

NEW YORK ASSOCIATION OF CONSERVATION DISTRICTS, INC.



PROVIDING TODAY...

... PROTECTING TOMORROW

FYI...

NYACD NEWSLETTER • JUNE/JULY 2007

FROM THE PRESIDENT

Hello one and all. This month, I would like to address the need for involvement; the need to be heard and the need to speak up. There is much to take notice of in the world of politics, funding, operations, survival, and, in looking forward. As in many cases, every triangle has angles that can be viewed from three different points. Depending on your view point, it can be a huge vision, or a medium or very small one. It all depends on your depth and length. So, too, are the workings of the NYACD or any volunteer organization which works to represent, advocate or protect a certain cause, a way of life or philosophy. It can not go far without assistance and working together. This teamwork is the backbone of what makes things work.

That is why it is puzzling why some districts will not pay the dues to the NYACD. The organization and its leaders have worked very hard to spearhead many initiatives and to promote the workings of the soil and water conservation districts on the national, state and local levels. It has worked diligently with federal, state and local agencies to bring the practices of the soil and water districts to the forefront. Yet some will not pay their dues. The NYACD has worked to secure additional funding and provide information concerning the changing face of soil and water conservation on all levels. But some will not pay their dues.

There is a change coming in the way we, as districts, do business with NRCS. Representatives from NYACD have been involved, working to be sure that you are heard and to provide insight into the up-and-coming changes. We were there- but some will not pay their dues. Some will not send representatives to the Annual meeting in October or to the legislative days in March.

The NYACD has a website, but what about the information regarding what is happening in the districts around the state? Do you send information to the NYACD website? If not, why?

The NYACD board is not complete. We lack division directors in Divisions VI, VII, and VIII. Just think of what more we could be doing if we had a full complement on the board. You could be working with dedicated volunteers who spend countless hours making sure they represent the soil and water districts to the best of their ability. Where are the other district directors, why won't they step up to the plate to become involved and help make not only the NYACD grow, but also the soil and water district cause? There truly is strength in numbers. No election was ever won by no-one voting.

We need you. We need your involvement. Federal legislation is being worked on that will affect the farming community and funding efforts. State legislation and the framework of certain programs are changing. There is much that needs to be done.

Please consider getting involved with your organization, the NYACD, today. Sign up for a committee, agree to be a member of the board of directors, become an associate member and maybe assist with some special projects.

We need you.

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.

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

FINANCIAL ADVISORY	2
NEW FUNDING REGULATION	3
NEW YORK'S FEDERAL FARM BILL PRIORITIES	3
AEM AGRICULTURE IN THE NEWS AWARDS	4
NEWS YOU CAN USE	6
UPCOMING EVENTS	8

FINANCIAL ADVISORY - 2008 SWCD BUDGETS & NRCS NY EFFICIENCY PLAN DRAFT

By Darlene Vogel, NYACD Division I Director. Darlene Vogel and Tom Nichols, NYACD Division III Director, have been actively involved, on behalf of NYACD, for several months in a partnership arena to discuss this Plan's pros and cons.

As you are well aware, NRCS released their proposed plan to restructure their organization within NY State. NYACD offered numerous comments and offered changes to mitigate and lessen the impact on local SWCD's. Unfortunately, the reality is that NRCS will make significant changes that will alter the manner in which programs are implemented throughout NY State. Some of our suggestions and recommendations were considered and adapted, while others were not.

Your NYACD board of directors' representatives worked to prevent the closure of as many offices as possible. We also expressed our deep concern and opposition about the impact of the dramatic change in rental agreements. We are deeply troubled about the reaction county governments may have when faced with paying a substantially greater rent in space currently held by local SWCD's. NYACD fought successfully to split up the rent cost change over at least a 3-year budgetary period rather than the entire impact in one budget year. This is a huge improvement over the original plan and will allow districts to slowly adapt to the increased rental costs. The statewide impact on local SWCD's is \$400,000 when fully implemented in the year 2010.

The NYACD clearly stated that if offices were to close, that to accomplish the NRCS self professed goal of "more boots on the ground" NRCS must add additional personnel to accomplish this goal. NYACD also reiterated a need for NRCS to be clearly visible delivering programming in those counties directly impacted by the closures to reinforce their continued presence in those counties.

This advisory is based on the most recent information available, based on the discussions held by numerous partners including NYACD and NRCS NY, regarding the status of the draft NY NRCS efficiency plan. As of this newsletter deadline, the draft has just been released. It includes NRCS fiscal targets, efficiency goals and a general timetable. The impacts will vary widely on individual SWCD's depending on field office collocation arrangements and NRCS consolidation plans. The timing of the draft efficiency plan approval is currently not in sync with SWCD annual county budget planning. These short financial planning suggestions for SWCD's are intended to help reconcile the timing issue with your annual budget preparation.

NYACD and other NRCS partners were invited to provide input in an advisory capacity to the NRCS NY business model development process. We were able to accomplish this through representatives from the NYACD Board and our Board members sitting on the NYS Soil & Water Conservation Committee (Tom Nichols, Darlene Vogel, Bob Aman and George Proios). Other participating partners included the NYS Conservation Districts Employees Association, the NY Federation of RC&Ds, the USDA Farm Services Agency, and USDA Rural Development.

The NRCS NY draft efficiency plan is designed to realign NRCS staff in order to streamline management and put more man-hours into conservation assistance in the field. The draft efficiency plan states general targets, but in the case of consolidations and cost recovery, the methods remain flexible and are yet to be outlined. The draft plan addresses agency overhead costs to meet federal cost reduction mandates. Some changes, such as the area offices reductions, are already in progress. Other changes, like the realignment of NRCS field offices will happen over the next 1-3 years. An annual reduction of \$200,000 from nine consolidated field offices and another \$200,000 in rent savings are planned by FY 2010. Despite the NRCS phased approach, it may take affected SWCD's some time to adjust depending on their current local NRCS field office/SWCD office working arrangements.

ALL SWCD's - Throughout the NRCS operational and program changes to come there will be opportunities for ALL county SWCD directors and staff to have input in and participate in the transition toward NRCS watershed basin teams. These teams are to be deployed within each of the 7 new basin areas and are not restricted by county boundaries. SWCD Directors can affect the success of the transitions that impact their counties. NYACD is committed to SWCD's, their customers, and their conservation communities. We are prepared to cooperate with NRCS and our partners to provide continuous service to our customers and communities.

CONSOLIDATION SWCD's - The draft plan includes nine counties proposed for NRCS consolidation – Niagara, Monroe, Wayne, Yates, Oswego, Herkimer, Fulton, Albany, and Sullivan. The consolidation is a reduction in the fulltime presence of an NRCS employee(s). A potential impact to these SWCD's is the loss of shared NRCS field office space and services over a period of 1-3 years. There are many details for consideration in these cases including potential new expenses depending upon the current operating arrangements. NRCS intends to work through the changes in each county based on financial and logistical considerations, including maintaining an NRCS working presence in each county. NYACD is prepared to work with these counties to address common issues and to assure equitable access to NRCS programs and technical assistance. *(cont. on page 7)*

NEW FUNDING REGULATION

From the edge of the Great Lakes, to the edge of New York City, to the edge of the Adirondacks, the road show rolled across New York. In our May issue of FYI, we announced a series of four regional information meetings about the draft regulation covering the new state funding for Districts. These four meetings have now been completed. Batavia, Auburn, Pomona, and Warrensburg all were locations.

In three of these four, the average attendance was about twenty District directors and staff members. In all four, NYACD hosted the event and staff of the State Soil and Water Conservation Committee gave a detailed slide show, going over every aspect of the proposed regulation and a proposed performance evaluation worksheet.

The regulation was submitted by the State Soil and Water Conservation Committee to the Governor's Office of Regulatory Reform (GORR). GORR approved it a few weeks later. This means that the regulation will be published in the State Register on July 18. Once that happens, Districts will have 45 days to make official written comments. While the four meetings provided opportunities for comments and questions, only the written ones during the upcoming period will be recognized as part of the official process. During the period after July 18, we encourage your District to submit any comments you might have.

Comments on the regulation largely revolve around one question, "How well does the proposed regulation reflect the State Legislature's intent in their 2006 revisions of the aid to Districts law?" Copies of the proposed regulation were distributed at all of the meetings. However copies of the revised law were not. To facilitate your ability to make comments on the comparison, we have posted the revised law on our web site at www.NYACD.org.

Overall, the intent of the proposed regulation is to provide a flexible system under which each District will be able to receive the additional \$19,000 in State aid. In addition to funding under the current Environmental Protection Fund, this new system will also provide the mechanism to fund Districts at higher levels if more funding becomes available or if more conservation needs are chosen to be met.

One element of this process which has raised concern is the proposed performance evaluation worksheets. While State Committee staff projected them onto a screen at each of the meetings, no paper copies have been released. State Committee staff has not released them in order to not confuse them with the proposed regulation. The worksheets do not have to go through the GORR process and merely have to be adopted by the State Committee. Committee staff believes that it is pre-mature to release them now, but will do so after the regulation is adopted. Comment on them will be accepted at that time.

Despite the fast track that State Committee has pursued for implementation of this revised law, with the steps remaining in this legal process, it is expected that Districts will receive funds from the 2006 State Budget in the Fall of 2007. Funds from the 2007 State Budget will likely be received by Districts in early 2008. Once these two backlogged years have passed, the process will become regular and at the same time each year.

By Gregory Bell, Executive Director, NYACD

COMMISSIONER HOOKER OUTLINES NEW YORK'S FEDERAL FARM BILL PRIORITIES

The following is a list of provisions that the NYS Agriculture Department will advocate to be included in the next farm bill.

- 1. Establish a safety net for dairy prices** – by either extending the existing Milk Income Loss Contract (MILC) Program and expanding its cap to 4.8 million pounds, or by establishing a floor price of \$15.58 per hundredweight for fluid milk, benefiting dairy farmers throughout the Northeast.
- 2. Enhance conservation programs** – by increasing funding and improving programs such as the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and the Farm and Ranchland Protection Program, making them more advantageous for New York's farmers and land owners.
- 3. Increase support for specialty crops** – through increased funding for block grants, technical assistance that addresses trade barriers, research to advance plant breeding genetics and the Market Access Program.

(Continued on Page 5)



Agricultural Environmental Management (AEM)
2007
Agriculture in the News Awards

WHO?

Who is eligible?

- All local AEM partner agencies such as County Soil & Water Conservation Districts, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Cornell Cooperative Extension and Farm Bureau are eligible.

Who is sponsoring the award?

- The NYS Soil & Water Conservation Committee and the NYS Department of Agriculture & Markets.

WHAT?

What are the awards based on?

- Awards will be based on quality of media coverage and quantity of press.

What can we win?

A high-end digital camera ♦ AEM embroidered fleece vests & jackets ♦ and more!

What is eligible?

- Any press that relays a positive message about New York or local agriculture is eligible. Additional consideration will be given to press that includes the AEM program, AEM Sign Awards, AEM key messages or the benefits of agriculture to the environment.
 - Media coverage including stories or quotes in newspapers, magazines, on radio, television and the internet.
 - Editorials, columns, commentaries, and articles produced by you reproduced in professional media outlets.
 - Media efforts including press releases, media advisories and meeting announcements for farm tours, press conferences and other events.
- Articles in 'membership-only' newsletters or periodicals are not eligible.
- Entries must include the issue date and official name of publication.

Eligible entries must be published or aired in the media between November 1, 2006 and October 31, 2007.

WHEN?

When are entries due?

- Entries must be mailed and postmarked by **Friday, November 2, 2007**.

When will the awards be presented?

- Awards will be presented at the November Annual AEM Training or other AEM event.

WHERE?

Where do we submit entries?

- Mail entries to: Barbara Silvestri, AEM Outreach Coordinator, 10B Airline Drive, Albany, NY 12235

Where can we get more information?

- Email barb.silvestri@agmkt.state.ny.us or call 518-461-6843.

WHY?**Why was the award created?**

- To continue the enthusiasm to foster public awareness of agricultural issues generated at the 2006 - 2007 'AEM Working with the Media Workshops' and recognize the success of AEM partners who are working to get press on local agriculture.

Why should I get involved?

- Your work promoting agriculture and your agency's role supporting local farmers is of benefit to us all; share your good news with us!
- Someone's going to win; why not you?

HOW?**How can I participate?**

- Use the following guidelines to submit your materials before the deadline:

Print - Mail clipping of original publication or photo copies including:

- All photos and captions.
- Name of publication and date issued.
- Highlight your AEM messages and/or quotes.

Internet Coverage - Provide printed copy and include the website address

- Highlight your AEM messages and/or quotes.

Television Broadcasts - Submit on DVD or VHS videotape

- Cue videotape to your section or include a time code reading.
- Include station information, program name and date aired.
- If you would like your videotape returned, please provide a self addressed mailer.

Radio Interviews/Announcements – Provide on CD or audio tape

- Cue tapes to your section.
- Include station information, program name and date.

- Fill out and mail the 'AEM Agriculture in the News Awards' **Application Form** with your submissions postmarked by November 2, 2007. The brief Application Form can be obtained by contacting Barbara Silvestri at barb.silvestri@agmkt.state.ny.us or 518-461-6843.

FARM BILL PRIORITIES *(Continued from Page 3)*

- 4. Create renewable energy opportunities** – addressing both the supply and demand sides of the energy equation, increasing the renewable fuels standard, creating incentives for cellulosic ethanol production and biofuel feedstock production, and increased funding for biofuels research and development.
- 5. Improve nutrition programs** – by ensuring that New York receives its fair share of the benefits provided by the Food Stamp Program and Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program, as well as expanding our schools' ability to purchase fresh fruits and vegetables through the National School Lunch and Breakfast Program.
- 6. Increase funding for organics** – to allow for research and data collection at the national level that will assist in adequately implementing crop insurance and other production oriented programs.

(Continued on Page 7)

NEWS YOU CAN USE

New EPA Tools Help Users Improve Resource Management

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has released a number of tools recently that are helpful in stewardship and natural resource management efforts. Check out what's new in the EPA toolbox!

Nonpoint Source Outreach Toolbox : The Nonpoint Source Outreach Toolbox is a comprehensive set of web-based resources designed to assist communities in conducting effective stormwater and watershed education and outreach activities. It includes a searchable catalog of nearly 800 print, radio, and TV ads and outreach materials. Explore the NPS Toolbox online at www.epa.gov/nps/toolbox

New website on Stewardship Programs : EPA's new website on stewardship programs can help business, government and private citizens make intelligent choices on sustainable environmental benefits. The website provides guidance on simple everyday decisions by organizations and individuals on such issues as recycling, reuse or choice of fuel support pollution prevention and environmental stewardship. See the Environmental Stewardship website at <http://www.epa.gov/stewardship>.

Water Quality Modeling Tool : EPA has updated its watershed management program making it easier to use and more readily available. *Better Assessment Science Integrating Point and Nonpoint Sources* (BASINS) is a multipurpose system that integrates environmental data, analytical tools, and modeling programs. BASINS 4.0 is a valuable tool for watershed and water quality-based analyses, including developing total maximum daily load (TMDL) allocations. More information about BASINS 4.0 is available at <http://www.epa.gov/waterscience/basins>.

NACD Executive Director's Conference around the Corner

The New York Association of Conservation Districts will host the 5th Annual NACD Executive Directors' Conference August 2-4 in Ithaca, New York. Every year, the Executive Directors gather for a time of valuable networking, workshops/training sessions and conservation-related tours. Agenda items include Fundraising and Grant Opportunities, Financial Management, Coalition Building, Marketing and Communications for Associations and a Farm Bill Update. Four guest speakers have been invited to join the conference as well.

The New York State Water & Sewer Infrastructure Co-funding Initiative

will be holding its 2007 *Co-funding Workshop and Individual Project Consultations* in four locations this fall. The schedule includes the City of Rochester, Tuesday, September 11, Crowne Plaza Hotel, 70 State Street. For more information visit <http://www.gflrpc.org/2007FundingWorkshopPR.pdf>.

Wolcott J. Humphrey III Symposium on Leadership and Community Life

will be held at Genesee Community College in Batavia on September 17, 2007, featuring William Hudnutt. Mr. Hudnutt is best known for his 16-year tenure as Mayor of Indianapolis, and is currently deeply involved in regional issues across the U.S. For more information contact Beverly Mancuso at the Genesee County Cornell Cooperative Extension at <mailto:blm34@cornell.edu>

NYACD Email Service In recent months, the National Association of Conservation Districts has ended a category of e-mail addresses for Districts in New York State. Several Districts ended up scrambling for new e-mail addresses and internet services at the last minute.

In order for Districts to have an e-mail address which looked related to conservation, NYACD offered free e-mail addresses to those districts which were suddenly in need. Rather than having their addresses end with the name of their commercial internet provider, followed by a dot com (which indicates a for-profit entity), our addresses end in NYACD.org. When the internet was set up, the dot org designation was specifically created to indicate non-commercial entities, so it is a good one for Districts.

So far, the Fulton County SWCD is the only one to accept our offer of a NYACD.org e-mail address. The rest have found other local alternatives. However, our offer remains open. If any District wishes to have an e-mail address which ends in NYACD.org, please let us know. This can be for your primary office e-mail address, or it can be for a secondary or special event address beyond your primary one.



FINANCIAL ADVISORY *(Continued from Page 2)*

COLLOCATED SWCD's - SWCD's located in NRCS field offices that currently pay any portion of rent to NRCS, or SWCD's currently offering any amount of services and supplies in lieu of rent should be prepared to pay its portion of rent or renegotiate NRCS/SWCD operational agreements.

If a SWCD does not share facilities or services (computers, equipment, etc.) with NRCS there will be no added costs or charges to offset NRCS cost recovery efforts. However, there may be other opportunities to assist NRCS in basin team deployment and projects, such as workspace, communications, etc.

SUGGESTIONS for SWCD's:

As part of NRCS cost recovery objectives, NRCS is preparing to reissue NRCS/SWCD operational agreements. These agreements will become part of a 3-part institutional relationship with the NRCS field or team offices. SWCD Board Chairs are a signing party to these agreements. To help prepare, SWCD staff and Boards should:

Find and review your latest agreement documents. These include your original USDA NRCS/SWCD Memorandum of Understanding, USDA NRCS/SWCD Cooperative Agreements (if any), and your latest USDA NRCS/SWCD Operational Agreement (if any). We will address these agreements in further detail in a future article.

When the NRCS request for operational agreements and guidance arrives, SWCD's should be prepared to analyze their operational arrangements with their current NRCS field office. It is recommended that you review all costs, major and minor, direct and indirect, which are associated with your facility and the implementation of conservation programs.

These costs include those benefits that are provided by NRCS and other partners including rent, utilities, shared services, communications, etc.; and those benefits provided by the SWCD to NRCS and other agencies. A more detailed list will be more beneficial than a general one.

In general, NRCS cost recovery goals will be different in every county. NRCS will look at their operational costs in each case and attempt to balance them through operational agreements where possible. A cash contribution may be required of a SWCD where there are deficiencies or where NRCS determines a fulltime presence is not efficient in a particular county. *In either case, this may present new expenses to a SWCD. Remember that these are actual costs – cash or services – that must be placed in your SWCD budget. Services, equipment, supplies, etc. committed to operational agreements are staff and things that generally cannot be used for other purposes.*

If you feel that these changes might apply to your SWCD, you should look at your annual budgets for the next 3 years and begin by adjusting your 2008 budget. A suggested approach is to add the new line items to your 2008 budget and a percent of possible new expenses, say 25% of rent, administrative personnel, etc., to introduce the new costs to your county lawmakers. The following years' budgets would build until 2010 when the new line items would become an annual expense at 100% if needed.

Good record keeping is a must for SWCD's attempting to offset potential new expenses through operational agreements. Visit the agreement when there are changes and plan on annual inflation and contingencies. Be prepared to prove that you have met your operational agreement obligations through documentation.

For more information or assistance on this issue, contact an NYACD Division Director or Officer listed in this newsletter.

FARM BILL PRIORITIES *(Continued from Page 5)*

7. Create a separate forestry title – that will provide technical, educational and outreach assistance to private forest landowners through existing efforts like the Forest Stewardship Program.

The farm bill is an omnibus multi-year authorizing law for major food and farm programs on the federal level. The current farm bill, the Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002, will expire in 2007, necessitating Congress to reauthorize it.

New York agriculture encompasses 25 percent of the State's landscape and generated \$3.6 billion for our economy last year. Currently, New York State has 7.5 million acres of farmland with 35,000 farms.

NEW YORK ASSOCIATION OF
CONSERVATION DISTRICTS, INC.

NYACD, Inc.
HRC 335E, HVCC
80 Vandenberg Avenue
Troy, NY 12180

Phone: 518-629-7645
Fax: 518-629-7646
E-mail: NYACD@nycap.rr.com
Web: www.nyacd.org

CHECK IT OUT!

WWW.NYACD.ORG



PROVIDING TODAY...
... PROTECTING TOMORROW

NONPROFIT ORGANIZATION
U.S. POSTAGE PAID
MAILED FROM ZIP CODE 14424
PERMIT NO. 335

Return Service Requested

UPCOMING EVENTS

- **NACD Legislative Conference -Summer 2007**, July 22-24, 2007, Washington, DC
Visit <http://www.nacdnet.org/meetings/2007Summer/> for information
- **CDEA Golf Tournament**, July 26, 2007, Orchard Vali Golf Club, LaFayette, NY
Contact Brian Wohnsiedler at 315-782-2749 or bwohnsiedler@centralny.twcbc.com
- **2007 Canon Envirothon**, July 29– August 4, 2007, Hobart and William Smith Colleges, Geneva, NY
- **State Committee Meeting**, July 31, 2007, Hotel Utica, Utica, NY
- **NACD Northeast Region Meeting**, August 5-8, 2007, Mystic, CT
- **NYACD Annual Meeting**, October 28– 30, 2007



August FYI—Deadline for Articles —July 31, 2007.

Please send articles to Maggie Atkins at matkins@frontiernet.net;

Phone: 585-396-9973; Fax: 585-554-4077. **Thanks.**

SAVE THE DATE
AUGUST 5-8, 2007

**CONSERVATION ON
THE URBAN FRINGE**

NACD Northeast Region Meeting
Mystic, Connecticut

For meeting and hotel information,
visit www.conservect.org