

NEW YORK ASSOCIATION OF
CONSERVATION DISTRICTS, INC.

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FYI...

NYACD NEWSLETTER • JANUARY 2006

FROM THE PRESIDENT...

On behalf of the NYACD Board of Directors, I wish each of you a happy and joyous New Year. 2006 will be a very important year for Soil and Water Conservation Districts not only here but across the country as well. We will be looking to you, each and every one of you, for much needed input into known and, at this time, unknown issues that will have impact on what we each do. **I know that we can count on you.**

I recently received an email with a philosophy lesson from Charles Schultz, creator of the "Peanuts" comic strip that seems to be a great way to start this portion of my column. It started with several questions. (No you do not have to actually answer them, but maybe you would like to try.) 1. Name the last five Heisman trophy winners. 2. Name the last five winners of the Miss America contest. 3. Name ten people who have won the Nobel or Pulitzer Prize. 4. Name the last decade's worth of World Series winners. How did you do? If you are like me, I couldn't answer most of these. But if I were to ask you to name two conservation leaders in the field of agriculture that have had a great impact on the work we do in soil and water conservation projects across the State of New York, I am sure that most of us would be able to come up with the names. As most of you probably know Ag & Markets Commissioner Nathan Rudgers has traded his commissioner's hat for a banker's hat working with the Western NY Farm Credit in Batavia. The second is Joseph DelVecchio, NRCS State Conservationist, who is retiring in early January, to enjoy several other retirement hats. Both of these true leaders have provided insight, direction, encouragement and their friendship to the Officers and Board of NYACD and to each of the Soil & Water Conservation Districts. We will truly miss them for their guidance and wisdom. We wish them the very best for their future endeavors and sincerely thank them for sharing their time with us these past many years.

At the end of January, Brad Rogers, as 1st Vice President, and I will be traveling to Houston, TX, to represent NYS at the 60th NACD annual meeting. In addition to listening to issues on the national level that will be affecting the activities of SWCDs across the country, we will be voting on resolutions that will set the positions of NACD for the year. As a part of that meeting there will be a specially-designed open forum for sharing ideas about how the Farm Bill policy is working on the local level. They will be looking for comments on 8 programs, including Conservation Reserve Program, Conservation Security Program, the Environmental Quality Incentives, Wildlife Habitat Incentives Programs, the Farm and Ranch Lands Reserve Program, Watershed Rehabilitation, the Grasslands Reserve Program and the Wetlands Reserve Program. If statements are to be delivered we need to register that fact by January 15th to NACD. **DO YOU HAVE SOME COMMENTS FROM YOUR DISTRICT?** Please let me know back to the NYACD email address nyacd@aol.com or by mail to the NYACD office. This will be our opportunity to let others across the country know what is important to districts here in New York State. In addition, the North East Regional organization of NACD will also be sending along two surveys that request feedback on agricultural and urban programs. Please be sure to send them back as well. These will allow us to have a joint statement with the other states in the northeast.

Please mark your calendars for the 2006 Legislative Day for March 6th and 7th. NYACD legislative committee co-chairs Brad Rodgers and George Proios will be providing more information. Oh, by the way, we could use your help as well. Please find enclosed a committee application that I hope you will return.

By Linda Coffin

NYACD MISSION:

The NYACD provides leadership in the wise use of soil, water and related natural resources. This direction is provided through programs that support member Soil and Water Conservation District's scientific, marketing/outreach and financial work and that encourage networking and building alliances with outside groups that have related interests.

NYACD LEGISLATIVE DAYS

The New York Association of Conservation Districts' Legislative Day 2006 may be the most important opportunity for district directors to make a difference. We have a short window of opportunity to make a historic financial impact on conservation districts. At the 2005 Annual Meeting held in Alexandria Bay, NY, Senator James W. Wright told the gathering that the Environmental Protection Fund should be raised from \$150 million to \$300 million. He informed us that he and his colleagues were well aware that conservation districts were the vehicles that move the State's conservation programs. He would like to see districts adequately funded. Armed with this information, and the fact that Governor Pataki's last few budgets supported conservation districts, NYACD has moved quickly developing a dynamic message. However, we NEED THE HELP of district directors and employees to deliver this message.

So save the dates of March 6 and 7, 2006 and plan to attend NYACD's 2006 Legislative Day in Albany. The future growth of conservation districts is at stake. Please check NYACD's web site, www.nyacd.org, for registration information along with information pertaining to Legislative Day 2006. A hard copy of the web site information will be mailed out to districts and districts' directors shortly.

By Brad Rogers

WE NEED YOUR HELP!

NYACD COMMITTEES

A listing of the NYACD committees is included as an insert in this newsletter. Please take a few minutes to look over the various options and sign-up to help. A good portion of the committee work is done by telephone and email. Also, for those of you who do not wish to sign up for a committee, but would be willing to help with a limited term project, please let us know that.

DIRECTOR OPINIONS & FEEDBACK

Got an opinion on something you'd like to share with FYI readers? Send us your letter. FYI... is NYACD's monthly newsletter—a newsletter specifically for Soil & Water Conservation District Directors.

Please send us your opinions, ideas, suggestions, articles and questions. Contact Maggie Atkins, Phone: 585-396-9973; Fax: 585-554-4077; email: magneil@att.net.

MAILING LIST

Help us keep our mailing list up to date. Please send us any address changes or information for new District Directors (including email addresses). We know that the Districts will be welcoming a number of new Directors on the first of the year. A quick email or phone call is all that is needed.

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STORMWATER VISION FOR DISTRICTS

Stormwater runoff from developed areas in New York State is well documented as one of the main challenges facing our waterbodies today. The NYS DEC has been mandated to address stormwater runoff issues in New York and has developed programs to fulfill that mandate. However, even they fully realize that they are under-equipped to handle this challenge and that much more work needs to be done.

Conservation Districts have been managing stormwater runoff for decades on agricultural lands and more recently on non-agricultural properties. Each District has its own unique set of skills, contacts, and resources to undertake these efforts, tailored to the specific needs of that county. No one knows the water quality issues and resource challenges at the local level better than Conservation Districts.

Based on these two assertions, it's obvious that Districts are well positioned to have a very positive impact in addressing stormwater runoff issues within their counties. What is often lacking, however, are the funds to develop a strong local program. Recent surveys of Districts show a very strong interest in getting more involved in stormwater management, pending a more reliable and consistent funding source.

Towards that end, a committee comprised of District directors, District staff, and State Committee representatives has worked to develop a "Vision" of how Districts could be more involved in the field of stormwater management. In November of 2005, each District was forwarded a document titled "Stormwater Vision for Conservation Districts", which outlines the concepts and topics in which Districts have shown interest in getting involved. The hope is that each District board will review this document and provide comments based on their local perspective, such that we can all carry the same message to our DEC regions and to Albany. Once this vision has been established, the next step is to develop a strategy to implement the vision, which is slated for the early part of 2006. That's where things will get interesting.

Districts have the contacts, the knowledge, and the legislative support to achieve funding which can make stormwater management a regular part of the local District program. What we don't have right now is a consistent message to send to the state which demonstrates that to be true.

Please take a look at the Stormwater Vision that was sent to you and provide your comments back to Linda Coffin (President, NYACD) or Amanda Barber (President, Employees Association). By working together, we can achieve much.

By Dave Wick, CPESC, District Manager, Warren County SWCD

TURNING GOLDENROD INTO GREEN

A Symposium for reclaiming fallow land using livestock as a tool for change

Sat. January 14th 2006, 8:30am to 4:00pm in Crawford Hall @ Morrisville State College

How many times have you traveled around this region and noticed idle pasture land going back to goldenrod and brush? Are there opportunities we are missing as landowners and farmers? What are the benefits and challenges to our area to revive this once highly regarded resource? Come to Morrisville State College on Saturday, January 14th, 2006, from 8:30 to 4:00pm and ask questions and see what the possibilities are for change.

A highly respected and seasoned group of speakers will present this informative program:

- Paris Reidhead (field crop consultant) The social, environmental and agricultural implications of fallow land and bringing it back to production.
- Matt Sanderson (USDA/ARS Pasture Systems & Watershed Mgt.) Tapping into the natural seed bank and investigating the qualities of weeds on soil life and animals.
- Darrell Emmick (NYS Grazing Land Management Specialist) Understanding animal grazing behavior and its effects on improving land for animals and wildlife
- Phil Metzger (USDA/NRCS/CNY RC&D Coordinator) Knapweed Control project, carbon sequestration benefits and bio-fuel from fallow forage
- David Valesky (NY State Senator 49th District) Briefing on Agriculture
- Dr. John Addrizzo (NYS Meat Goat Associates) Using meat goats to clear land
- Troy Bishopp (Grazier and Madison Co. SWCD grazing specialist) Contract grazing on fallow land with beef
- Bee Tolman (Sheep Grazier) Manipulating sheep to bring back fallow land
- Mark Twentyman (NYS Office of Real Property Services) NYS Ag. Assessment Program and other beneficial programs for NY landowners
- Landowners forum: Landowners with fallow land working in partnership with farmers. What are their thoughts?

Please pre-register as space is limited !! Admission is \$ 10.00 Call Troy Bishopp, Madison County Soil and Water District Program Grazing Specialist @ 315-824-9849 or E-mail Troy.bishopp@ny.nacdnet.net Send admission to Madison Co. SWCD, 6503 Wes Rd. Hamilton, N.Y. 13346 Thank you.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S COLUMN

During December, we mailed out questionnaires to all 58 Soil and Water Conservation District offices in the State. These questionnaires deal with two topics: forestry and the Leadership Institute proposed for the Spring. To date, about half of the Districts have returned their completed questionnaires. Both of these are efforts by your Board of Directors and the Conservation District Employees Association to better serve the Districts.

The first survey asks what forestry activities your District is doing and what are its goals in forestry services. It is being administered in conjunction with the State Soil and Water Conservation Committee which is re-negotiating the Memorandum of Understanding on forestry which was established in 1982 between the Committee and the State Department of Environmental Conservation. The compiled answers to the survey questions will be very helpful in that discussion and, ultimately, in setting new directions on forestry activity by Districts.

The second survey concerns the second Leadership Institute. The first one was held in 2003. This one is being proposed to be held in 2006. Its date, location, and content all will be strongly influenced by the answers which Districts provide on their questionnaires.

Turning to our Annual Legislative Day in Albany, the dates chosen are Monday, March 6 and Tuesday, March 7. We have selected these dates based on the availability of our legislators. The NYACD Board urges District Directors to participate in Legislative Days in Albany.

In order to build a solid legislative effort, I will be communicating with

both District Directors and employees in the weeks between now and March 6. Districts need an increase in their annual funding from the State. At our Annual Meeting in Alexandria Bay, both the State Senator and the State Assemblyman from that area stated to a full dinner crowd that they support increasing that funding. More than anything, an increase of the current \$30,000 reimbursement cap will allow Districts to implement more of the requests for service which have increasingly been piled on them. Since these funds come from the Environmental Protection Fund, we will need to focus not just on the cap issue, but also on making sure that the overall EPF budget is raised enough to provide Districts with the tools to meet the State's conservation needs.

When the Legislature reconvenes this month, Districts will need to start communicating with their own Legislators in their home districts. When we have our Legislative Days, Districts will need to come to Albany to meet with both their own Legislators and with Legislative leaders. When we have completed our Legislative Days, Districts will need to continue their efforts with follow-ups with Legislators. NYACD will be there for you before, during, and after. We will provide the coordinated messages and the status reports needed to make your contacts the most appropriate to the current situation.

This column is both an outline of what to expect, and a request for your participation in our 2006 efforts. Your help, expertise, and contacts will all be needed to move Districts forward this year. I look forward to working with you on these efforts.

By Gregg Bell, Executive Director NYACD

UPCOMING EVENTS

NACD Annual Meeting—Houston, TX—January 29-Feb 2, 2006

Symposium: "Turning Goldenrod Into Green"
Morrisville State College—January 14, 2006

NYACD Legislative Days—Albany, NY—March 6 & 7, 2006

Water Quality Symposium—Auburn, NY—March 7-10, 2006

February FYI—Deadline for Articles —January 22, 2006

Please send articles to Maggie Atkins at magneil@att.net, Phone: 585-396-9973; Fax: 585-554-4077. Thanks.

REALLY GOOD INFORMATION

New on www.nyacd.org

Surveys: Annual Meeting, Forestry, and Leadership Institute. Check it out!

www.nysenvirothon.org

A fabulous website that tells you all about the 2006 NYS Envirothon to be held at the SUNY Oswego campus May 24th and 25th.

Note all the great information on the 2007 Canon Envirothon which New York State will be hosting at Hobart William Smith Colleges in Geneva, NY on July 29th—August 4th.

www.nys-soilandwater.org

This is the website of the New York State Soil & Water Conservation Committee (NYSSWCC). It has tons of great information: newsletters, links to related sites, District Law, state conservation programs, etc.

Other sites will be highlighted in future issues of FYI. Let us know of ones you find useful.