY Fredonia's first department of environmental affairs. In her spare time, she enjoys quilting, cooking, and shopping. Shaylah was an Americorps volunteer with SWCD last summer. Good to have you back!



AEM and CORTLAND COUNTY AGRICULTURE

N. McMahon



Agricultural Environmental Management (AEM) is a voluntary program that helps farmers operate their business in a manner that is environmentally sound. One of AEM's many functions is that of an agricultural planning tool used to identify and address water quality concerns on farms. Typically, a SWCD

representative will come out to the farm and go through a series of worksheets that cover basically all areas of the farm from manure management to stream and floodplain management. The evaluation can take anywhere from 1 to 3 hours.

An AEM farm summary is developed that identifies the major pollution concerns on the farm, and the corresponding AEM action plan includes recommendations to correct or improve the various areas of concern found in the summary report. Practices are commonly recommended to address barnyard runoff, silage leachate (or juice), manure management, grazing systems, stream crossings, and milkhouse waste water. The worksheets are also educational in that they inform the cooperator of benchmarks relating to soil sampling, forage sampling, drinking water analysis, and other aspects of the many sciences found on the farm.

Once an appropriate conservation practice is selected to address a specific area of concern, AEM helps to link farmers to programs that offer financial assistance. Cost-share funds for non point source pollution control and abatement provide incentive to farmers to address environmental problems on the farm. Although not all projects are eligible for financial assistance, technical assistance is still available through SWCD. The AEM summary is a valuable planning tool and provides additional resources and networking opportunities.

If you would like to participate in the AEM program or have any questions, please contact Cortland SWCD to find out more and set up a farm visit. For farms that have participated in AEM in the past; please contact SWCD to update your summary to reflect any significant changes that have occurred on the farm. An update every 3 years will keep farms eligible for cost-share assistance and will help foster a positive and active relationship between Cortland County agriculture, local supporting agencies, the community, and the environment.

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*



VOLUNTEERS NEEDED FOR ANNUAL RIVER CLEAN-UP

Cortland County's Annual Tioughnioga River Clean-Up is slated for Saturday, September 30, 2006. Every year, civic groups and individuals come together to help preserve and beautify our river ways. If you are interested in participating in an event that benefits the entire community, please contact our office at 753-0851, Ext. 3 for more information.

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

Non Profit Org.
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Homer, NY 13077

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

WE'RE ON THE WEB
VISIT US AT:

WWW.CORTLANDCOUNTYSWCD.COM

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



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

Melanie Dewey - Secretary to the Board

Jean Foley - Conservation Assistant

Neil McMahon - Conservation Assistant

Shaylah Reagan - Summer Intern

Pat Reidy - Water Quality Specialist

Stacy Russell - Natural Resource Program Specialist

Darrel Sturges - Conservation Assistant

Jean Swisher - Account Clerk

NRCS Staff:

Tyson Buerkle - Summer Intern

Darrell L. Emmick - State Grazing Land Management Specialist

Suzette Kocher - District Conservationist

Elena Steele - Soil Conservationist

07/04/06 Office Closed for Independence Day

07/04/06 Dirt and Gravel Roads Seminar

07/13/06 Board Meeting (7:00 p.m.)

07/27/06 WQCC Meeting

08/10/06 Board Meeting (7:00 p.m.)

08/24/06 WQCC Meeting

08/24-09/04/06 New York State Fair

09/04/06 Office Closed for Labor Day

09/14/06 Board Meeting (7:00 p.m.)

09/21-22/06 Conservation Field Days

09/28/06 WQCC Meeting

09/30/06 River Clean-Up

10/12/06 Board Meeting (7p.m.)

