

**We're here to serve you!**

Otsego County SWCD  
 967 County Highway 33  
 Cooperstown, NY 13326



Phone: 607-547-8337 ext. 4  
 Fax: 607-547-8814  
 E-mail: blanche\_13335@yahoo.com

**CHECK OUT THE OTSEGO COUNTY  
 SOIL & WATER WEBSITE!!!**

[WWW.OTSEGOSOILANDWATER.COM](http://WWW.OTSEGOSOILANDWATER.COM)

OR

[WWW.OTSEGOSOILANDWATER.ORG](http://WWW.OTSEGOSOILANDWATER.ORG)



**Stock your ponds!!  
 FISH ORDER ENCLOSED!!**

## Otsego County SWCD Services & Supplies

Call Otsego SWCD for more a complete list of services & supplies

### Soil & Water Board:

**Robert Banta**, Chair

**Les Rathbun**, Vice  
 Chair & Grange Rep.





**Darin Hickling**,  
 Member @ Large

**Floyd Dubben**,  
 Legislative Rep.

**Don Lindberg**, Leg-  
 islative Rep.

**Doris Moennich**,  
 Member @ Large

**Dean Utter**, Farm  
 Bureau Rep.

	Annual Tree and Shrub Seedling Sale	Jan.1 through March 31	(prepaid orders)
	Agricultural Assessments	Jan.1-Feb 28	\$20.00 per parcel
	Non Agricultural Drainage Recommendations	Field Visit	\$50.00 per hour
	Pond Site Evaluation	Field Visit	\$50.00 per hour
	Soil Percolation Test for new septic:	\$150.00 & add'l charge of \$50.00	per hour
	Soils Request (in excess of ½ hour)	\$25.00	per hour
	GIS Mapping Fees	Map Size 8 ½ " by 11" \$5.00	Map Size 11" by 17" \$8.00
	Hydroseeding	Call for a quote	
	Bluebird boxes	\$10.00	each
	Wood Duck boxes	\$25.00	each
			

**Otsego Co. SWCD & USDA Service Center**

*Prohibits any discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, gender, religion, age disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, and marital or family status.*

## OTSEGO COUNTY SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT 2009 SUMMER NEWSLETTER

967 CO HWY 33, COOPERSTOWN, NEW YORK 13326  
 TELEPHONE: (607) 547-8337 EXT. 4, FAX: (607) 547-8814

### Tree & Shrub Program 2009

By Jordan Clements, District Conservation Technician

This year we teamed up with the Milford BOCES, Natural Resource Occupation class taught by Mr. Steve Mason. Having over twenty thousand trees ordered and ready to be packaged the N.R.O class was invited to come Tuesday & Wednesday afternoon. In little over two and half hours they had completed all two hundred fifty orders. The class finished early on Wednesday and to celebrate the completion of tree packing the class enjoyed hotdogs, chips, and soda.

The scheduled pick-up started on Friday April 24, at 8:00am with eager county residents awaiting the opportunity to pick up their seedlings. Much of the surplus seedlings were gone by early afternoon on Friday. In order to avoid losing surplus trees to dehydration, the District donated the remaining seedlings to non-profits and County municipal facilities. The recipients of the seedlings were The Manor, Springfield 4-H club and the Bronx River Alliance.

I would like to thank Mr. Steve Mason, Mrs. Jill Eichler and the afternoon N.R.O class, FSA staff, NRCS staff; Mr. Tony Capraro, Mrs. Jeanine Harter, and the rest of the SWCD staff. I would also like to thank the county residences for ordering there seedlings through Otsego County Soil & Water Conservation District.



Jordan Clements and Bob Weaver pose with the Milford BOCES Natural Resource Occupation class.



L-R: T. Bookhout, J. Clements, and Otsego County resident Dick Keene pose for a picture during Friday's pick-up.

### Fish Program

By Jordan Clements, District Conservation Technician

October 14, 2009 will mark our first annual fall fish sale. Otsego County residents might have become use to the fish sale in the spring along with the tree & shrub sale, but with the move of the fish sale to the fall, a larger variety of fish will become available. Along with this news letter you will find a fish order form and a fish description page. Please return order form September 14, 2009

It is New York State law to obtain a fish pond permit before fish can be purchased for stocking, so for those who don't already have one you can find a copy of a farm fish pond permit on our website or you can pick one up at our office any time between 8-4:30pm Monday through Friday. There is no fee for this license and processing time is generally two weeks. You will have to send your completed fish farm permit to your regional Department of Environmental Conservation office\*.

You can also find our order form and description page on our website which is [www.otsegosoilandwater.com](http://www.otsegosoilandwater.com). If you have any questions please contact Jordan Clements at (607) 547-8337 ext 4. \*NYS DEC - Stanford permit address: 65561 State Highway 10, Suite 1, Stanford, NY 12167 Phone Number: (607) 652-3722.

**FROM THE MANAGERS DESK**

By Scott Fickbohm, District Manager



The first two definitions of the word 'environment' found in Webster's Dictionary are: 1) the circumstances, objects, or conditions by which one is surrounded and 2) the complex of physical, chemical, and biotic factors (such as climate, soil, and living things) that act upon an organism or an ecological community and ultimately determine its form and survival.

An honest assessment of the District, using the first definition, and of the County's landscape, using both, does not provide a rosy picture. With a rise in the need for soil and water conservation practices hitting taking place simultaneously with cutbacks in available funding, the District and our County natural resources may be in for a wild ride. One that may 'ultimately determine its form and survival' as the book says.

Both environments are ever-changing, and recently, changing fast and in significant ways – for good and for bad. However, one thing that remains constant is the District's determination to do all we can to protect Otsego County's soil and water resources, make progress where we can and confront the new and difficult challenges we face to carrying out our mission, while making sure we are open to new 'opportunities'. Summarized below are just a few of each of these opportunities and 'challenges' (as we like to call them) that help define our working environment and are likely to have an impact on our physical one too.

**OPPORTUNITIES Wetland Program** - The District (SWCD) is announcing the kick-off of its first locally led **Wetland Program**. This program will be an extension of an existing and highly successful Wetland Program implemented by the Upper Susquehanna Coalition (USC). The USC is a coalition of SWCD's that are in the NY portion of the Chesapeake Bay Watershed and functions as a means to plan, fund and implement conservation programs across the basin. The program will support wetland projects of all sizes from large complexes to small, ephemeral vernal pool projects. The District is asking for any Otsego County landowner who is interested in a wetland restoration or vernal pool project to call the District office at (607) 547-8337 ext 4. Sign-up will be available through our website ([www.otsego-soilandwater.com](http://www.otsego-soilandwater.com)) as soon as possible.

**Grassland Protection**- Some residents in the Towns of Richfield, Springfield, Middlefield and Cherry Valley are going to be eligible for the DEC's **Landowner Incentive Program for Grassland Protection and Management**. Through this program, the DEC will reimburse landowners at a set rate for grassland management. Pre-applications are due by Aug 1<sup>st</sup>. For more information, contact the District or visit the DEC website <http://www.dec.ny.gov/pubs/grants.html>.

**Private Ponds** – Ponds are wonderful additions to our landscape. Placement and permitting are important things to take into consideration. If you're constructing a pond on your property and would like **technical assistance** with these issues, the District can provide this service for a fee of \$50/hr.

**Canadatego Lake** – Funding goals for the **Hydrology and Hydraulic Study** and the **State of the Lake Study** have been met and work is underway. The goal of this effort is to address the chronic flooding that occurs around Canadatego Lake and its impact on water quality. Updates on the current status of each study will be coming out later this summer.

**Contractor and Excavator Training** – The District is working on a partnership with DEC and the Tioga County SWCD to offer a 4hr training for contractors and excavators on sediment and erosion control measures for construction sites. The tentative date for the training is mid December 09. The training will help the private sector meet new requirements by DEC that stipulate that certain construction on-site inspectors and contractors, specifically, individuals working under direct supervision of a licensed Professional Engineer or licensed Landscape Architect of NYS, can take to satisfy the Construction General Permit (GP-0-08-001) training requirements

**CHALLENGES Natural Gas** – The idea of widespread natural gas exploration and exploitation in Otsego County has raised many serious concerns regarding the negative impact on water quality in our creeks, streams, rivers, lakes and aquifers. The range of impacts is as wide as the range complexity in addressing them. Further confusing the issue is having to read the 'tea leaves' when trying to foresee how (and to a lesser extent, if) exploration and eventual exploitation will take place. While the District has no legal jurisdiction in this area (or regulatory power in general) and no new funds relating to natural gas, we are dedicated to doing what we can to carry out our mission to protect our County's outstanding water resources. For example: we will continue you to work towards the protection under federal law, as well as try to develop watershed based emergency spill plans as well as feasible water sampling and erosion control programs focused on gas related impacts.

*Continue on page 3, Manger's Desk*

**Leatherstocking Regional Envirothon Winners**



**Second Place**  
Milford Central Team A



**Third Place**  
Cooperstown School Team Architeuthis

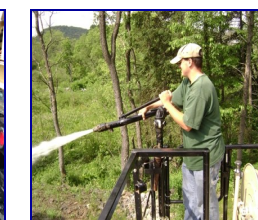
**2009 Hydroseeding in Progress**



Photo on left done in Town of Laurens. Project on right was done at Bartlett Road Springfield Center.

**Elizabeth Stein Soils Award Winner**

Cooperstown School Team Architeuthis



Aaron hydroseeding & clean-up at days end.

Aaron Buchta is Otsego SWCD's Ameri-Corp summer intern. Aaron will be working with Jordan Clements on hydroseeding projects through-out the county. If see these two young men out there spreading a seed mixture along the highways be sure to give them a wave. Please contact Jordan at (607) 547-8337 ext. 4, if you are interested in having your lawn hydro seeded.

**USDA SERVICE CENTER**

**Adopt-a-Highway Day**

**Friday, May 8, 2009**



L-R J. Harris, J. Clements, J. Harter, B. Weaver, L. Knapp, S. Fickbohm, B. Hurlbutt, T. Capraro, and

kneeling; T. Bookhout

**Land Link Program**



The purpose for this program is to help connect farmers with landowners of under utilized ag land. It will help develop leases, assist in farm planning, improve communication, and assist both sides in facilitating an equitable partnership to put more farmland back into production.

Through a comprehensive database, contacts will be made on behalf of both parties. Program staff will help make introductions and determine if the fit is "right" and then complete necessary paperwork to protect and benefit both parties.

For additional information contact Chris Harmon, Executive Director of Center for Ag Development & Entrepreneurship (CADE) at 607-433-2545.

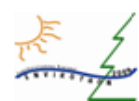
**Otsego SWCD New Staff Member**

If you haven't all ready met our new Conservation Technician please stop in and introduce yourself to Jordan Clements.

Jordan comes to us with a degree in Fishery & Wildlife Sciences from Paul Smith College.

It is a joy & a pleasure to have this "can do" person on staff. Jordan has only been with us for three months, but he's all ready showing a willingness to step up and perform his duties, make changes, and add new ideas.

Jordan fills the vacant spot that was created when Ryan Naatz left us. We miss Ryan and his step-up take charge attitude and we wish Ryan all the best in his new job in Delaware County.



**Oneonta High School Places Eighth Place**

**At NYS Envirothon**



On May 6, 2009 Oneonta took the overall win at the Leatherstocking Regional Envirothon. This win advanced the Oneonta High School Envirothon team to compete at the NYS level. On May 27th the team traveled to Keuka College, Keuka Park to compete at the NYS Envirothon May 27-28.

The NYS Envirothon is the next step in Envirothon completion where the winner at the regional county level advances to the state, the state winner advances to the Canon Envirothon. The Canon Envirothon will be held on August 2-8, 2009 at the University of North Carolina, Asheville, NC.

These young ladies from Oneonta High School worked very hard preparing for the state completion. Their hard work paid off at the state competition where they placed eighth overall out of 56 teams.

The Envirothon is a hands-on environmental competition where teams of five out of fifty-six teams compete in five different environmental areas; soils & land use, aquatics ecology, forestry, wildlife, and a current issue. This year's current issue was "Biodiversity in a Changing World".

We couldn't hold the Leatherstocking Regional Envirothon event without the local Otsego County sponsors; **Communications Specialists, Inc., NBT-Bank, Northern Eagle Beverages, Inc., J.B. Logging Inc., Otsego Mutual Fire Ins. Company, Gerald & Robert Pondolino, DDS, Oneonta Hannaford, Hummel's, and Stewart's Shops.**

**Thank you for your continued support.**



**L-R;** R. Fox, G. Hyland, J. Matus, A. Bitzer. **Front:** E. Ko



**2009 Leatherstocking Regional 1st Place Winners: Oneonta High School.**



**Oneonta High School at NYS Envirothon**



**Agricultural Environmental Management**

**By Troy Bookhout, AEM Coordinator**

The Otsego Agricultural Environmental Management program is moving forward following a new strategic plan. In the past, priorities were created using DEC's priority water bodies list (PWL). It utilized test results to determine which water bodies are "impacted" by non point source pollution. This method works on a large watershed scale basis, but often misses opportunities at the county level. Our new approach takes into account such site-specific and farm level conditions as economic considerations, nutrient management, farm size and type, distance to surface water, availability of matching funds and supporting programs, farmer commitment and input from local agricultural organizations. Utilizing this new approach will create a more dynamic AEM program that continues to impact water quality and economic viability throughout the County.

Otsego County SWCD is also targeting best management practices that can create positive economic impacts on the farm. These include Nutrient Management Plans (NMP) and Prescribed Grazing Plans. NMP's maximize the use of nutrients generated on the farm for crop production. This has the potential to reduce the amount of fertilizer inputs. Prescribed Grazing Plans utilize the animals foraging abilities to reduce costs. While Otsego County's climate is ideal for growing grasses, grazing is vastly under utilized here. Grazing has the potential to reduce harvesting costs, increase grass forage yields, and increase the quality of grass forages.

Additionally Otsego County SWCD is currently positioning itself to be included in the Graze NY program. This program promotes and assists in the successful adoption of grazing for area live-stock farmers. Look for this program to start in 2010.

If you are interested in learning more about the AEM program, participating, or developing a plan; please contact Troy Bookhout at Otsego County Soil & Water Conservation District by calling (607)547-8337 Ext.4.

**Continue from page 2, Manager's Desk**

**EPA** – The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is likely to designate the entire Upper Susquehanna River in NY a "Total Maximum Daily Load Watershed" (TMDL) in 2011. At its heart, this is an effort to stem the ongoing environmental degradation taking place in one of our nations most precious natural resources – the Chesapeake Bay. By declaring a TMDL, the EPA will seek to reduce the amount of nitrogen (N), phosphorus (P) and sediment leaving NY and entering Pennsylvania and, by extension, entering the Bay. The sources of these 'pollutants' are mainly urban settings (especially stormwater), agriculture and naturally occurring forested areas. Reducing the amount of sediment, N&P from our County's landscape is a monumental task, but the District is already on the job with programs like the **Oneonta Stormwater Program**, the **Municipal Hydroseeding Program** and the **Agricultural Environmental Management Program** which are all geared to reducing those very same pollutants.

**NY State Funds** – It looks like the national and state-wide financial crunch is finally hitting home here at the local District. While the District does obtain funds from a variety of sources, NYS funds represent a large portion of our annual operating and program budget (40% for 2009). This year Albany removed the Upper Susquehanna Coalition from the Environmental Protection Fund (good-bye **District Flood Program**) and it looks like our **Agricultural Environmental Management Program** and **Agricultural Non-Point Source Grants** may be on the chopping block for this and next year. And while the District will continue to implement our **Municipal Hydroseeding and Oneonta Stormwater Programs** and **stream projects**, as well as continue to work on existing **Agricultural Non-Point Source Grants**, there seems to be no assurance of reimbursement on the horizon.



**Farm Service Agency Update**

By Bill Gibson, County Executive Director

Our dairy community has worked through many tight times of high cost and low prices over the decades. The current economic cycle for dairy is truly one of the worst total scenarios. Many dairy articles have addressed how to lose the least during this period. Dairies are by nature high on input costs which cannot be eliminated when milk prices turn down. If planning to survive, and to continue operating, farmers realize they may have many months of deficits. The USDA recognizes this and does offer some help. For dairy this comes under the title of the Milk Income Loss Contracts (MILC). Such programs are approved by Congress with the goal of maintaining critical farm resources. The MILC program pays 45% of the difference below a standard price for "fluid" milk and the current actual rate. This falls significantly short of making up the need that currently exists on dairy farms. The 2008 Farm Bill added a provision to include an adjustment for high feed costs. Purchased feeds typically represent 25-30% of all expenses on a dairy farm. Feed costs had practically doubled with gas prices over the last couple years. These costs have tapered some as did fuel prices, but they are not back to 'pre- Katrina' levels.

MILC is one tool the USDA offers. I will mention a couple others. There are, of course, loans. Very few farmers want to borrow more, but to meet obligations and remain in business the USDA Farm Service Agency lending program does offer operating loans to meet outstanding debts or re-finance higher interest obligations. This year funding was used very quickly--- even "Recovery Act funds", but that does not mean farm operators should avoid applying. Congressional efforts are underway to provide additional loan funds.

Elsewhere in this newsletter, grazing is highlighted. Improvements funded through our programs would be late for this year, but there are multiple opportunities to improve grazing systems. One that FSA offers is through the Conservation Reserve Program. By keeping cattle back from streams and water-bodies, we can fund new and improved water systems and join with other programs to provide improved fencing to act as a foundation to enhanced grazing systems. Many farmers prefer grazing to barn feeding due to labor and cost savings. The challenges are keeping even quality feed and water. CRP can be an important part of that package, and offers high level cost-sharing and incentives to promote it.

Wool and lamb producers have an opportunity to receive incentives for each unshorn lamb marketed or consumed, as well as for wool. Remember to contact our office before marketing either. This year's wool pool at the Morris Fair grounds is Saturday & Sunday, September 12 & 13<sup>th</sup>, 8:30 am to 4 pm..

The last program I'll mention is the ACRE program, which supplements the Direct & Counter-cyclical Program (DCP) from the previous Farm Bill. ACRE is not for everyone. First, a DCP Base is needed from the 2002 Farm Bill. Then you need to gamble a little, by giving up 20% of the known, guaranteed Direct DCP payment. With that you are eligible for price and yield protection that could reap significantly larger benefits than the 20% buy-in. It is an interesting option that could be used by large, small or intermediate farms. It is a matter of scale where each would give up 20% to "play". The odds of getting it back are based on grain market prices and yields for the year ahead. The rub is once you're in you remain in for this Farm Bill. Call (607) 547-8131 for details.

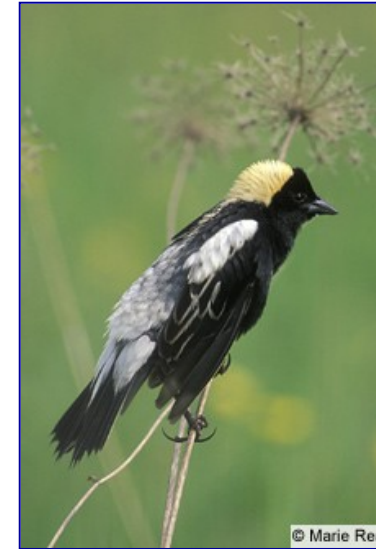
*Have you seen me?*

**Spotted Turtle**

If so please call Dave at (518) 796-9049 or email [dwmacdougall@yahoo.com](mailto:dwmacdougall@yahoo.com). Research project through the University at Albany.



by Anthony Capraro, District Conservation, USDA, NRCS



Above: The male Bobolink

**Otsego County Landowners:** Do you like to see fields of grasslands waving in the summer winds or hearing the beautiful songs of the bobolink or the eastern meadow lark? Through the 2008 Farm Bill, NRCS is offering the Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP). Under the WHIP, there are many best management practices available to promote grassland nesting species such as the bobolink, eastern meadow lark, and the eastern wild turkey. This program does not just benefit avian species; it also benefits many insect species, such as bees, amphibians, and mammals. There are a range of practices that fall under the program's criteria. A few practices are, conservation cover, obstruction removal, and early successional habitat development/management. This program is aimed at controlling fields that are in current agriculture or that have been abandoned and are starting to turn back into a wooded area. These fields would be mowed after July 15<sup>th</sup> before September 30<sup>th</sup> so the grasses have time to grow again before winter sets in. There are incentive payments for each practice also. This is a voluntary program and all applications will be ranked against others throughout New York State. If this program interests you please contact the NRCS office in Cooperstown, Monday – Friday, at 607-547-8337 ext. 3

**EQIP – Organic Initiative**

By Jeanine Harter,  
Soil Conservation Technician  
USDA, NRCS

The Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 (2008 Farm Bill) includes an exciting new program - the Organic Initiative. This initiative includes the availability of financial and technical assistance to help producers of all commodities to meet their conservation goals. The Organic Initiative is open to agricultural producers who are certified organic or are transitioning to organic. Applicants must meet eligibility requirements and the program will highlight 6 "core" conservation practices. The list of eligible practices include but are not limited to: Cover Crop, Prescribed Grazing, Nutrient Management, Pest Management, Conservation Crop Rotation, and Forage Harvest Management. The EQIP Organic Initiative allows eligible producers to apply for up to \$20,000/year not to exceed \$80,000 over six years. For more information please call the USDA, Natural Resources Conservation Service at the Cooperstown F.O. at 607-547-8337 ext. 3 or visit [www.ny.nrcs.usda.gov/](http://www.ny.nrcs.usda.gov/).

