

Otsego County Soil and Water Conservation District



2020 Summer Newsletter

July 2020

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Cooperstown, NY 13326

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2020 Tree and Shrub Sale Success

As all attendees of this past spring's annual tree sale hopefully noticed, we had to structure our tree sale differently to address the COVID-19 pandemic. We would like to extend our thanks to all of our customers who followed guidelines, stayed in their vehicles and limited exposure to allow us to carry out yet another tree sale. The customers cooperated so well and the sale went so smoothly that we are seriously debating structuring our sale in a similar drive-through fashion next year. Again, thank you so much for following protocol and allowing us to offer this outstanding service during



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**Meet Our
2020 Summer
Interns**

**Nicholas Jordan - USC Buffer
Steward**

As a Fisheries & Wildlife Technology student and outdoorsman, I find myself in search of native Brook Trout throughout Otsego County. My love for the outdoors, my education, and my opportunity to work here in Cooperstown have helped me develop an appreciation for how water quality plays a vital role in the health and abundance of sensitive fish and aquatic invertebrates alike.



Riparian buffers are the vegetated regions adjacent to streams, and these buffers play a crucial role in promoting overall stream health. Among their numerous benefits, riparian buffers aid in reducing Nitrogen and Phosphorus inputs that would otherwise enter the water, and deeply-rooted vegetation along streams help to reduce soil erosion during high-water events. Another benefit of riparian buffers is that the leaves from trees and shrubs drop into the streams every fall, and they are a major nutrient source for aquatic invertebrates; which are the cornerstone of a stream's ecosystem.

My job at the District this summer is to assist our Stream Technician in the buffers we have planted throughout the County. We are working to monitor buffers for species-specific survival rates, and we are expanding our knowledge to help guide conservation-related decisions in the future.



Buffer monitoring and maintenance is being performed by buffer interns across the County this summer. Weed whacking 3 foot survival rings.



Tarrah Skye Smith - Summer Intern

My name is Tarrah Skye Smith, and I'm the new intern at Otsego Soil and Water. I'm originally from Oneonta, New York, and I'm starting my senior year at Hartwick College where I study Environment and Sustainability. In collaboration with Otsego Soil and Water and Hartwick College, I am conducting a research project on the effectiveness of riparian buffer zones on the health of local stream water. I would like to thank the Freedman's in their help with this project. I enjoy performing in and watching live theatre, and in my free time, I like to explore nature by kayaking and hiking.

Meet the NRCS Intern

My name is Kate Mertus, and I'm originally from Corning, NY. Currently, I'm a student at SUNY Oneonta studying Biology with a concentration in Conservation and Ecology. I like to bake, paint, hike, bike, and take care of my many house plants. My position with the NRCS is through the Pathways Program as a Student Soil Conservationist Trainee. The



The Pathways Program offers federal internship and employment opportunities for current students, recent graduates and those with an advanced degree. I've been onboard for about 7 weeks, and so far, I've been kept busy by soil sampling, attending numerous site visits, and have been to a couple trainings around the State. I'm constantly shocked at how much information and experience staff of NRCS have, and I'm lucky to be able to learn so many cool things from them. My only set goals for the future are building a tiny house and working with people that I enjoy seeing every day (hopefully in conservation). The Pathways Program is a great chance for me to see if working with the NRCS is something that I could do for the rest of my life. I'm excited to continue to work this summer being outside, learning, and meeting a lot of awesome people!

COVID-19 & Otsego County SWCD Response

Submitted by: Jordan Clements, District Manager

Otsego County Soil & Water Conservation District has been navigating the COVID-19 pandemic and its aftermath for the last five months and this is one of the biggest challenges of our time. The District has managed to keep operations going while minimizing the risk to employees. The District made an investment into the technology that made it possible for the staff to work from home during the initial 4-5 months that COVID-19 outbreak.

Myself and the District Board bear the primary responsibility for navigating our District through this disruption. It will be up to the District Board to determine how and when to start the difficult task of returning to the workplace once government restrictions are lifted. The District Board allowed the staff to return nearly a month ago. Of course, this wasn't allowed until a strict list of preventive protocols were put into place assuring peoples protection and safety. All staff are aware of these protocols and are expected to follow the rules accordingly. Each morning prior to the admittance into the office each staff members temperature is taken to ensure they are not feverish. If any staff member is found to have a fever of 100.5 or greater, they will not be allowed to enter and must leave and not return until fever is gone.

The health and safety of the District staff is my top priority as the District Board considered, how to bring operations back to some semblance of normal. This is, of course, a moral, ethical and legal concern for all agencies and business. And from my Districts perspective, safeguarding employees' well-being is paramount because no plan to resume normal operations can succeed without them.

The District is making every effort to follow all federal, state and local orders as restrictions are eased. Once the office reopened, the new protocols for deep cleaning and sanitization have been put into place. It could also mean changes to the layout of the workspace, such as moving workstations farther apart or changing employee schedules to reduce the number of people in buildings at one time.

The District also established guidelines for the use of personal protective equipment, such as face masks and gloves, checking employees and visitors for fever before entering the workplace, and establishing rules governing when employees can return to work after recovering from infection. The District not only cares about the environment but it also cares about the safety and well being of its staff members and there families.

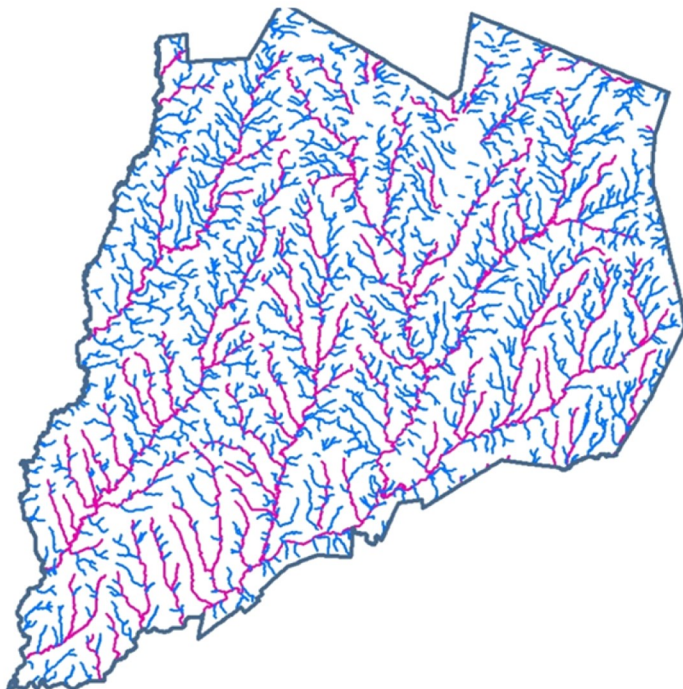
How to Name a Stream

Small streams account for about 80% of all streams in the United States, and they are essential for the overall health of our freshwater ecosystems. Quite often though, small streams are neglected, and society doesn't value them at the same level as their larger; more well-known counterparts. Part of the problem is that many small streams are unnamed, and when the public can't associate a name with a stream, they often fail to assign value to it. Here in Otsego County we have no shortage of small streams, and of the 1,316 streams we have in the County, 1,220 (nearly 93%) are unnamed. The included image displays an outline of Otsego County with named streams in purple/pink and unnamed streams in blue.

The responsibility of naming geographic locations in the U.S. is held by a branch of the United States Geological Survey (USGS), and assisted by each State's "geographic names authority."

If you wish to name a stream in New York State you must first contact USGS (<http://geonames.usgs.gov/domestic/index.html>) and obtain all necessary documents. Once all documents are complete and submitted to USGS they will be sent to the New York State Committee on Geographic Names who will review the information and return their recommendation to USGS. According to the New York State Museum's website, some of the documentation required includes:

- What is the historical justification for the proposed name?
- Is the proposed name in local usage?
- Do local leaders, residents and businesses support the proposed name?



Other Services Available

Post Pounder Rental

Soil Group Worksheets for Agricultural Assessments

Soil Percolation Testing for New Septic

Soil Sampling

GIS Mapping

Compost (40 lb. Bags)

Barley Straw

Bluebird Boxes

Wood Duck Boxes

Owl Boxes

Bat Boxes

Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plans

This year has been a challenging one for most of the world, and for those of us working in the field of environmental conservation there has been no exception. While the constant threat of a potentially fatal virus has certainly brought many difficulties, it has also provided some opportunities. Luckily for myself, I was able to work from home and spend extra time with my son as well as accomplish some career objectives.

After nearly 3 years of working towards a New York State Agricultural Environmental Management certification, the Otsego County Soil and Water Conservation District is now very close to having a Certified AEM Planner on staff. Since Covid-19's onset (and subsequently moving our offices to our homes), I have had my first Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plan (CNMP) approved, my second CNMP accepted, and my third plan completed and ready for submission to New York State Ag and Markets for review. Upon the review and approval of my second and third CNMPs, I will have reached a significant milestone for myself and our District.

We are now seeking individuals who may be able to benefit from having a Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plan. Agricultural producers interested in promoting conservation, potential project implementation, reducing fertilizer bills, and/or increasing operational efficiency are encouraged to call (607) 547-8337 ext. 4. Also, on the topic of Covid-19, we have a substantial amount of hand sanitizer available free of charge for any agriculture related business in the area in an attempt to help keep everyone healthy. If you are interested, please call our office and we can arrange for you to safely pick up hand sanitizer in unopened cases.

Intensive Rotational Targeted Grazing

Intensive Rotational Targeted Grazing (IRTG) is a new technique I stumbled upon from the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC). The DEC is promoting the use of sheep and goats, along with some larger livestock, for invasive species control and land clearing in lieu of herbicides and mechanical clipping. According to the DEC, they have been working with Dr. Gary Kleppel at the State University of Albany to aid in the fight against invasive species and help to reduce the amount of herbicide needed on State lands. They stated these animals can be brought in on temporary contracts to perform the tasks required to meet the management goals and objectives. This article has many more interesting points discussing the possibilities of IRTG. If you are interested, please read the article found at <https://www.dec.ny.gov/lands/86641.html>.



Forest Management Plan

Do you own forest land? If the answer is yes, do you have a forest management plan? If you do not have a plan, you should! Ownership imparts responsibility and in turn has certain financial requirements. Forest property ownership responsibility can best be described as one of stewardship. But just what is stewardship? My definition is the conservation of your properties natural resources and attributes/features over a period of time. Conservation can be thought of as the wise use of a natural resource. This can become rather complicated but can be simple also. I believe that having a Forest Management Plan is an important step to good stewardship.

Essential parts of a professionally written plan include: forest owner goals and objectives, location, maintenance requirements, inventory, and prescription. Goals and objectives include both ownership long term and short term specific undertakings such as timber stand improvements, thinning, harvests, and regeneration strategies. Location includes site specific mapping and aerial photography showing just where the property is located, access, boundaries, and relationships to adjoining parcels and various features. Maintenance aspects can include road and trails considerations, insect, disease, and invasive issues, and property line and corner marking (or surveying issues). Inventory goes to knowledge of what you have, its condition, and where it is. Essential to most forest activity and certainly inventory is the forest stand. Stands are contiguous groupings of forest trees by attributes such as forest species composition, forest cover type, structure, size, age, and location so as to be distinguishable from adjacent communities. Stand inventory can include location on maps, acreage, soil types, tree species, age, stocking, density, timber volume, tree health, among other observations and measurements.

Prescription involves applying landowner goals and objectives to individual forest stands and then developing a timeline of planned endeavors to achieve said objectives. Prescribed activities can consist of timber harvests, stand regeneration (site preparation, plantings, interfering plant removal, etc.), silvical system selection and implementation, wildlife management practices, water quality practices, stand aesthetics, biodiversity, recreation enhancement, and other activities.

It is important that owners realize that Forest Management Plans are action plans. They are not just theory or wish lists but require action for realistic goals that are obtainable. Plans should be

reviewed every 5 years or so as conditions and owners themselves change.

Forest Management Plan benefits can be as varied as the forest landowners themselves. Like many aspects of life you get out of forest planning what you put into it. Additional benefits are: educational, brings about awareness of environmental regulations especially when employing professional services, financial considerations: income, costs, taxation and accounting planning; cost share programs of several government agencies; and certification possibilities through the American tree farm system.



The District Embraces Technology

The 2020 Farm Tour will be a little different this October. Every year we invite State legislators, County legislators, board members, and our partner agencies to come out and visit three farms that have undergone major improvements made possible by the Otsego County Soil & Water Conservation District, New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets, Farm Service Agency, and the Natural Resources Conservation Service. We have decided to not let Coronavirus ruin another event, and have begun to adapt to the new age of hosting meetings remotely. District staff will be thrown into production mode, and diving into the world of video editing to compile together the story of the farms, and showcase the Best Management Practices installed. Without having travel time to worry about we will have time to show viewers other projects that go on at the District as well, such as the County Forestry Program and the riparian forest buffer program. We hope to have a live Q & A session at the end as well

2020 DEC/USC Cover Crop Program

The Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) has reimbursement funding available for the implementation of cover crops. Otsego SWCD has a practice implementation reimbursement agreement with the Upper Susquehanna Coalition (USC) who disperses the funds to us to pay farmers for successful cover crop plantings. There are a limited number of acres available for this cover crop program, and they will be distributed on a first come, first serve basis, there is no sign up. Necessary documentation you will need to provide us with this fall is photos before, during planting, and after germination. The number of acres planted, planting date, cover crop species, a copy of the seed tag, field location, termination method, and manure application timing (if applicable). The funding will be used toward the purchase of certified seed and/or cost of implementation. You'll even get a cover crop sign to display your field proudly.





Eligibility for Nominations for the 2020 County Committee Elections

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Farm Service Agency (FSA) county committees are a critical component of the day-to-day operations of FSA and allow grassroots input and local administration of federal farm programs.

Committees are comprised of locally elected agricultural producers responsible for the fair and equitable administration of FSA farm programs in their counties. Committee members are accountable to the Secretary of Agriculture. If elected, members become part of a local decision making and farm program delivery process. The Otsego County Committee consists of three elected members from local administrative areas (LAA). Each member serves a three-year term. To be eligible for nomination and hold office as a committee member or alternate, a person must fulfill each of the following requirements: (1) be a producer with an interest in farming operations, (2) participate or cooperate in any FSA program provided for by law, (3) be a U.S. citizen, (4) be of legal voting age, (5) meet the basic eligibility requirements, and (6) reside in the county or multi-county jurisdiction in which they will be serving. Local Administrative Areas # 1, the towns of **Middlefield, Springfield, Cherry Valley, Roseboom, Westford, Decatur, Maryland, Worcester**, is up for election this year.

All nomination forms for the 2020 election must be postmarked or received in the local USDA Service Center by Aug. 1, 2020 (or next business day). For more information on FSA county committee elections and appointments please call the Otsego County FSA, 607-547-8131, or refer to the FSA fact sheet: *Eligibility to Vote and Hold Office as a COC Member* available online at: fsa.usda.gov/elections.

Kate Hemstreet, Farm Service Agency County Executive Director

kate.hemstreet@usda.gov

I've recently transferred to Eastern New York covering Albany, Otsego, Schenectady and Schoharie Counties.

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To sign up for our future newsletters you may do so in 3 ways, you may send your email address to millerj@otsegoilandwater.com , call our office at (607) 547-8337 ext. 4 or use the sign up form on our website at www.otsegoilandwater.com/contactus

We are transitioning to summer electronic newsletters to save time, paper, and money. This will also allow us to get you info faster with more photos, links, and information. Please add us to your contact list to ensure your newsletter reaches your inbox. We hope you understand the transition! If you don't use email contact us to make special arrangements.

Otsego County SWCD and USDA Service Center prohibits any discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, gender, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, and martial or family status.

Friendly Reminder to All Farmers

Anthony Capraro, District Conservationist

USDA/NRCS



This is a reminder to all farmers that if you plan on plowing up any abandoned fields or opening any ditches to check with your local FSA or NRCS to make sure you are still in compliance with the Food Security Act of 1985. To be eligible for any USDA farm loans or any other program benefits farmers must certify on Form AD-1026. By signing this form a producer certifies that they will not; a) plant or produce an agricultural commodity on highly erodible fields unless actively applying an approved conservation plan or maintaining a fully applied conservation system, b) plant or produce an agricultural commodity on wetlands converted after December 23rd, 1985, c) convert wetlands by draining, dredging, filing, leveling, landclearing or any other means that would allow the planting of any crop, pasture, agricultural commodity, or other such crops, d) to use proceeds from any FSA farm loan, insured or guaranteed, or any USDA cost-share program, in such a way that might result in negative impacts to wetlands, except for those projects evaluated and approved by NRCS. If you have any questions or concerns please contact the USDA Service Center at 607-547-8337. The office is open Monday through Friday 8am to 4:30 pm.



It's Never Too Late Conservation Farm Planning

While the new Farm Bill rules are finalized, now is the time to plan. If you have ever been interested in any Farm Bill program or even if you have been thinking of applying; the first step is getting a good conservation farm plan completed. A good conservation plan could help distinguish the difference of immediate resource concern issues from convenience of management. A conservation farm plan is exactly what it sounds like, "a plan", this document is meant to be progressive, it changes as the farm changes. This plan is also very helpful if applying for any programs since a good portion of work will have already been completed. Please contact the Cooperstown NRCS field office at 607-547-8337. The office is open Monday through Friday 8am to 4:30 pm if you are interested in conservation farm planning.

Helping People Help the Land

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Healthy Soils – A Key to Crop Production

By Jeanine Harter, Soil Conservation Technician

USDA, Natural Resources Conservation Service

Soil is often taken for granted and soil health is more often a side thought and not a priority on an agricultural operation. The type of agricultural operation does not matter; a livestock farm with cropland and pasture, a crop farm, or vegetable farm. The base of all operations is the soil that mother nature provides for the farmer to manage. Soil health has become increasingly more important as rain events have increased in frequency and intensity. Soils should be healthier and more resilient to withstand the power of an intense precipitation event. In the past, soils have only been considered after a storm event when there was evidence of a problem in the fields.

Precipitation falling to the earth at a high intensity cannot infiltrate down through the soil profile 100%, so it becomes surface flow and begins the erosion process as sheet erosion (photo 1). The water then concentrates over a length of slope and forms rills. The rills concentrate and erode the soil to form ephemeral gullies. At this point the soil can be disked and the gully smoothed and repaired; even though topsoil has still moved. The gully then cuts deeper and forms a classic gully (photo 2). At this point, many tons of soil have eroded and collected at the base of the field or have continued to flow into an adjacent surface water such as a stream, pond, lake, or wetland. Along with the topsoil, there is the loss of nutrients that were available to grow the intended crop. How can this situation be changed to be proactive instead of reactive? Improving soil health is key to long-term, sustainable agricultural production.



Photo 1: Sheet Erosion



Photo 2: Classic Gully

Healthy soils are high-performing, productive soils that will reduce erosion and protect natural resources on the farm. Healthy soils reduce production costs and improve profits by increasing production of valuable crops. Healthy soils have more structure which allows them to hold more water; therefore, losing less water to runoff and evaporation. As tillage passes decline, and more plant and crop residues cover the soil, the organic matter will start to build. Organic matter holds 18-20 times its weight in water and recycles nutrients for plants to use. Studies have shown that 1.0% of organic matter in the top 6” of soil would hold approximately 27,000 gallons of water per acre. Most farmers can increase their soil organic matter in 3-10 years if they are motivated about adopting conservation practices to achieve this goal.

There are 4 basic soil health principles that can lead to being proactive instead of reactive with soil health.

They include:

1. Use plant diversity to increase diversity in the soil.
2. Manage soils more by disturbing them less.
3. Keep plants growing throughout the year to feed the soil.
4. Keep soil covered as much as possible.

These principles can be accomplished by utilizing conservation practices that will enhance crop production, soil function, improve or sustain water quality, air quality, energy efficiency and wildlife habitat. Recommended conservation practices include: Conservation Crop Rotation, Cover Crops, Stripcropping, No Till, Mulching, Nutrient Management, and Pest Management.



No Till Corn into Sprayed Sod



No Till Corn into Previous Year Grain Corn



Rye Cover Crop Following Corn Harvest



Radish Cover Crop to Reduce Compaction

Basic Principles of Soil Health to think about through the cropping season:

1. Topsoil is precious and should be protected.
2. Soil organic matter is critical to crop production and should be protected.
3. More soil organic matter is better, and we should try to increase it.

We're Still Here

*Submitted by Andrew Grabo
NRCS Program Support Specialist*

As a reminder, NRCS is always looking for new and old applicants for our programs. With the pandemic happening this year the Otsego County Fair and many other Events that you normally see us at have been canceled. We will not get to see you in the booth under the grandstands, or at our display setup at other events, but we are always looking to work with all producers both new and old of any business size and type. We are still available for your conservation needs. You can always call us at (607)547-8337. Please note that currently our office is open by appointment only. Or email us at Anthony.Capraro@usda.gov. We still are doing our best and getting conservation on the ground.

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Office Hours

Monday through Friday

8:00 A.M. – 4:30 P.M.

Office is Closed on
All Federal Holidays

Robert L. Banta

Conservation Center

Otsego County Soil and Water

Conservation District Staff

Jordan Clements - District Manager

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Chris Andreassen - Conservation Technician

Karl Giroux - Conservation Technician

Mark Kugler - Stream Technician

Dan Zimmerman - Forest Technician

Otsego County Soil & Water

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Meg Kennedy, Vice Chair - County Legislator

Doris Moennich, Treasurer - Landowner

Edward Lentz, Member-at-Large

Helene Kraham, Member-at-Large

Larry Roseboom, Sr., Farm Bureau

Michelle Farwell, County Legislator

USDA Service Center Staff

Natural Resources Conservation Service

Anthony Capraro - District Conservationist

Jeanine Harter - Soil Conservation Technician

Andrew Grabo - Program Support Specialist

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