

# Otsego County Soil and Water Conservation District



## 2021 Summer Newsletter

August 2021

### Partnerships are Everything!

Written By: Jordan Clements, District Manager

Richard Rogers once said, “The only way forward if we are going to improve the quality of the environment, is to get everybody involved.” In today’s conservation world, teamwork is an essential part to



successfully implement practices that benefit not only the individual landowner, but the other landowners downstream of them. In reference to the summer Olympics, the USA Basketball Team works together to set up the best shot possible. Every team member has a specific role to play in accomplishing tasks on the project. Even though it may seem as if one player scored the basket, that basket was made possible by many peoples’ planning, coordination, and cooperation to get that player the ball.

When the District works together with its partner agencies and/or nongovernment organizations to accomplish a project, everyone benefits.

Our county residents can expect to “see” this in action in different ways. For example, the District has teamed with its partner agencies such as the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and Farm Service Agency (FSA) to implement a variety of programs. Working with our partners has created a wealth of professional discussions, during which differing approaches and opinions might be shared and assessed in a respectful manner.

June 15, 2021 marked the anniversary of a partnership that the District has maintained for over 77 years. This partnership is with the Otsego County Board of Representatives. This close relationship has allowed us to make enormous strides in conserving the health of soil and water found within the borders of Otsego County. The one thing that I would like to make clear is our appreciation for our conservation partners for helping us meet our goals, and for the residents of Otsego County whose support and dedication to environmental stewardship is often what drives our success. Thank you, Otsego!

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Visit Our Website for  
More Information:  
[www.otsegoilandwater.com](http://www.otsegoilandwater.com)



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# The beauty of nature might just come out and bark at you!

**By: Devin Kiser, USC Buffer Steward/District Intern**

We are often reminded to stop and smell the roses and as much as we all try to do this, it can become a challenge when bouncing from our day to day activities. Most all that you do has importance in your life, but just for a short while I highly urge you stop and open your eyes to the true beauty in nature.

In its simplest form, a tree is composed of a trunk and a crown. Have you ever dared yourself to look further than that? If you have, then you might have realized that each tree is different – some have peeling bark like most birches whereas others have smooth bark like beeches and there are many trees with diamond patterned bark that include ashes and those pesky Norway maples. The fun with bark does not stop just yet! If you are to compare the same tree's bark at different life stages you will find that they might look completely different. The paper birch is known for its white, papery peeling bark, but if this tree becomes old enough, the more mature section of the bark – typically at the base of the trunk – will no longer appear to peel. How exciting! I personally believe this is where the beauty in nature lies, in the complexity and differences in each and every living thing. So, the next time you have a moment, stop and smell the roses – or in this case, the trees. Instead of taking the world as is, remember to ask questions and seek out the answers. You are bound to find even more beauty than you anticipated, especially in nature.



*Left: the younger and more typical bark of the paper birch, *Betula papyrifera*.  
Right: the bark of an old paper birch, not commonly observed.*

## Emerald Ash Borer and Otsego County Forest Lands

**Written By: Daniel Zimmerman, Forest Technician**

In Syracuse's Post Standard Newspaper CNY Outdoors column written May 20, 2013 and updated March 22, 2019 a DEC press release titled: "DEC: Emerald ash borer confirmed in Delaware and Otsego counties" an infestation has occurred "just south of the village of Unadilla in Delaware County and just north of the village of Unadilla in Otsego County". "With the confirmation of EAB in Delaware and Otsego counties, New York now has 15 counties where EAB has been found".

Much has been written about the borer, so I will be as brief as possible in its description: The emerald ash borer is a very small but very destructive member of the beetle family. It has four life stages: egg, larva, pupa and adult. The adult beetle has a glossy emerald green body with a coppery red abdomen. Adults are usually 3/8 to 5/8 of an inch long with tiny green wing covers and a coppery red or purple abdomen.

Adult beetles leave distinctive D-shaped exit holes in the outer bark of the branches and the trunk. The best time for encountering the adult version is June and July. Adult females lay their eggs in the outer bark and crevices of the White (Black, Green too) Ash trees. The major damage and actual weakening and killing of the tree is done by the larval stage which feeds on the phloem layer of the tree leaving distinct larval serpentine tunnels or galleries.

The risk is in the time frame needed to identify infestation of the Emerald Ash Borer given a large population of ash trees within a given area (density). Infestation could occur at any time in the future rendering the value of the Ash timber dramatically decreased. The biology of concern is the borer can infect some trees while not being detected; but within several years when environmental factors (not fully understood) occur, cause a population explosion killing most Ash trees.

Included with this article is a picture of a valuable White Ash tree that is cruised and marked for harvest. This tree and most other White Ash trees will be killed by EAB sometime in the near future. Two county forests have very high densities of valuable ash that have been marked for harvest. These parcels are Taylor Hill, and The Forest of the Dozen Dads. Infestations by EAB threaten the very survival of the ash species and damage our ecosystems through diminishing bio diversity.



# Busy Beavers

Written by: Mark Kugler, Stream Technician

In 2021, I have seen and heard of more beaver damage than any year in recent memory. Free flowing streams that I was fishing just last spring are now dammed in multiple locations, resulting in fragmented aquatic organism habitat and the streams' inability to effectively transport sediment and debris downstream. The presence of beavers in more locations is a land-use related trend that started in the late 1800's, and without remediation, this trend is likely to continue into the foreseeable future.

There are a few main reasons we are seeing an increase in beaver populations and activity. Some of these include the abandonment of agricultural lands, reforestation, and a dramatic decline in trapping. In New York State, DEC is not legally liable for damage caused by wildlife, and the responsibility to protect and restore lands damaged by beavers falls solely on the landowner.

It has been determined that the best long-term solution for minimizing beaver damage is to develop a partnership between landowners and trappers. DEC's Bureau of Wildlife maintains a list of active beaver trappers by region (we are in Region 4), and a Nuisance Wildlife Permit can be obtained to dispatch nuisance beavers during their open season.

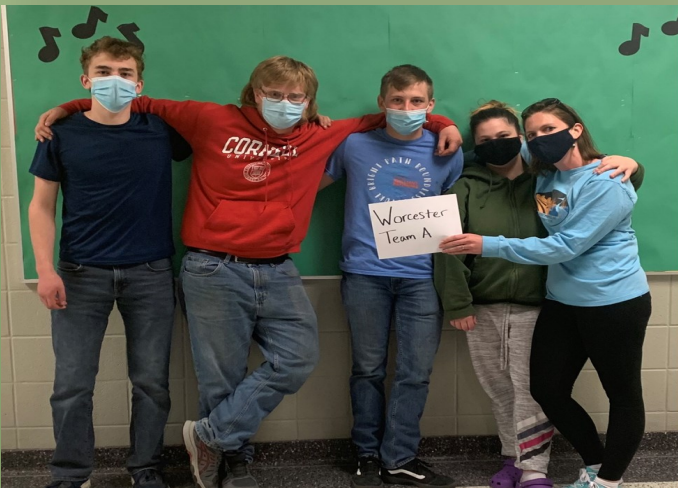
Another thing landowners can do to minimize damage by beavers is to protect their trees. Wrapping tree trunks (to a minimum height of 36 inches) with zinc or plastic-coated welded wire fencing can deter beavers from girdling trees (and hopefully encourage them to seek a different location to inhabit).



## 2021 Virtual Leatherstocking Envirothon

Written By: Jessica Miller, Administrative Assistant

The 2021 Leatherstocking Envirothon looked a little different this year. Participating school's Envirothon teams had to compete against each other in Aquatics, Soils, Wildlife, Forestry, and Current Issue multiple choice exams virtually using Google Classroom. Although the virtual event wasn't nearly as popular as our traditional in person event at Gilbert Lake, we were still fortunate to have enough participation to hold the virtual event. Unfortunately, in 2020 we had to cancel completely, but in 2022 we hope to see the Leatherstocking Envirothon back in action in person as it should be. That being said we are seeking donations to fund the 2022 event. We will be honoring our 2020 donors with sponsorship advertising in 2022. Please check out our website or contact us to learn more about our sponsorship levels. We would like to congratulate Worcester Team A for winning the 1<sup>st</sup> place Ted Peters award.



**Worcester Team A Winner of the 2021 Leatherstocking Envirothon.**

2<sup>nd</sup> place went to Worcester Team B. We would also like to congratulate Morris Team A on winning the Elizabeth Stein Award for highest soils exam, and taking 3<sup>rd</sup> place. Worcester Team A represented Otsego County at the NYS Envirothon, which was also held virtually this year.

## **2022 Spring Tree Sale Changes & Updates**

**Written By: Karl Giroux, Conservation Technician**

The Otsego SWCD's annual spring tree sale will be here before you know it, and beginning next year, we will be revamping our ordering system. Instead of using traditional hardcopy order forms and having checks mailed to us, our District will be following suit with other Districts, as we transition to a fully online ordering system. We know that some people may be uncomfortable ordering and paying online, but if you contact us, we'll be happy to assist you.

In the coming months, we will be setting up an online store that will automatically calculate available inventory. This will eliminate the need for refunds, orders being partially filled, or mailed order forms not getting to us by the deadline. We will be ordering a set amount of stock, and once they sell out, they're gone! We encourage those who are interested to access our online store early in the process to ensure you get the species and totals you want.

Throughout the pandemic, certain nursery stock has become unavailable for the foreseeable future. We will have a limited supply next year, but we plan to expand the selections as more become available. By updating our ordering system we aim to improve the experience for all parties involved, and the goal of our program is still to provide quality trees and shrubs at an affordable price.



## **Comprehensive Nutrient Management Planning**

**Written By: Christopher Andreassen, Certified Nutrient Management Planner**

As of March 25, 2021, Otsego County Soil & Water Conservation District has welcomed an Agricultural Environmental Management (AEM) certified planner on staff to assist local producers with Comprehensive Nutrient Management Planning. This marks the first time in the county's history that an AEM certified planner has been employed by the Soil & Water Conservation District. It brings with it funding opportunities to help with farm efficiency improvements as well as meet the needs of environmental concerns that producers often-times have the desire, but not the economic resources to address on their own. During the planning phase, soil, water, animal, plant, air, and/or human related resource concerns are identified and alternatives are provided to effectively satisfy requirements to reduce or eliminate each concern. At the conclusion of the planning process, state and/or federal funds are pursued via a ranking process. Otsego County Soil & Water Conservation District provides these services to producers who own or operate a farm within the county or to those outside the county that utilize farm land within Otsego County. Producers who wish to learn more about the Agricultural Environmental Management program are encouraged to call our office at (607) 547-8337 Ext. 4.

# How Riparian Forest Buffers Improve Biodiversity and Water Quality in New York Streams and Rivers

Written By: John Fowler, District Buffer Steward



A riparian forest buffer can be described as the forested land adjacent to streams, lakes and other surface waters. Some may refer to this area as the floodplain. As riparian buffers increase in size, so too does the biodiversity of fish and wildlife. For example, a northern cardinal only requires a buffer that is at least 40ft in width to be successful. Bald eagles, nesting herons and cavity nesting ducks all require buffers at least 600ft in width. The wider the buffer, the more niche availability for an array of wildlife and songbirds. Cold water fisheries such as those supporting Brook trout require 100-300ft wide buffers.

The importance of riparian forest buffers for our native brook trout is astronomical. The forest canopy provides shade that maintains cooler water temperatures. Brook trout prefer temperatures between 44 and 64 degrees Fahrenheit. Waters above the optimal levels can lead to stress, and temperatures above 70 can be lethal. Removal of streamside vegetation can increase daily and seasonal temperatures. Trees grow to maturity and eventually succumb to old age, disease or pests. Natural disturbances lead to coarse woody debris falling into streams and water bodies. This process is particularly important to trout because it provides them with habitat and protection from predators. Trout rely on trees not only for shade, but the falling of insects into streams that make up a portion of their forage base, with a majority of their diet consisting of aquatic macroinvertebrates such as mayflies, stoneflies and caddisflies.

Lastly, the RFB's improve bank stabilization and reduce sedimentation into our streams. Using tree and shrub species that are fast growing and deeply rooted improves the success of bank stabilization. Lowland species are typically more successful because of their tolerance to inundation, or frequent flooding. Recommended species include: American sycamore, Red maple, River birch, Swamp white oak, Black willow and Streamco willow. Sedimentation is one of the greatest factors impacting the decline of fisheries. Sedimentation decreases light penetration, reduces oxygen, and introduces toxins that may be stored in sediments. Sediments make it harder for predators to find food, impair respiration by clogging gills, and reduce overall reproductive success. By protecting our RFB's we are preserving our fisheries, improving habitat, reducing non-point source pollution, and most importantly, ensuring clean and safe drinking water for the 18 million residents in the Chesapeake Bay Watershed. To get involved in protecting our RFB's, please contact Mark Kugler, our Stream Technician at the Otsego County Soil and Water Conservation District, to learn about our annual spring tree sale, and see if you're eligible for Federal or State funding towards your very own riparian forest buffer.

## Meet SWCD Buffer Steward Interns

My name is John Fowler and I am 22 years old. I grew up in northern New York and went to high school at Indian River Central School District. I have always been fascinated with the outdoors and the environment. I am a 2021 graduate and received my bachelor's degree in Wildlife Management from the state university of New York of Cobleskill. I became interested in environmental restoration and stream restoration through my coursework at college. This semester I was influenced by my environmental restoration course that included planning, organizing and implementing a riparian forest buffer. We were able to plant 800 trees of approximately 20 different species to encourage biodiversity. I understand the importance of riparian buffers, and how ecosystems can be degraded over time without such buffers. They provide resources to fisheries and wildlife, reduce runoff and pollution, and reduce erosion of banks and sedimentation into our streams. I believe this internship opportunity will give me a chance to expand and implement what I've learned through my education. I am grateful to have the opportunity to encourage the success and biodiversity of our riparian forest buffers across the county. Being a part of Soil and Water Conservation is a job career I feel is very fulfilling. We are promoting the health and quality of our water systems, and our ecosystems. I spend my free time fishing for largemouth bass, northern pike, and brook and brown trout. My family owns a camp on Goose Bay on the St. Lawrence River and I spend much of my summers there fishing and kayaking. I also spend much of the fall hunting for white-tail deer and go every chance I get. I have developed a passion for cooking and enjoy to incorporate wild game into traditional dishes. In the fall I plan on searching for a job related to this position, although I am considering continuing my education to attain a masters degree.



**John Fowler - SWCD Buffer Steward Intern**



**Devin Kiser - USC Buffer Steward**

My name is Devin Kiser. I am a 23 year old, Milford native, and a 2018 graduate of SUNY Oneonta where I earned a Bachelor's degree in biology. During my time there I developed an interest in using my skills to better the natural environment and that combined with my upbringing has narrowed my career perspective to opportunities where I can enjoy the outdoors and have a positive impact on it. In the two and a half years since I finished my undergraduate degree, I have worked at a local hardware store helping people complete the many projects they have while refining my communication skills. In my free time I enjoy hanging out with my family and friends and helping my fiancé on his family's dairy farm. Some of my hobbies include knitting, cooking, and nature walks. My goals in life are to continually better myself while doing what makes me happy.

## Farm Service Agency(FSA) News

Nominations Open for the 2021 Farm Service Agency County Committee Elections

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Farm Service Agency (FSA) encourages producers and landowners to take part in the Otsego County Committee election nomination process.

FSA's 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 is composed of three elected members from local administrative areas (LAA). Each member serves a three-year term. This year LAA 2 is up for election. This includes the townships of Burlington, Edmeston, Exter, Hartwick, New Lisbon, Otsego, Plainfield, and Richfield

County committees may have an appointed advisor to further represent the local interests of underserved producers. Underserved producers are beginning, women and other minority producers and landowners and/or operators who have limited resources.

All nomination forms for the 2021 election must be postmarked or received in the local USDA Service Center by Aug. 2, 2021. For more information on FSA county committee elections and appointments, refer to the FSA fact sheet: Eligibility to Vote and Hold Office as a COC Member available online at: [www.fsa.usda.gov/elections](http://www.fsa.usda.gov/elections)

## Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)

Meet Toni Daino the newest member of the Field Office Team, she is a Soil Conservationist in Walton.

NRCS Soil Conservationist Toni Daino is a 2021 graduate of SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry (SUNY ESF) where she majored in Conservation Biology with minors in Marine Science and Environmental Writing and Rhetoric.

While at ESF she worked with the Chittenango Ovate Amber Snail which is New York State's most endangered species. In her spare time she enjoys kayaking, hiking and scuba diving. One of her hiking goals is to finish the Fire Tower Challenges in the Catskills and Adirondacks.



Otsego SWCD  
967 County Highway 33  
Cooperstown, NY 13326

## 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)  
Bluebird Boxes  
Wood Duck Boxes  
Owl Boxes  
Bat Boxes  
Fertilizer Tablets

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OTSEGO COUNTY  
SOIL AND WATER  
CONSERVATION DISTRICT

### 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  
Jessica Miller - Administrative Assistant  
Chris Andreassen - C.N.M. Planner  
Karl Giroux - Conservation Technician  
Mark Kugler - Stream Technician  
Dan Zimmerman - Forest Technician

### Otsego County Soil & Water

### Conservation District Board Members

Leslie Rathbun, Chair - Grange  
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

### Farm Service Agency

Kate Hemstreet - County Executive Director  
Lisa Pedersen - Program Technician