

Otsego County Soil and Water Conservation District



Above: New riparian forest buffer planted in Garrettsville, NY at a sheep farm.

COVID-19 & Conservation:

Trials, Tribulations & Perseverance

Written By: Jordan Clements, District Manager

On March 20, 2020 Governor Andrew Cuomo required all workers in nonessential businesses across New York State to stay home in an effort to combat the spread of the Coronavirus pandemic. This included the employees of the Otsego County Soil & Water Conservation District. As it were, they would not return to the office until June of 2020.

During this challenging time, the District instituted new policies in response to this first ever shut down due to the pandemic. Many of our new policies were adopted from guidance provided by the CDC, and we shaped them to meet our specific office needs. Included in these policies are how our staff operates when working from home, how each staff member is to have an assigned vehicle, and how personal protection equipment is to be worn when interacting with the general public.

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Conservation—Development—Self-Government

2021 Winter Newsletter

March 2021

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Important Dates to Add to the Calendar

**2021 Tree and Shrub
Sale is on April 26th and
27th**

Orders Due By April 1st

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Continued: COVID-19 & Conservation: Trials, Tribulations & Perseverance

Written By: Jordan Clements, District Manager

As a result of the pandemic, we were forced to update our technology so that staff could be able to continue to do meaningful conservation work (albeit from home). During this time, we focused on education and outreach by releasing “Moo Mondays,” “Watershed Wednesdays,” and “Forestry Fridays” posts on our Facebook page as well as our website. Many staff members also completed a wide array of online trainings that were offered during this time.

While working from home, the staff and I kept in constant communication. We held staff meetings twice a week to make sure that everyone had everything necessary to perform the tasks required to maintain forward progress with our programs and projects.

Once the staff was able to come back to the office, we were able to hit the ground running; providing services to the general public with the new safety protocols in place to protect our customers and staff alike. We were able to begin implementation on a few projects, but most that were started this year will not be finished until 2021.

Although we have had recent spikes in COVID-19, and our staff has since gone to half on and half off, we were 100% ready once that decision was made. The staff switches weekly, it allows some of the staff to work from home while the other half work from the office. This lowers the number of staff members in the office at one time, while still being able to conduct our work. This will continue until we are told it is safe to have all staff back in the office or if we are to receive orders to close non-essential businesses again.

I would like to take this time to thank my staff. Everyone kept an upbeat attitude and a willingness to adapt to the new “normal” even if it is ultimately temporary. Even in the face of adversity, they were able to provide worthwhile conservation work to our community; something that we greatly pride ourselves on. Everyone worked together to help each other out and went above and beyond when it came to communicate and to keep in touch with me to make sure we were making progress. I would also like to thank the Otsego County SWCD Board for allowing us to advance with our technologies so that we were able to do our jobs efficiently and safely. The District is looking forward to 2021, and we won’t have to jump as many hurdles trying to implement our Best Management Practices to conserve the valuable resources of our County.

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 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 the newsletter reaches your inbox. We hope you understand the transition! If you don’t use email, please contact us to make special arrangements.

COVID-19 and Nutrient Management Planning

Written By: Christopher Andreassen, Conservation Technician

Although the introduction of numerous Covid-19 safety protocols have wreaked havoc on many businesses and institutions in 2020, Otsego County Soil & Water Conservation District has continued to move forward with its principle objective of providing our services to local residents and landowners. As a Nutrient Management Planner, this has involved identifying and working with producers who are willing and able to invest in developing plans that benefit the environment and improve their operational efficiency. Markets have deteriorated and profit margins have dwindled as the Coronavirus has continued to surge. Perhaps one of the most hard-hit industries has been the agriculture sector. Yet, despite the shortfalls our local producers have faced, several of these folks have continued to push forward with the objective of implementing Environmental Best Management Practices (BMP's) on their farms. This requires a great deal of time and effort as well as monetary investment, even as budgets everywhere are being crunched. The District has provided Comprehensive Nutrient Management Planning on 5 local farms this year with 2 having been submitted for potential project funding and a third plan awaiting approval by New York State Ag. & Markets.

I would like to take the time to thank these producers who are environmentally conscientious enough to invest their resources in promoting sustainable farming practices for their families and future generations. Sustainable agriculture is becoming increasingly critical as resources are being quickly depleted. To the farmers who have realized the importance of farming in environmentally friendly ways, such as working with Soil & Water Conservation Districts and USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service to develop conservation plans, your sacrifice is and will continue to be appreciated for generations to come. Please contact the Cooperstown Field Office at (607) 547-8337 if you have any interest in developing your own conservation plans. We will be more than happy to assist you in a safe and friendly manner.



2021 Annual Tree Sale

Written By: Karl Giroux, Conservation Technician

Can you believe the Otsego County SWCD's Annual Tree Sale is rapidly approaching? Before we know it, the District's technicians will be busy gathering orders and wrapping trees. Last year, during the start of the Covid-19 pandemic we developed and new system for supplying trees; while maintaining proper social distancing and following the CDC's guidelines. Our "drive through" system worked so well and our customers cooperated so perfectly, that we are going to utilize this drive through system once again in 2021.

Each customer will be mailed a postcard with their order number, and a time slot to come pick up orders on Friday, April 23rd. There will be no need to exit your vehicle when you arrive. Simply show us your numbered postcard, open your trunk/hatch, and we will place your bagged order inside your vehicle.

We ask that customers please try to adhere to their provided times as best as possible. If you are unable to do so, please come on Saturday, April 24th and we will be on site completing orders until 12:00 (noon). The Otsego County SWCD is proud that we can still provide this service to our customers and keep everyone safe at the same time.

You can find our 2021 order form located on our website <https://www.otsegoilandwater.com/tree-sale> as well as on the District's Facebook page. We hope to see you in April, and we appreciate your continued support during these trying times.



Time

Written By: Daniel Zimmerman, Forest Technician

The relevance of time in my work as Forest Technician for the Otsego County Soil and Water Conservation District is always a fascinating concept especially when paired with memory and experienced professional judgement. I worked on Otsego County forest parcels thirty eight to thirty nine years ago and find myself working on them again in the year 2021. Not many Foresters get to have this experience in their careers. Initially, I did the forest measurements with my mentor, Ken Williams (Otsego County Forester) doing the Forest Management Plan writing. Now, I do the measurements, evaluations, and the writing of the plans; in addition the implementations also.

While working implementing a timber harvest on County land through marking timber my mind frequently

travels through time. One instance: I travel back through 39 years of time, cloudy with surreal images fading into a focus that is as clear as yesterday. It is summer, the smells of the early morning forest are unmistakable as Ken and I are preparing to cruise. Otsego County is exceptionally beautiful at this time of year, green, green! We are at the Forest of the Dozen Dads in the Town of Middlefield, just outside Cooperstown, NY. Do we have everything I ask? Yes we do Danny was Ken's answer, as clear as if it was today!

I am able to refocus to the present but only briefly as I visit three forest stands that I am marking timber in. One stand is a planted Norway spruce stand that is stagnating and becoming a hardwood stand. Within this stand is valuable marketable timber, heavy to White Ash that has to be harvested due to the impending Emerald Ash Borer threat. I can see the past, the actual planting of the Norways many years ago, the loss of growth, and the encroachment of the hardwoods. Spruce eight inches in diameter, perhaps 60 to 80 years old!

In another stand I go back in time, 30 to 40 years to see a seed cut being implemented, scattered large hardwood trees mostly Ash and Red Maple left to produce seed and restart the forest anew. I can see the cutting of everything else allowing for sunlight to reach the forest floor, tree tops everywhere, evidence of logging difficulty; my mind drifts to the present: no hardwood seeding or regeneration but instead acres of ferns and acres of goldenrod existing in this state for many, many years with scattered large trees. I shake my head, White-tailed Deer influences. No seedlings, no saplings, no future forest established.

The third stand within this parcel I notice considerable stumps everywhere, mostly 12 inches in diameter, moss covered and in an instant I am transported back years ago, to a Red Pine clear cut. Scattered throughout this stand are very large White Ash trees, some very good quality and a significant amount way past mature, requiring substantial volume deductions during the timber cruise/marketing. These trees were present during the planting of the Pine and were left during the clear cut. Regeneration in this stand is substantial, but it consists mostly of American Beech and some Red Maple. Another influence of the White-tailed Deer. No doubt what the future forest will be in this location.

I finish my cruising for the day and on my walk out of the forest my mind drifts through an eerie mist that forms in front of my eyes. Time yes time goes on. The mist fades enough to peer into the future, yes the results of my work on this forest parcel of Otsego County. I can see successional forces at work as the forest stands evolve twenty, forty, and yes sixty years into the future. Will they be what I envision? Only time will tell....



Populations on the Brink

Written By: Mark Kugler, Stream Technician

In biological systems, the term “recruitment” is used to describe the process by which new individuals are added to a population (through birth and maturation, or immigration). Between 2017 and 2018, a collaborative study in the Upper Susquehanna River Watershed was conducted by SUNY Cobleskill and SUNY Oneonta to determine predictive estimates of time since recruitment in the Eastern Elliptio (*Elliptio complanata*), a species of freshwater mussel commonly found in waterbodies throughout the Northeast.

Freshwater mussels are among the most imperiled groups of organisms worldwide, and are significant because of the multiple ecosystem services they provide. Some of these services include filtering sediment, nutrients, and pollutants, creating habitat for aquatic macroinvertebrates, and acting as a food source for a variety of other organisms. Mussels are parasitic throughout their early stages of development and require a host to mature. Juvenile mussels called “glochidia” attach themselves to the gills of fish and consume nutrients until they have grown sufficiently to drop off and complete the remainder of their lives

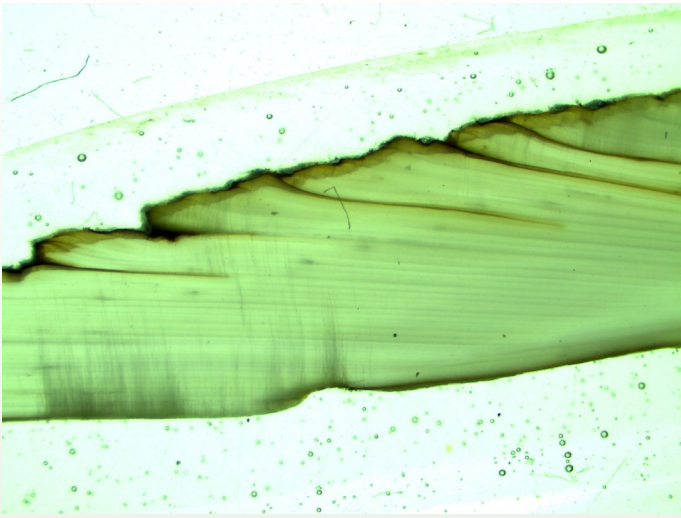
buried within the substrate. Some species are opportunistic in the hosts they use, while others are very specific in their requirements and demonstrate poor recruitment when their preferred host is absent.

The Eastern Elliptio is a species that strongly prefers a specific host, the American Eel (*Anguilla rostrata*). Unfortunately, the American Eel had been widely absent from the Susquehanna River and its tributaries due to the construction of dams, with the first being completed in 1928. These dams have prevented

Eels from completing their catadromous migration from the Sargasso Sea (where adults spawn and juveniles are born) to the freshwater streams and rivers along the East Coast where they mature for decades before migrating back to the ocean to spawn and complete their life cycle.

From multiple dive efforts in streams throughout the Watershed, Eastern Elliptio were collected and measured, with live organisms being safely returned to their original locations, and shells from deceased individuals collected for lab analysis. Using standard techniques developed by a previous study, shells were mounted to glass slides and thin-sectioned with a diamond saw, then were hand polished for microscopic analysis which would determine the age of the mussels when they died (similar to counting tree rings).





From there, a correlation was made between length and age, and the approximate ages of those within the remaining population were determined. This study determined that the population of Eastern Elliptio in the Susquehanna Watershed consisted of primarily older individuals (average age of 50, N=79).

Given that Eels are capable of surviving in freshwater systems for several decades, it appears that this particular population of mussels represents the last few generations of ample recruitment following the completed construction of the first dam. This study helped bridge a gap in the knowledge of our natural area, and as a result, American Eels have now been stocked in the Butternut Creek in hopes to aid the Eastern Elliptio in their future recruitment and continued existence. If you happen to catch an Eel while fishing, please consider other species that may depend on them for survival. They are very difficult to handle, but can be easily released by cutting the line.

Need a Soils Map Fast? Use Web Soil Survey

Written By: Jessica Miller, Administrative Assistant

Do you need a Soils Map? Did you know you can make one quickly and easily with just a few clicks of a button using the USDA's Web Soil Survey website? The best part about it is that this is a free service to use. Conservation professionals all over also use this service for the most up to date soils information. You just need to visit <https://websoilsurvey.nrcs.usda.gov/>

Just hit the green button to start! Once you zoom to the location you'd like to know the soil types you'll need to create an area of interest by using the define AOI tool rectangle, polygon, or by importing a shapefile. Once your area of interest is selected you'll be able to see the soil types on the soil data explorer tab. There are a lot of additional reports you can run with web soil survey as well, like organic matter depletion. Once you are done you can add your soils map into your shopping cart (for free) to get a complete report generated for you to download or print for future reference. The site has many how to guides, and references for more information.

If you need any help along the way, feel free to give us a call and we will walk you through the steps, or if you prefer we can complete it for you.

You are here: [Web Soil Survey Home](#)

The simple yet powerful way
to access and use soil data.



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)
Barley Straw
Bluebird Boxes
Wood Duck Boxes
Owl Boxes
Bat Boxes

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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

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Otsego County Soil & Water

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