

# NEW YORK ASSOCIATION OF CONSERVATION DISTRICTS, INC.



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## FYI...

NYACD NEWSLETTER • JANUARY 2007

### FROM THE PRESIDENT . . .

I hope this finds all of you in good health and rested from your Holiday seasons. My apologies for the absence of this column from the last issue of *FYI*. My continued thanks to Maggie Atkins who manages this newsletter with great professionalism and heart.

As we move forward throughout 2007, we can remember the accomplishments of 2006 and now must build on them into 2007. We can be thankful for so much. The disasters of 2006 have showed all of us that Mother Nature is truly the one in charge. Out of those disasters has come the building of needed disaster preparation and remediation plans. Out of those disasters also came the strengthening of partnerships, both the traditional ones and new ones.

At the end of November, I had an opportunity to attend the Cooperative Conservation Partnership Training in Nashville. Also attending were Amanda Barber, President and Jeff Carmichael, Vice President of the NYS Conservation District Employees' Association and Ron Alvarado, NRCS State Conservationist. The Employees' Association, NRCS, NYACD and the NYS Soil and Water Conservation Committee make up the traditional 4-Way partnership here in New York State. While several workshops were held on a wide variety of topics, I want to share a few points provided on leadership.

**Strategic Planning** - It is an important step to set out goals and vision. It is the road map to accomplish the mission and to determine which vehicle to operate as you make your journey. Without a road map, how will others know what and where you want to go; what you want to accomplish? How will you know when you successfully complete your trip?

**Good Leadership** - Presenters provided some suggestions for traits in leadership:

1. Be **Positive** - no one wants to be a part something negative.
2. Take **Action** - nothing gets done unless someone moves.
3. Be **Persistent**- as the saying goes, nothing good happens fast, stay with your goals; see them through.
4. Be **Innovative** - try new ideas, keeping in mind your goals, but remember to look at what may have worked in the past.
5. Be **Trusting** - put trust in others' abilities and talents; trust that things can be done; have confidence in others.
6. Be **Focused** - know your limitations and how to focus time, money and people in the right directions to accomplish the goals.
7. Always **Learn** - never stop learning and adding to your skills and talents.
8. Pay attention to **Details** - learn to analyze details. The small details can sometimes make the difference between success and failure.
9. Be **Honest and Dependable** - be there, tell the facts.
10. Be sure to **Follow-Through** - something started needs to be finished and completed as intended; analyze the results.
11. Be **Accountable** - be available, be ready to take praise as well as being critiqued.
12. Be **In the Present not the Past** - learn from the past, participate in the present and look forward and act for the future.
13. Be **Adaptable** - change when needed to the situation around you.
14. **MOST IMPORTANT - HAVE PASSION** - a passion for what you do; what the group stands for. Passion is what drives us to strive for more and helps in the motivation of others.

There is a need to develop leaders at all levels. There are opportunities to mentor and build new leaders within the soil and water conservation movement and within YOUR NYACD. It starts with many of the traits listed in above. Most of all, it has to do with action. Involvement and participation is important.

(Continued on Page 2)

### 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.*

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## FROM THE PRESIDENT . . . (CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

Many of the districts had representatives at the NYACD annual meeting in October, a good step, but we need more. Some of you attended the legislative days in 2006; we need you there even more in 2007. There is a need for each of you to be familiar with what is happening not only in your backyard, but also on the state and federal levels to understand the impact of how the decisions there affect your back yard. A good way to start learning is to be a part of the committee system for the NYACD. Consider working on one of these committees today, please. We still need a few division directors and could use alternates in most divisions. We need your feedback on various issues when requested; this would be easier with email addresses for those of you who have them. Information can then be sent out to each of you as things are happening. This year, this process will be very important. Many of you are leaders in your community; we need you to step up to the next level.

Beyond leadership is understanding the importance of building partnerships and coalitions to address issues across agency and organizations boundaries. It allows us to focus on what we can do together to accomplish common goals and projects. If used to its fullest potential, partnerships build energy to accomplish much more than one entity can. You will hear throughout this year about additional partners, many that you currently work with. This New Year as you all know, we have a new governor, new state legislators, new legislative committee chairmanships, new leaders of agencies, new representatives in Washington and new leadership and members of important national governmental committees. This means we have a great deal of work ahead to communicate with these new people on the work and needs of soil and water districts in New York State. Additionally we need to continue the discussions with those who we have had communications with in the past.

### Future

I hope that many of you will be coming to Albany in February for the legislative days. On Monday evening there will be kick-off activities and speakers to provide insight into lobbying, and into the topics for our legislative initiatives. All of you have been mailed information about Legislative Day. I do want to emphasize one important point. While lobbying, please do not forget to support strongly the Environmental Protection Fund. This fund is a part of the Department of Environmental Conservation's budget. It is the source of the state money for existing reimbursements to Districts and for the enhancement of projects under the new rules being developed. Money to districts is not a sure thing. Everyone must remember to thank their legislators and provide information on what you have done and what your needs are.

Hope to see you in Albany.

By Linda Coffin, President NYACD

## ROLE OF WORKING GROUPS IN THE GREAT LAKES WATER QUALITY AGREEMENT'S REVIEW PROCESS

The Canada – United States Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement, first signed in 1972, expresses the commitment of the governments of Canada and the United States to restore and maintain the chemical, physical and biological integrity of the Great Lakes Basin Ecosystem. It is an example of a successful Canada-United States partnership on Great Lakes issues, showing that bilateral cooperation is strong and effective. The Agreement provides for consultations between the two governments and periodic reviews (every six years) of the operation and effectiveness of the Agreement. The review helps to ensure that the Agreement continues to serve as an effective bi-national instrument to meet the current and emerging Great Lakes objectives well into the future.

Canada and the United States have committed to an open, transparent and inclusive review process which allows for the involvement of all interested parties. The year 2006 marks the latest review of the Agreement. At the request of the governments of Canada and the United States, the International Joint Commission held public hearings on how well the Agreement is working. The meetings took place in 14 Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River cities in the Fall of 2005.

This report summarizes the work conducted by Review Workgroup A, of which I was a member. The group had two face to face meetings one in Chicago and the other in Toronto. The rest were via teleconferencing beginning bimonthly and quickly switching to weekly two hour meetings. The Workgroup was given the task of reviewing the articles of scope and purpose, goals and objectives, standards regulatory requirements and research, programs and other measures, and management and administrative elements, as provided by the Agreement. The above Articles were reviewed using five evaluation elements: clarity, relevance, achievement of results, management framework and accountability. As reviewers, we were encouraged to follow this process and take advantage of opportunities to contribute and share our views with the governments as to how we perceive Agreement work is proceeding and what we would like the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement to address.

All reviews and other information will be collected and provided to the International Joint Commission for presentation to the two governments in early 2007.

My tenure with NYACD has given me many opportunities to work and travel throughout the Great Lake Basin. The future of this Agreement and the Great Lakes rests in all of us. By taking advantage of participating in the aforementioned review processes and the opportunities afforded NYACD by the New York Ocean and Great Lakes Ecosystem Conservation Council, taking an active participation on committees such as the NACD Great Lakes Committee and working hand in hand with our partners, each of us can contribute to a process that ensures that the Great Lakes basin ecosystem is truly restored and protected.

By Brad Rogers, 1st Vice President NYACD

## ALBANY NEWS

Changes are happening daily as we move into the new administration of Governor Elliott Spitzer. We are pleased to hear that Pat Hooker, who has worked with NYS Farm Bureau and is a valuable partner, has been nominated for Commissioner of Ag & Markets. We know that this partnership will continue. We are very thankful for the support and commitment of current Commissioner Pat Brennan and wish him success in future endeavors.

Department of Environmental Conservation Commissioner Denise Sheehan has recently resigned from her position. We await the naming of the person who will be taking her place. Again, we have appreciated the support and work that former Commissioner Sheehan has provided for soil and water districts and the work we do. We wish her well in her next position with the Town of Colonie.

On Wednesday January 10, Brad Rogers, First Vice President, Gregg Bell, Executive Director, and I attended a public hearing sponsored by the Assembly Standing Committee on Environmental Conservation and the Assembly Subcommittee on Oversight of the Department of Environmental Conservation. The purpose for the hearing was to hear comments from invited individuals and groups concerning the impact of the 2006-07 State Budget on the programs of the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC). While the current DEC budget added another 36 new positions related to various functions, the 700 staff that have been lost since the 1990s, have called into question the ability of DEC to implement its programs adequately. Various speakers discussed DEC needs related to water quality, dam safety, law enforcement, invasive species, brownfields, forest management, fish and wildlife management, wetlands, disaster recovery, stormwater and especially the Environmental Protection Fund (EPF). The NYACD delivered testimony in support of the need to continue to increase the EPF funding, supported the working relationship that SWCDs have with DEC staff on all issues and encouraged additional funding for the stormwater program.

Also, on Wednesday, January 10, NYACD leadership attended an education class provided by the NYS Temporary Commission on Lobbying. It was a very intensive session in regards to lobbying, not only in terms of paperwork and record keeping, but in the definition of when you are or are not lobbying. The NYACD will be providing more information on this at the Legislative Day in February. As an example, the Commission defines:

- The term **lobbying or lobbying activities** to mean
  - “...any attempt to influence:
    - The passage or defeat of any legislation by either house of the state legislature, or approval or disapproval of any legislation by the governor;
    - The adoption or rejection of any rule or regulation having the force and effect of law by a state agency;
    - The outcome of any rate-making proceeding by a state agency;
    - The passage or defeat of any local law, ordinance, resolution, or regulation by any municipality or subdivision thereof; or
    - The adoption or rejection of any rule, regulation, or resolution having the force and effect of a local law, ordinance, resolution, or regulation;
- The term **“Attempts to Influence”** means any activity intended to support, oppose, modify, delay, expedite or otherwise affect any of the governmental actions.
- The term **“state agency”** shall mean any department, board, bureau, commission, division, office, council, committee or officer of the state whether permanent or temporary, or a public benefit corporation or public authority at least whose members are appointed by the Governor, authorized by law to make rules or to make final decisions in adjudicatory proceedings but shall not include judicial branch or agencies created by interstate compact or international agreement.”

This is just a small part of the lobbying rules. Come to the February 12<sup>th</sup> & 13<sup>th</sup> Legislative Days to hear more about how these rules can affect your district. One of our speakers will be from the Lobbying Commission itself.

By Linda Coffin

## WASHINGTON NEWS

# NACD ISSUE ALERT—INCOMPLETE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT FUNDING IMPACTS CONSERVATION DELIVERY SYSTEM

This was received from NACD to alert us all to the current status of federal government operational and programmatic funding that impacts conservation districts and the delivery of conservation programs across the country.

While each state and local district may have various partnerships to implement and deliver conservation, environmental or wild-life programs from the federal government, the current budget situation in Washington, D.C. could affect the operation of all of these programs.

### *The Situation:*

Congress failed to enact annual appropriations bills to fund the government prior to the beginning of this fiscal year, which began on October 1, 2006. With the exception of Defense and Homeland Security, all government departments and agencies are operating on temporary funding Congress approved through February 15.

Because Congress failed to complete action on funding for the entire fiscal year, federal government budgets for the year remain in flux. While this impacts all federal agencies, Conservation Districts will likely hear the most discussion or be affected by NRCS, FSA and the Forest Service. This situation could result in a reduction in staffing levels/furloughs, no new agreements for the delivery of technical assistance, reduced travel budgets for federal government staff participation in meetings, no new equipment and increased requirements to cover federal government costs – such as computers and background checks.

Members of Congress will return in January to decide on final program funding levels for fiscal year 2007 at the same time they will start developing legislation to provide funding for fiscal year 2008. To ensure that this reduced level of program delivery is not sustained throughout the year, Conservation District officials must communicate with Congress about the importance of Conservation Technical Assistance, and funding to deliver conservation programs. This is not a one-time issue, but a long-term funding debate that will take place every year.

### *What can be done?*

Members of Congress need to understand what impact current budgets are having in your local area. Conservation Technical Assistance must be a priority.

Examples of the current impact and what may not be accomplished this year if funding levels remain low are important for Members of Congress to understand and specifically the impact in their district.

Remember, this is not just NRCS or USDA, but most all federal government agencies, so for Congress to make changes to the funding levels, they must specifically understand the impact in their home areas/state. While members are at home over the next several weeks, now is the time to share your concerns. The squeaky wheel gets the grease – our conservation funding message must be heard often.

You can participate in NACD's action alerts. If you would like to receive additional information/updates, please contact NACD's Grassroots Coordinator at [jeremy-peters@nacdn.net](mailto:jeremy-peters@nacdn.net).

### *Next Steps:*

The Federal agencies are currently assessing their budgets, so operations are subject to change as more details become available. Overall, agencies will be working under reduced budgets and their first priority will be to assess internal staff costs and operational requirements before working with outside partners to deliver conservation programs. Please work with Federal Agencies at the state level to further understand their individual budget limitations, and help craft an approach to best serve conservation customers.

NACD will also be developing additional information, and will continually keep you up to date. Again, there is no quick-fix for this budget problem. Federal funding is provided annually through appropriations bills approved by Congress, so this will be a continual outreach effort. It will take a coordinated effort and the work of Conservation Districts across the country to be involved in educating Members of Congress on the importance of conservation program delivery, technical assistance and the value of conservation programs.

## EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S COLUMN

As we pass from a successful 2006 Annual Meeting to our annual lobbying season, we have already begun well. It is important for all of our District members to regularly know what services to Districts your dues to NYACD are producing, so this is another report to you along that line.

While the State Legislature has been in session for only a few days, we have already been hard at work on legislative matters for about six weeks. At the Annual Meeting, two resolutions were passed which are guiding our legislative work for 2007. They endorsed:

- 1) an increase in the EPF over the next several years, and
- 2) funding for Districts to provide services to assist the State Department of Environmental Conservation to implement the backlogged Stormwater Phase II Program.

Shortly after Governor Spitzer was elected in November, he appointed Transition Teams covering many parts of State government, including an Environmental Team and an Agriculture Team. Once members of these teams were announced in mid-November, we contacted several members of each of these two teams, presenting a copy of our stormwater committee's proposal. In December, we sent a letter and a copy of the proposal to almost every member of the State Legislature.

On January 10, NYACD Vice President Brad Rogers and President Linda Coffin joined me in Albany where Linda gave testimony at a hearing on the performance of the 2006 DEC budget before the Assembly Committee on the Environment. Later, we attended another training program by the State Lobbying Commission.

On January 17, we began our first in-person lobbying for this Session. President Linda Coffin, Dave Wick and Ed Milner from Warren County SWCD and the stormwater committee, and I all spent a day at the State Legislature. Like last year, in 2007, we will not put all of our eggs into the one basket of a single big Legislative Day. Instead, we will supplement that one big day with a series of smaller days of lobbying. On this first lobby day, we met with six legislators or their staffs presenting our stormwater proposal. It was a very productive experience, giving us early clues on potential problems and how to proceed. It was also good to hear that, for one legislative staff member, we were the first issue organization to meet with him for the whole year.

For the big Legislative Day on February 12 and 13, we have already been making appointments with legislators for those of you who will be coming to Albany. We have also begun to set up the training meeting for the evening of February 12.

In preparation for Legislative Day, I would like to make an offer and a suggestion. The offer is to help you during your next Board meeting. If your Board would like to know more about the 2007 NYACD issues or about the February Legislative Day, I would be happy to join your meeting via speaker phone. I have done it before and the Boards found it helpful. Simply invite me to call in whenever you would like and let me meet with your Board on a speaker phone for five or ten minutes. That should allow questions to be asked and answered quickly and should help inspire your Board to get more involved.

Now, for the recommendation. Districts have a process whereby the Board approves requests for individuals to attend the Legislative Day. Unfortunately, the dates of the Board meeting are often too late in the cycle to meet the deadline for registration. Since this seems to come up on a regular basis as a problem, here is the recommendation. Don't wait for the last minute! Approve a certain number of people to attend for the 2008 Legislative Day now. Since we have had a similar day every year for several years, why wait until NYACD announces the 2008 date before you approve attendance? If now seems too early to approve attendance at the 2008 Day, then now put it on your agenda for your Board meeting in September 2007. That way, it will be approved in plenty of time and you can simply fill in the specific names later. This will both relieve anxiety and improve participation.

I hope we will see you all here in Albany on February 12 and 13. I hope that some of you will also be able to join me for smaller days of lobbying throughout the next five months.

by Gregory Bell

## NEWS YOU CAN USE

### **Wanted: Information on Producers Conserving and Generating Energy**

NACD is looking for examples of innovation in energy conservation and energy generation on America's farms and ranches for an upcoming report. "Energy Conservation Opportunities in Agriculture" will focus on ways in which agricultural producers are changing farming and ranching practices to conserve energy, reduce consumption and generate energy in their operations. We also hope to show how conservation districts are helping producers achieve success in this area. The report will share information on innovative practices with other conservation districts and partners and inform policy-makers of the good work taking place on energy conservation and generation in rural America. Please submit ideas and examples to project coordinator Bill Berry at [billnick@charter.net](mailto:billnick@charter.net) or (715) 341-9119.

### **The Hidden Treasure: A New NACD Youth Education Tool on Woody Biomass**

NACD is excited to offer districts a new education tool on woody biomass for use in local district youth education efforts. "The Hidden Treasure: Forests and Woody Biomass" is a full-color comic book targeted at students in the upper primary education grades and middle school. The book can be previewed at [www.discoverycomics.com/review/TheHiddenTreasure.pdf](http://www.discoverycomics.com/review/TheHiddenTreasure.pdf).

The comic book is available free of charge through NYACD. Please contact NYACD before February 16, 2007 if you would like to receive copies of the comic book. The books will be distributed on a first-come, first-serve basis.

Districts interested in ordering bulk quantities (**500 copies or more**) can bypass their state association and contact NACD Forestry Consultant Fred Deneke directly at [fred-deneke@nacdnet.org](mailto:fred-deneke@nacdnet.org).

The project was funded through NACD's Cooperative Agreement with the Department of Interior and the USDA Forest Service on woody biomass utilization.

### **NACD Stewardship Marketplace Open**

Now is the time for all districts to "turn up the heat" and be the power behind good conservation in your community. The NACD Stewardship and Education Committee is pleased to announce the opening of the Stewardship Marketplace - visit <http://nacdstore.org/> to see the bold new products available for 2007 Stewardship Week activities.

Stewardship Week, themed "Today is the Day to be a part of Conservation's Power," will be observed April 29 - May 6, 2007. Basic topics covered in the 2007 theme materials include energy saved by no-till farming practices; solar, wind, alternative fuel sources; renewable and non-renewable resources; conservation at home; and partnerships with conservation districts, community and families working together.

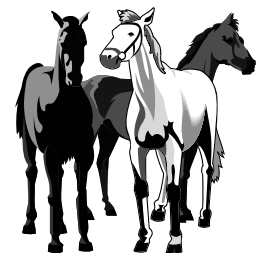
Go to <http://stewardship.nacdnet.org/> for more information about Stewardship Week and free downloadable materials.

### **One Day Horse Grazing Conference: Yes, You Can Graze Horses & Have Healthy Pastures**

The Broome Co. Soil & Water Conservation District, through the Graze NY Program, will be holding a one day horse grazing conference on Saturday, February 17, in the Auditorium of the Broome County Cornell Cooperative Extension in Binghamton, NY. The event will run from 9:00 am to 4:30 pm.

The day will focus primarily on pasture management for horse operations. Topics to be discussed include: setting realistic pasture goals, forage species selection & forage growth, the importance of rest and rotation for pastures, toxic plants, weed control, and fencing options. Additionally, there will be a presentation by a horse owner who successfully pastures his horses and a discussion on Agricultural Value Assessments and how they can reduce taxes for some horse operations. Whether you have 1 or 100 horses, there should be something for you.

The event will cost \$10 (\$15/couple) and pre-registration is requested. Along with lunch, educational materials will be provided. Contact Dan Vredenburg at the District office for more information and/or to register for the event. (607-724-9268 or [broomesoil@juno.com](mailto:broomesoil@juno.com))



## GREAT LAKES COMMISSION SEEKS GRANT APPLICATIONS FOR SOIL EROSION, SEDIMENT CONTROL

The Great Lakes Commission is seeking grant applications for local projects to improve water quality by reducing soil erosion and sedimentation, under the Great Lakes Basin Program for Soil Erosion and Sediment Control.

Funding is available for both demonstration projects, involving measures to physically limit erosion or sedimentation, and information and education efforts.

It is expected that up to \$2 million will be available for grants in the current funding cycle. Small-scale grants of up to \$40,000 will be awarded in each of the two categories, with an additional category for large-scale demonstration projects of up to \$80,000. The deadline for applications is March 1, 2007.

The application process is open to units of state and local government, academic institutions and nonprofit organizations in the United States with an interest in or mandate to address soil erosion, sedimentation and related water quality issues within the Great Lakes drainage basin. U.S. federal agencies, public and private Canadian organizations, and private landowners may not apply directly, but are encouraged to participate as project partners with eligible applicants.

All proposed projects must be explicitly relevant to reducing soil erosion and/or contributing to sedimentation control. For demonstration grants, projects must show a measurable reduction of soil erosion commensurate with the size of the project. No grants will be made for planning, inventories or research.

All applications must be submitted electronically. For more information and directions on how to apply, see [www.glc.org/basin](http://www.glc.org/basin).

The Great Lakes Basin Program for Soil Erosion and Sediment Control is funded by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, as authorized under the Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002. The program is administered by the Great Lakes Commission. Funding decisions will depend on the availability of funds and the program's review process.

Other information on the program, including past grants, news updates, funding information and an extensive list of project management tools is available at [www.glc.org/basin](http://www.glc.org/basin).

Contact: Gary Overmier, [garyo@glc.org](mailto:garyo@glc.org)

## 2006 AGRICULTURE IN THE NEWS

Cortland County, Madison County and Wyoming County SWCD were presented with "2006 Agriculture in the News" awards by the New York State Soil & Water Conservation Committee and the NYS Department of Agriculture & Markets. The awards are presented as part of the Agricultural Environmental Management Program (AEM) in New York State. This award recognizes the success of AEM partners working to get local press on agriculture and continue the enthusiasm to foster public awareness of agricultural issues.

This program coordinates the delivery of the technical support and financial incentives needed for farmers to implement the conservation practices critical to protect water quality and other natural resources for all New Yorkers. Soil and Water Conservation Districts are the local catalyst and delivery mechanism for the AEM activity at the county level. AEM also helps to ensure that New York farms remain viable in an ever changing market place and regulatory climate. AEM programs and services are delivered to farmers at the local level by the local Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) and its partners, specifically the USDA agencies and Cornell Cooperative Extension.



Amanda Barber, District Manager Cortland Co. SWCD, Dave Reckahn, Water Quality Technician Wyoming Co. SWCD, Troy Bishopp, Grazing Specialist Madison Co. SWCD and Rick Zimmerman, NYS Deputy Commissioner of Agriculture

NEW YORK ASSOCIATION OF  
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## UPCOMING EVENTS

- **Four Way Partnership Conference Call**, January 23rd, February 27th and March 27, 2007
- **CAFO Update Road Show**, January 31 (Malone), February 7 (Albany), February 14 (Mt. Morris)
- **Friends of NY's Environment (EPF) Meeting and Conference Call**, February 1, 2007, Albany, NY
- **NACD 61st Annual Meeting**, February 4-8, 2007, Los Angeles, CA
- **NYACD Legislative Days**, February 12-13, 2007, Albany, NY
- **NYS Soil and Water Conservation Committee Meeting**, February 20, 2007, Albany, NY
- **2007 Water Quality Symposium / CDEA Annual Training Session**, March 13-16, 2007, Auburn, NY
- **"Graze-A-Palooza" Spring Grazing Conference**, March 31, 2007, Hamilton, NY
- **2007 New York State Envirothon**, May 23-24, 2007, Cobleskill, NY
- **2007 Canon Envirothon**, July 29– August 4, 2007, Hobart and William Smith Colleges, Geneva, NY

**February FYI**—Deadline for Articles —January 30, 2007.

Please send articles to Maggie Atkins at [matkins@frontiernet.net](mailto:matkins@frontiernet.net); Phone: 585-396-9973; Fax: 585-554-4077. **Thanks.**