



**FYI ...**



Newsletter of the New York Association of Conservation Districts ••• June 2005

## LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE

In the summer of 2003, NYACD, NYSCDEA, and several partner agencies sponsored our first Leadership Institute. It brought together people from across formal agency roles into an informal setting in the Adirondacks, where they learned new skills and developed working relationships to further our mutual conservation goals.

Last month, our newsletter announced that the event would be held again this summer at the same location. However, just as the newsletter was being printed, the planning committee met and changed both the time and place. It is now being planned for November 12 and 13, 2005, a Saturday and Sunday. The location has not been finalized, but will be in Central New York. Stay tuned for information on the content and other details.

This event is designed to bring existing District Directors into more active roles within the Soil and Water world, and to support the development of newer members to assume those roles. Soon you will receive a survey about this. We ask that you complete it.

## ANNUAL MEETING

by Anne Tibbetts

Our Annual Meeting Planning Committee met this month and would like to announce the location and dates of the 2005 NYACD Annual Meeting. It will be held at the Riveredge Resort in Alexandria Bay, which is

on the St. Lawrence River near the famous Boldt Castle. The Meeting will run from Sunday October 30 to Tuesday November 1, 2005. We invite and urge you to be there.

For your enjoyment, we will offer a narrated boat tour of the 1000 Islands. For your eating pleasure, the Riveredge will serve their famous seafood and beef buffet. (To insure the quality of the buffet, the Committee has sampled the buffet, including four deserts each).

A series of panel discussions will thread through the Meeting and will include representatives of Ducks Unlimited, Save The River (a St. Lawrence River organization), South Nation Conservation Authority (from Ontario), and the NACD Great Lakes Committee. Topics will include the proposed windmill farm on the Tug Hill Plateau, Fort Drum, urban sprawl, farm continuity, in-state biomass energy production, invasive species, the 2007 Farm Bill, forestry, air emission regulations and CAFO, AEM, and CEM.

A complete schedule and registration materials will be forthcoming. In the meantime, please mark your calendar. If you have suggestions, please contact me at [fawn4321@aol.com](mailto:fawn4321@aol.com) or (315) 232-4357.

## CALL FOR RESOLUTIONS

by Maggie Atkins

Again, it is time for resolutions to be prepared for the NYACD annual meeting. The resolution process gives directors a means for setting the agenda for NYACD regarding our natural resources, programs, funding, and

legislative direction. Please discuss your concerns at your next board meeting and prepare resolutions as described in the below procedure. Division meetings should also be held in the next two months to address resolutions and regional issues.

Resolution Deadlines are:

1. Local Soil & Water Conservation Districts discuss issues for NYACD action. Resolutions are drafted and submitted by August 15<sup>th</sup>.
2. Division meetings are held to discuss issues for NYACD action. Resolutions are drafted and submitted by August 15<sup>th</sup>.
3. The Resolutions Committee meets, reviews, collates the submitted resolutions and distributes the 2005 resolution package to districts by September 15<sup>th</sup>.
4. Local Soil & Water Conservation Districts review and discuss the 2005 resolutions prior to the NYACD Annual Meeting on October 30<sup>th</sup>.
5. Resolutions are voted on by the District Directors (one per district) at the NYACD Annual Meeting.

The NYACD 2005 Resolutions Committee members are: NYACD - Linda Coffin, Gregg Bell, & Maggie Atkins; NYSCDEA - Amanda Barber, Kevin Lewis, Tom DeRue, & Dave Wick; NRCS - Marilyn Stephenson; NYSSWCC - Ron Kaplewicz.

If you have any suggestions or feel you may have difficulty meeting the timeline, please contact Maggie Atkins at (585) 396-9973 or [magneil@att.net](mailto:magneil@att.net).

## OUR BILL IN THE LEGISLATURE by Gregory Bell

In the May issue of this newsletter, we reported how A5449, the bill we had gotten introduced into the New York State

Legislature, was moving through the process fairly well. After that, the bill was introduced into Senate. Things looked ok.

Then, in early June, the staff of the Ways and Means Committee began raising some issues which are of concern to them, but which may be beyond direct concern to Soil and Water Conservation Districts. In response, the language of the bill was changed twice more in ways which NYACD considered possibly harmful to the intent of the bill. With the deadline of adjournment of the Legislature looming, and with a series of new issues raised by the new language, your NYACD Board engaged in a flurry of e-mails and phone calls. Ultimately, on June 7, the Board decided to suspend further work on the bill. Our legislative sponsor was then notified. It had become clear that the intent of our carefully-crafted bill could not be resolved in the time remaining.

This means that the bill will be waiting in the legislative hopper when the Legislature returns in January 2006. We plan to use the time after recess to meet with legislative staff, answer questions, and work out new language to be considered next year.

## PRESIDENT'S COLUMN WHY AM I A DISTRICT DIRECTOR? by Linda Coffin

Soil and Water Conservation Districts have played an important part in the history of our landscape for many years. Districts can point to many victories and have been seen as champions of conservation. *What would our communities be like without the fine and necessary work of our districts? Why would anyone want to serve on a district board?* After all, it means giving up at least one night a month for a meeting, plus special tours, training, dinners, and educational events. *Do*

*we do it for the pay? I know, what pay? Do we do it for the glory? Okay, again what glory? I am sure that each of us has a very special reason why we have agreed to serve on a local soil and water board. But, whether you have served for 20 years, or for one year, topics, concerns, projects, and yes, even those acronyms (ABC DER) seem to keep coming and bring with them new challenges.*

The question remains, “*why did you become a district director?*” Maybe you are one who serves on the EQIP Working Committee, or maybe on the Water Quality Coordinating Committee, or serves as a representative to the RC&D Council. Perhaps you represent your district at the Fish & Wildlife Management Board or Forest Protection Board. Maybe you are one of those who have become a division director or committee member in the organization that works for you on the state and national level.... the NYACD.

Much has been done. There is much that needs to be done. There is much that we do not even know about, yet which needs to be done. We hear about needs at state and national meetings. *So, why did you become a district director?* I don’t know what your answer might be, but mine is that I was asked.

In case that was the reason you became a district director, *I am now asking you to consider additional involvement beyond the district.* Your State Association needs you. In the coming months you will receive information concerning a Leadership Institute in November, our Annual Meeting in October and requests for feedback concerning upcoming national issues. We need volunteers such as you to serve on one of our state committees in areas such as forestry, urban conservation, finances, communications, meeting planning, legislation, and training. This commitment may be as little as 1 or 2 meetings a year and corresponding by e-mail or phone for other times. WE NEED YOU

TODAY. As a commercial once said, “try it, you might like it.”

**DISTRICT DIRECTORS’ RESPONSIBILITIES WITH THEIR DISTRICTS’ AEM STRATEGIES:** An interview with Jeff Ten Eyck, NYS AEM Coordinator  
By Maggie Atkins

Recently Soil and Water Conservation Districts were asked to submitted their AEM strategies to the State Soil and Water Conservation Committee. What is this?

The AEM (Agricultural Environmental Management) Base Program provided \$2,000 per county to develop/update a 5 year strategic plan to implement AEM and lay out how the funding can be maintained and will be used to address priority natural resource issues in priority watersheds. The plan was expected to build upon the AEM work already under way in the counties; address how new participants will be recruited; state how progress will be evaluated; and indicate how partners, such as NRCS and Cornell Cooperative Extension will be used to advance the program.

We understand that district directors are responsible for assuring that commitments made by their Districts are followed. What responsibilities do district directors have in carrying out the AEM strategies submitted? District Boards of Directors can help the effort in many ways. A few that come to mind include:

- Ask staff to review the AEM Strategic Plan with the County Legislature and organizations such as Farm Bureau, if they have not already done so. Grower input and buy-in is also critical to success.
- Encourage and participate in periodic (at least annual) review and update of the strategic plans. As more work is

completed and information is gained, adjustments may be needed.

- Work with staff to develop an effective outreach strategy to promote the program to growers. In our view, many strategies were weak in this area.
- Work with staff to develop an effective evaluation strategy to measure success and the need to adjust the strategy.
- Encourage staff to be innovative, perhaps counties could merge funds and share an employee to coordinate the program in each county, or an organization like Cooperative Extension may be able to help with the workload for a share of the funding.
- Encourage participation in AEM to farm neighbors and members of organizations such as, Farm Bureau.
- Ask for update reports on progress toward meeting year 1 goals as identified in the AEM Strategic Plan and question why if goals are not being met. This information will be beneficial in adjusting the program in year 2 if there are barriers to success that can be identified and removed.

How do the Counties contract for the strategic plan work?

The 54 participating counties will receive up to \$20,000 through a one-year deliverables contract to implement their strategic plans. Contracts can not be extended. Districts will be paid for work that is completed on the contract end date of May 6, 2006. Twenty-five per cent of the contract amount is provided up front with the balance paid at the end of the contract.

Let's review for a moment ... What is meant by AEM base Program?

In 2003, New York State's Conservation partnership sought a Congressional earmark to advance the AEM Program. A \$750,000 earmark was secured and the NYS Soil &

Water Conservation Committee set aside \$600,000 of the Environmental Protection Fund allocated for agricultural NPS projects to establish a noncompetitive base program for AEM.

Up to \$20,000 is available to AEM Teams in each county for far- level inventories (Tier 1), assessments (Tier 2), basic conservation planning (Tier 3A), assessment updates (Tier 5A), and plan/BMP evaluations (Tier 5B). AEM Tiers 3B/C (Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plans/Whole Farm Plans) and Tier 4 (BMP implementation) remain competitively funded through the EPF and Farm Bill programs. A congressional earmark has been secured for the second year of the program (2006-7) and work is progressing to secure a third year.

Providing noncompetitive base funding to do basic inventories, assessment, and planning should help provide many Districts with the information and experience needed to develop better competitive grant proposals to do intensive planning and BMP implementation. I hope it will even the playing field for many districts which have not been as successful with competitive grants. Annual base funding will also help districts build capacity to consistently implement the program.

For more information please check out the NYSSWCC website at [www.nys-soilandwater.org](http://www.nys-soilandwater.org).

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