

NEW YORK ASSOCIATION OF
CONSERVATION DISTRICTS, INC.

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NEW YORK ASSOCIATION OF CONSERVATION DISTRICTS, INC.



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FYI...

NYACD NEWSLETTER • MAY 2006

FROM THE PRESIDENT...

In past issues and meetings NYACD has discussed the development of Community Environmental Management (CEM) here in New York State. The program would include tool kits which would facilitate the delivery of environmental assistance to municipalities and other local groups. A series of draft CEM worksheets was prepared as assessment tools to assist communities with making informed land use decisions. Some of these materials were utilized by the Upper Susquehanna Coalition (USC) with eight pilot communities in 2003 and 2004. That project was very successful in that it enabled USC staff to work with individual municipalities and watershed organizations to address their local environmental concerns. However, the results were mixed with regard to the usefulness of the CEM worksheets in helping communities develop plans to address their environmental issues. The principal shortcoming identified by this pilot project is that CEM does not lead the participants in a clearly defined direction. This differs from the Agricultural Environmental Management (AEM) program, which is tied to the NYS Environmental Protection Fund grant system and leads to implementation of management practices that address the identified problems.

The New York Association of Conservation Districts (NYACD) requested funding from EPA to test the draft CEM worksheets, modify the worksheets as appropriate, and develop a CEM webpage. The Association was approved to submit

an application for possible grant funding to move ahead with the above. However, in the course of almost a year and half since that notification, the NYACD has met one obstacle after another to making this happen. First, it appeared there were difficulties identifying Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCDs) interested in testing the CEM worksheets. One after another, many of the state agencies working with SWCDs also felt that the plan for CEM was more than districts should and could take on at this time. There were still others who felt the money, while maybe great for one year, would not sustain the program beyond one to two years. Therefore at the beginning of April the NYACD made the decision not to pursue this funding at this time to EPA. In addition we made it known that we truly support every effort possible to work with municipalities on their needs to integrate natural resource issues into local planning efforts. In addition, we see that urban conservation and relationships with rural operations remain important topics for the future.

NYACD thanks the EPA and especially Donna Somboonlakana, Environmental Engineer, USEPA – Nonpoint Source Program and looks forward to working with her on other projects in the future.

Thanks to all of you who did support CEM. Don't give up, as we continue with an urban conservation element. For now, we can focus on our many other program areas.

By Linda Coffin, President, NYACD

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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UPCOMING EVENTS

MARK YOUR CALENDARS!



2006 New York State Envirothon
May 24-25, 2006, Oswego, NY
Still need volunteers, great raffles!!
See www.nysenvirothon.org for details

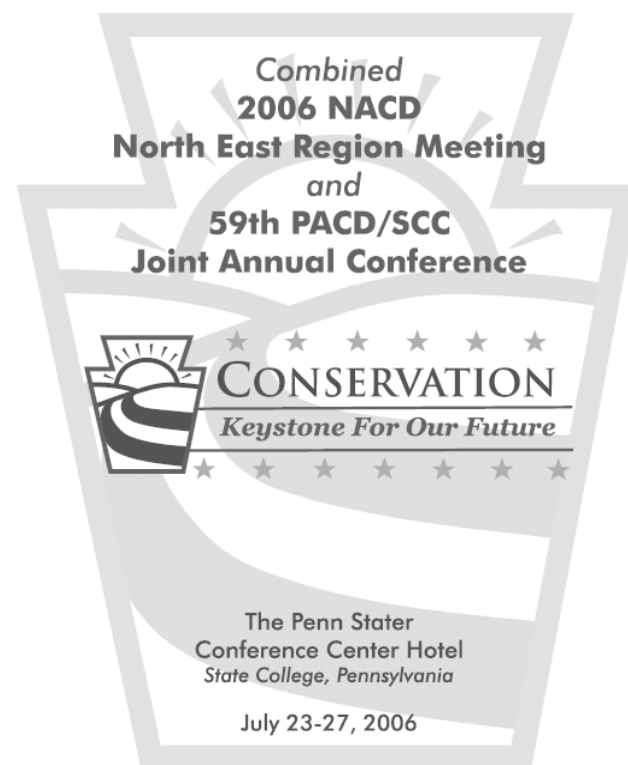
2006 NACD North East Region Meeting,
July 23-27, 2006, State College, PA

North Country Regional Stormwater Tradeshow & Conference, October 19, 2006, Lake George, NY

NYACD's Annual Meeting, October 29-31, 2006

June FYI—Deadline for Articles —May 22, 2006

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



WELCOME STATE CONSERVATIONIST RON ALVARADO

NYACD welcomes Ron Alvarado, the new State Conservationist. Ron (officially) became the New York State Conservationist on April 17, 2006.

Ron Alvarado began his career with NRCS when it was still the Soil Conservation Service as a student trainee while attending New Mexico State University. As a student trainee, Ron worked in several field offices throughout New Mexico and spent a short time in the New Mexico State Office. He has held various positions with the agency in New Mexico, Arizona and Oregon. Some of his previous positions include; soil conservationist trainee, soil conservationist, district conservationist, basin team leader (area conservationist) in two areas and assistant state conservationist for Operations.

Ron gained experience as a soil conservationist in several field offices across Arizona, including Buckeye, Yuma and Phoenix. He also served as the District Conservationist for the Phoenix Service Center. After four years in Arizona, Ron moved to Oregon and served as the Southwest Basin Team Leader/AC. As manager of this southwest Oregon area, Ron was responsible for NRCS employees in five field offices, one RC&D area and provided technical leadership and guidance to six Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCD).



Ron Alvarado, State Conservationist

In 2001, he voluntarily transferred to La Grande, Oregon where he served as the Snake River Basin Team Leader/AC. In this northeast corner of Oregon, he managed NRCS employees in four field offices and provided technical leadership and guidance to seven SWCD's. Prior to his move to New York, Ron was the Assistant State Conservationist for Operations in Portland, Oregon, with state-wide leadership for Conservation Operations management, strategic planning and accountability.

On a personal note, Ron was born and raised on a small farm north of Las Cruces, New Mexico, where he and his family raised pecans, alfalfa and various vegetables, particularly red and green Chile for the farmers market. He graduated from New Mexico State University in 1994 with a Bachelor of Science in Horticulture/Agronomy and a minor in Soil Science.

These days, Ron loves to exercise, remodel and renovate homes, work on old cars, read, and listen to music.

NEW YORK STATE ENVIROTHON

The New York State Envirothon is being held May 24-25, 2006, in Oswego, New York.

Volunteers are still needed. To help out, please contact Anne Carpenter at anne@nycswcd.net or John Naple at jnaple@nycap.rr.com.

Raffle tickets are still available for \$5 at your District office or contact Seth Dennis at seth-dennis@ny.nacdnet.org.

1st prize: 50" Sony Plasma TV; 2nd prize: 13' Necky Manitou Kayak with paddle & life vest; 3rd prize: \$250.00 Gas Card.

For more information on the NYS Envirothon go to: www.nysenvirothon.org.



NYACD NEEDS YOUR HELP!!

The New York Association of Conservation Districts, Inc. wants **YOU** to get involved in your association. Many NYACD Divisions will be holding elections for Division Directors and alternates this spring and summer.

What is a Division Director and what does he or she do?

- The state is divided into 8 areas or divisions. The Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) Directors elect the Division Director to sit on the New York Association of Conservation Districts (NYACD) Board.
- The Division Director represents the SWCD Directors from his NY State Division in the conduct of the business and activities of the NYACD, Inc.
- The NYACD Board of Directors meets periodically in person and by conference call.
- The Division Director works with other members of the NYACD, Inc. Board of Directors to develop policies, programs and activities, which will support the programs of the State's Soil and Water Conservation Districts.
- The Division Director conducts division meetings for elections, and when it is deemed to be in the interest of Soil and Water Conservation Districts.
- The Division Director develops and maintains contacts with districts.

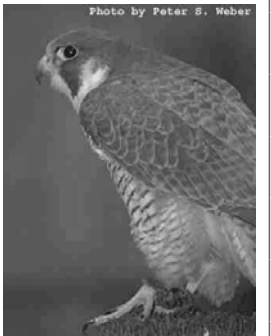
To find out more, please contact one of the current board members listed on the website: www.nyacd.org

PEREGRINE FALCON WEBCAMS

Once decimated in New York State by pesticides, many peregrine falcons again claim New York State as home. As a result of successful reintroduction programs, they are now living happily on mountain cliffs, skyscraper perches, and between high bridge beams. From both the natural and man-made sites, they provide spectacular scenes of flight and attack of their prey.

Now, you can keep track of several of these peregrine families. Web cams on skyscrapers in New York City, Buffalo, and Rochester, and on bridges over the Hudson in Albany and Poughkeepsie take minute-by-minute photos. These are posted on the web, where you and your children can watch. The following link to the web site of the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation gives a good background on the plight and recovery of these spectacular raptors. The site also gives links to all five of the above web cams. Peregrines hatch their eggs usually in April, so May should be a good time to watch new broods of young.

<http://www.dec.state.ny.us/website/dfwmr/wildlife/endspec/webcams/AlbPere/>



NATURAL HISTORY EXHIBIT

We all learn to appreciate nature from two sources, from nature itself and from human representations of nature. Natural history illustration has been practiced for centuries. Its focus has always been on the identification and study of floral and faunal species. Works in this genre don't focus on being art, but art, they are.

On April 20, the New York State Museum opened two large, diverse, and fascinating shows on contemporary natural history illustration. They will continue through the summer, until August 30. The larger show, called Focus on Nature IX, presents illustrations on species ranging from trillium and iris to fishing spiders and marine iguanas. When these biennial shows were first begun, they included only artists from New York State. While this show includes numerous artists from towns across New York, it has now expanded to include artists from Korea, Portugal, Australia, and Russia.

While the precise representation of the bones of a huge turtle might not be what you would want hanging on your wall, most of the works have strong visual appeal. Like most historic natural history illustration, the contemporary works in the show focus on one species or group of species with minimal backgrounds. Most are so firmly rooted in the visual tradition of this field, they look like they could have been painted or drawn fifty or a hundred years ago.

For those who work in the soil and water conservation field, this show would renew your appreciation for the resources we are all trying to conserve. If you are coming to Albany, add the show to your agenda.

By Gregory Bell

“STRATEGIES FOR GOING GRASS-FED” ANOTHER SELLOUT!

The interest in grass-based farming blossomed like the coming of Spring. 200 farmers, household chefs and agency folks from all over the Northeast welcomed in a host of seasoned, practical farmer speakers on the subject of our most promising asset, pasture.

Marty Broccoli from Oneida County CCE Ag. Development opened the program and Phil Metzger of USDA/NRCS and the CNY RC&D project introduced Assemblyman Bill Magee, Ag. Committee Chairman. He praised the ideas of using our grasslands more efficiently to stimulate the palates of the consumers who are asking for these products. Troy Bishopp, Madison Co. SWCD grazing specialist and Oneida Co. farmer, introduced the Commissioner of Agriculture, Patrick Brennan. Mr. Brennan was excited about the passion for pasture, as well as its benefits environmentally, socially and financially for the farmers in this region. He and his staff continue to work for constituents to enhance this resource for the viability of New York agriculture.

Keynote speaker and author of “No-Risk Ranching”, Missouri grazier Greg Judy was passionate about contract grazing on leased land. He uses over 500 beef cows, 300 hair sheep, goats, horses and Tamworth pigs on 1300 acres to reclaim and maintain idle land. He described landowner relationships, lease agreements, fencing and stocking rate strategies and wildlife promotion. His passion fired up the crowd over and over again throughout the day. Indiana seasonal dairyman Dave Forgey was just as enthused about having dairy animals on pasture and bringing the next generation into farming through a share-milking business partnership. His practical experiences with forage species and replacement heifers is second to none.

Shannon Hayes, author of *The Grass-Fed Gourmet* brought to light that Americans spent 68 billion dollars last year on kitchen renovations, but did very little cooking and only averaged 30 minutes together at the family meal. She emphasized the importance of locally grown meat, dairy and eggs raised on good pastures and the associated health benefits with consuming them. She also had keen insight on marketing and educating the consumer on cooking techniques. Her words were a good prelude to a truly awesome lunch featuring Sweet Meadow Farm's grass-fed beef, lamb, pork and turkey prepared exquisitely by the Dibbles Inn chefs. The comradery and discussions at the dinner table among attendees was truly memorable.



Enjoying some grass-fed meat.

This conference was made possible by the support, vision and spirit of the Center for Agriculture Development & Entrepreneurship, Inc., Central NY RC&D Project, Inc., Northeast Sustainable Agriculture Research & Education, NY Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative, Madison, Onondaga and Oneida Co. Soil and Water Conservation Districts, Cornell Small Farms Program, The GRAZE-NY Program, Cornell Cooperative Extension of Oneida, Madison, Cayuga and Onondaga Counties, USDA/NRCS, Chenango Co. Ag. Development Council, American Pastured Poultry Producers Assoc., Oneida Co. Ag. Economic Development, Cornell University Dept. of Animal Science, Country Folks Farm Magazine, Sweet Meadow Farm, Cornerstone Farm Ventures, Fertrell Minerals, Williams Fence Company, CROPP Organic Valley, Tru-Test Inc., Kings Agri-Seeds, Adirondack North Country Assoc., Penny Nutrition, Wayne Perry Fencing, Restora-Life Minerals, LLC., Lakeview Organic Grain and Bishopp Family Farm.



Commissioner of Agriculture, Patrick Brennan

The afternoon sessions featured more in-depth discussions on pastured poultry from Dr. Ben Lucio, Jim McLaughlin, Jeff Mattocks and Mike Carroll. These gentlemen laid the groundwork for a successful poultry venture and also discussed the Avian Flu concern. The livestock session focused on contract grazing, marketing and multi-species grazing strategies. Mike Debach, artisan butcher from Leona Meats led a spirited group on the benefits of grass-based genetics as it relates to meat quality, flavor and cutout ratios of beef animals. The afternoon dairy tract featured Onondaga County grass-based dairyman Pete Mapstone and his thoughts on maintaining top production throughout the grazing season. Ideas for grazing replacement heifers and working with different forage species were explored. An organic dairy farmer roundtable discussion consisting of farmers Kevin Engelbert, Paul Knapp, Dave Stratton and Charles Blood ended the day on a positive note.

Participants noted they enjoyed the large amount of diversified topics and meeting new people as well as feeling inspired to explore all the opportunities of pasture based farming. Grazing is great in New York State!!

PROGRESS AND STANDOFF IN ALBANY

During the past couple of months, your Association has been heavily involved at the State Legislature in lobbying to increase funding for our under funded Soil and Water Conservation Districts. Much progress has been made. Our bill has been introduced in both houses. The State Budget was sort-of passed by the Legislature on time. The Legislature's EPF Budget contains a 60% increase in funding for Districts. Looks good so far, eh?

Then came mid-April. The Governor issued a mind-boggling 202 vetoes, totaling almost \$3 billion in cuts. Then came the Easter/Passover recess. Activity around the Legislative Office Building in Albany became suddenly very quiet. The busloads of citizen activists disappeared. Legislative staff returned to their home districts around the state.

On April 24 the Legislature will return to Albany. As of this writing (April 21), it looks like the Legislature will pursue both legislative overrides of vetoes and negotiations with the Governor. Law suits concerning some constitutional issues concerning the Budget are also likely to be filed soon. It is not known how this high drama will conclude.

In the meantime, there is no approved budget for the Environmental Protection Fund (EPF). As of this writing, there is no budget at all for Soil and Water Conservation Districts for next year. The EPF budget is likely to be passed eventually. It is likely to include the 60% increase for Districts which is in the draft, but it is not possible to know when or what it will actually contain in the end.

Prior to the vetoes, April 11 was another significant step in getting the action Districts desire. While our main Albany Legislative Day was back on March 7, April 11 was our fourth Legislative Day of 2006.

Brad Rogers, our Legislative Committee Chair, and Chair of the Genesee County SWCD, came to Albany to help push our agenda. Tom Sanford, District Manager of the Rensselaer County SWCD joined us to give an in-the-trenches perspective to the Legislators and their staffs.

The reason I chose April 11 for this mini-Legislative Day was because the Senate Ag Committee had a meeting that day at which our bill, S7053, was considered for the first time. Using that meeting as the core for the day, in addition, I scheduled appointments with six members of the Assembly Agriculture Committee or their staffs. These appointments started every half hour.

The Senate Ag Committee meeting flew through their agenda in fifteen minutes. Our bill passed with no serious objections. It has now been sent to the Senate floor for a first reading, a strong step for us. (Last year when we had a bill introduced, it never got that far). A full Senate vote has not yet been scheduled.

At the Senate Ag Committee meeting, the only substantive questions on the bill were from Senator Seward from Central New York. Since I know him from when I lived in Tompkins County, as soon as the meeting was over, I rushed into the hallway where I spent five minutes explaining the bill. Once he knew more about it, he was fine with it. However, I would request that any SWCD which is in his Senate District try to meet with him in his home office in Oneonta prior to the Senate vote on the bill to give your local perspective and to strengthen my brief hallway presentation.

In the six scheduled meetings on April 11 with Assembly Ag Committee members or their staffs, all were supportive and appreciated the background. In addition to the scheduled meetings, we were able to get non-scheduled meetings with the Members or staffs of three additional members of the Assembly Ag Committee. In total that day, we had ten substantive meetings with Legislators or their staffs. Three of these were with the Legislators. Seven were with their staff members.

Until this date, SWCDs have focused most of their legislative contact energy on upstate legislators. Today, we were able to break out of this box and into the New York City circle. Three of our meetings were with New York City Assembly members or their staffs. This was very productive and needs to be pursued.

In late March I asked Districts to write to members of the Assembly Ag Committee. Until that Committee schedules a meeting, I would still like to request that Districts write those letters if you have not done so yet. It now looks like that meeting will be scheduled for mid May.

I have scheduled another mini-Legislative Day, on May 2. That will be after the Legislature has returned and has started to deal with the vetoes. I have invited several SWCD Managers and Directors who have expressed interest in coming back to Albany for that day.

On whatever day the Assembly Ag Committee considers our bill, I plan on holding another mini-Legislative Day. It would be great to have several SWCDs in the room for that. If your District can send someone, it would be helpful. Please let me know. Like on April 11, I will schedule another batch of meetings around the Committee meeting. That day may be our final group Legislative Day for the year. If you can send someone or for the unscheduled mid-May date, please let me know. Our strategy seems to be working for the benefit of SWCDs, so we need to continue it.

If you have any questions or thoughts on this, please let me know. This is a team effort.

By Gregg Bell, Executive Director, NYACD



**Agricultural
Environmental
Management**

WHY CARE ABOUT NEW YORK FARM FAMILIES & AEM?

Top 10 Ways New York Farm Families Positively Affect Your Life

1. They produce the fresh, high quality food and beverages you enjoy everyday.
2. You are one of the 144 people that each farm family feeds annually.
3. They preserve treasured open space and keep the great outdoors great.
4. Their farms provide habitat for the birds, fish and other wildlife in your area.
5. Their farms provide you with scenic views and maintain a rural quality of life.
6. Their farms provide recreational opportunities, such as hiking, fishing and cross-county skiing.
7. Every dollar they earn multiplies four times in your local economy.
8. Their farms help to keep your local taxes low by requiring far less than the costs of services required by developments.
9. They plant hundreds of thousands of trees on their farmland, along streams and wetlands every year.
10. They work hard and spend millions of dollars annually to implement conservation practices on their farms to protect water quality and other natural resources your family depends on.

**Agriculture is the biggest industry we have in New York State, one that we can keep,
one that's about more than the food on your table.**

Help our farm families to help your family!

**Buy New York products and support our farm families in their efforts
to keep agriculture environmentally sound
and economically viable in NYS.**

AEM...for the Future of Farming in New York State

The State's Agricultural Environmental Management (AEM) program brings together technical support teams and resources to assist farm families in their efforts to keep agriculture environmentally sound and economically viable in New York.

For more information contact your County Soil and Water Conservation District or visit www.nys-soilandwater.org

GREAT LAKES WATER QUALITY AGREEMENT

Brad Rogers, First Vice-President of NYACD, has been appointed to a Review Working Group for the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement.

Brad brings a host of pertinent experience to the table as: Principal Legislative Contact for NYACD, member of the Board of Directors of NACD, member of the NACD Great Lakes Committee, member of the Board of Directors of NY-ACD, Chairman of the Genesee County Soil & Water Conservation District, retired school teacher in Science and Health, former member of the SUNY Brockport College Council, and former Genesee County, New York Legislator.

Brad will be part of a review group of public and private sector Great Lakes Basin Stakeholders from the US and Canada. The work of the review groups started in late April and will continue to the end of 2006.

The importance of the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement is widely recognized. It commits the two countries to restore and maintain the chemical, physical and biological integrity of the waters of the Great Lakes Basin Ecosystem and has been held up as a successful mode of Canada-United States partnership, showing that bilateral cooperation is strong, effective and productive. The review of the agreement will help insure that it continues to fulfill this role well into the future.

NEW RESOURCES AND PUBLICATIONS AVAILABLE ON-LINE

Check out American Farmland Trust's New Website at www.farmland.org !

And, from NACD's eNotes, a host of on-line information:

1. **BufferNotes:** The April issue of NACD's BufferNotes newsletter focuses on the 20th anniversary of CRP. The Farm Service Agency is recognizing the milestone with activities and special features planned throughout the year. Included is information on success stories from across the nation. NACD CEO Krysta Harden authors a guest column in the newsletter that reflects on the successes and the challenges of CRP. BufferNotes can be found on-line at www.nacd.net/buffers.
2. **Conservation Resource Briefs:** NRCS has made their new series of issue papers available from their <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/technical/page>. Presenting a National perspective, the briefs combine scientific studies, data and status reports from NRCS and other organizations on key resource topics of our time.
3. **National Conference on Bioenergy Presentations:** As a follow-up to the second annual national conference on bio-energy and wood products, conference presentations have been posted online. Presentations include former Secretary of the Interior Gale Norton's speech *Renewable Energy for the 21st Century*. Most of the other 36 presentations online are copies of the actual PowerPoint presentations given by technical and policy experts from across the country at the conference. Go to <http://nationalbiomassconference.org/presentations/> to view the information.
4. **New Nutrient Management Website:** The National Association of State Departments of Agriculture (NASDA), in cooperation with the EPA and NRCS, has launched a new website for manure and nutrient management planning information. The *CNMP Watch* website is designed to assist the agricultural livestock industry and others with information and guidance related to nutrient management plans and Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plans (CNMPs). *CNMP Watch* will provide news and information from around the US to provide the most comprehensive information source possible about nutrient management planning and CNMPs. The website includes news, events, nutrient management tools, manure management technologies, and links to informative websites. Check it out at www.cnmpwatch.com.
5. **USDA Farm Bill Comment Summaries:** USDA has completed a summary of the public comments submitted verbally and in writing during USDA's Farm Bill Forum listening tour. The summaries will serve as the basis for USDA policy review and analysis in preparation for the 2007 farm bill. The comments are categorized in 41 general subject areas that include factual background data about the topic, a summary of general opinions expressed and a list of specific suggestions that were conveyed. Agriculture Secretary Johanns announced that the next step for USDA in preparing for the 2007 farm bill is to glean from these summary documents a number of themes that warrant further analysis. The analysis of each theme, which will be led by USDA Chief Economist Dr. Keith Collins, will contain factual, unbiased information. Each analysis paper will be posted on the USDA website when it is complete. The summary appears are available on the USDA website at www.usda.gov.