

# NEW YORK ASSOCIATION OF CONSERVATION DISTRICTS, INC.



PROVIDING TODAY...  
... PROTECTING TOMORROW

## FYI...

NYACD NEWSLETTER • OCTOBER 2006

### FROM THE PRESIDENT . . .

This summer my grandson won a fish at the county fair - you know, one of those toss a ping-pong ball in a fish bowl and win a gold fish. Well that started a whole process, a tank, more fish, filters and all the necessary equipment. We had to learn how to maintain a healthy aquarium; what the proper ph needs to be, what amount of food, what fish will co-habit, did we want real or plastic plants, how much light etc; we needed to make a plan. We also learned about the nitrogen cycle, in fact learned the hard way by losing a few fish and needed to get technical assistance from our neighborhood pet store. Of course there was learning how to cleanup and treat any problems. I began to realize that maintaining a healthy aquarium is much like maintaining a healthy organization.

Maintaining a healthy organization must follow some similar actions. Maybe not actual food food, but an organization continues to grow as the result of those who actively participate in its development. The New York Association of Conservation Districts was formed to represent the districts and to promote the activities of those same districts to others. Now to do that, we need to be sure that we maintain a line of communications. Do you know your division director? If you are in divisions 7 & 8 we are looking for a district director in each division who would like to serve on the NYACD Board to represent those districts.

What makes for a healthy organization? **Communications:** Do you communicate your district's need? What do you want from your organization? What do we expect from you? We will be facing in the coming year many changes in State Government, in federal appropriations for programs, and along local political lines. Districts are involved today in a very wide variety of activities. Who are your customers? Do you see an increasing connection to the community, both ag and nonag?

What about **expectation and responsiveness**? Like that aquarium when maintained properly, those within it will thrive. While many have less time because there is so much more to complete, there is much still to be done. Disasters, recovery, remediation, funding solutions, new procedures and policies and yes-new ideas to implement and try; work with new agencies and new legislative leaders; How do we respond? How do you respond? How will they respond to what we want and need? What will they expect from all of us? Like our aquarium, good preparation provides for the best results. Careful monitoring produces the best outcome.

I guess it also takes what I will call **landscaping**, that is the presentation, the first impression when someone looks at our organization, like the aquarium, we added plants, ornaments and yes, colorful fish to make a pleasing picture as one views and enjoys it. We too must provide a picture for others to understand not just who and what the NYACD is and does, but about the awesome work and assistance that districts accomplish on a wide variety of programs and audiences. This will become increasingly important as we work together in 2007 with a new administration in New York State, with federal programs, and with other natural resource agencies and organizations. What should that picture show? How do we continue with its maturity and growth?

(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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## NEW YORK OCEAN & GREAT LAKES ECOSYSTEM CONSERVATION COUNCIL

As you may well remember, the New York Association of Conservation Districts, along with a broad range of experts and representatives from the private sector, academic and research institutions, state, federal and local governments, and non-governmental organizations, were invited by Gov. George E. Pataki to attend the New York State Ocean and Great Lakes Symposium on October 24, 2005 in New York City. The charge of this symposium was to identify potential actions for New York to take to enhance stewardship of its ocean and freshwater resources.

New York State, which serves as a gateway to the Great Lakes, has historically been a leader in advancing the protection of the Great Lakes. New York's presence is extremely critical to success in their restoration.

Governor Pataki heard the Symposium's call for an "Ocean/Great Lakes Council" and recently signed into law the New York Ocean and Great Lakes Ecosystem Conservation Act. The act created the New York Ocean and Great Lakes Ecosystem Conservation Council and charges it with recommending actions needed to maintain ecosystems in a healthy, productive and resilient condition so the state government can provide the service people of New York need and want.

Again NYACD has been invited to participate in one of five dialogues on ecosystem-based management in New York State. These dialogues are the next step in a collaborative process which relies on our and other stakeholders' involvement.

We, as Soil and Water Conservation Districts, always put education and stewardship first when dealing with critical, rich and diverse marine and freshwater resources. Participation in these dialogues gives NYACD the opportunity to improve decision makers' understanding, enhance a broader public value, and prepare a new generation of leaders on ocean and Great Lakes issues.

### New York Ocean and Great Lakes Ecosystem Conservation Council Members:

**Denise M. Sheehan, Chair**  
Commissioner, Department of  
Environmental Conservation

**Patrick H. Brennan**  
Commissioner, Department of  
Agriculture & Markets

**Charles Gargano**  
Chairman,  
Empire State Development

**John J. Spano**  
Acting Commissioner,  
Office of General Services

**Bernadette Castro**  
Commissioner, Office of Parks,  
Recreation & Historic Preservation

**Christopher Jacobs**  
Secretary of State

**Thomas J. Madison, Sr.**  
Commissioner  
Department of Transportation

**Peter R. Smith**  
President & CEO, NYS Energy  
Research & Development Authority

**John R. Ryan**  
Chancellor  
State University of New York

**George R. Stafford**  
Executive Director  
Deputy Secretary of State  
For Coastal Resources

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## FROM THE PRESIDENT . . .

(Continued from Page 1)

Then of course there is **composition** - the make-up, partnerships, proper alignments, active membership, cooperation etc. As the district directors, we have to remember that we are the policy makers, we work with the advice and support from our staff, along with those entities and individuals that as a board you have designated as a partner to assist with work plans and activities that you have outlined for the district. Each part of that composition is important. The whole success of your district rests on how that composition and cooperation and the final **outcome and results** are accomplished. Not one part of the composition can determine its success; a part can certainly have a large hand in it, but ultimately success rests with how well does the whole work together, much like that aquarium. What is your composition? Who do we, the NYACD, need to be reaching to assist the new projects you are doing? Who needs to be on the team?

TEAM! That brings me to my conclusion - "Building a Team for New York" is the theme of the 2006 NYACD Annual Meeting in Cooperstown this year on October 29-31. I hope you will be there, to help build the team, to provide for a strong and healthy organization and to provide your feelings about the paths that need to be traveled for the future. Hope to see you in Cooperstown.

By Linda Coffin, President, NYACD

## FUNDING FORMULA PROCESS

A series of steps has begun to unfold, and your participation is requested.

In the new State law we got passed this year, there are provisions to allow for Districts in New York to receive more funds in exchange for doing certain activities. However, the law outlined the list of activities in only general terms, leaving the specifics to be worked out. We are now at the beginning of this second process which will develop the actual funding formula.

In the new law, a section specifies that the new formula is to be developed by the State Soil and Water Conservation Committee and the Commissioner of the Department of Ag and Markets. In State government parlance, this process is technically called "rule making," and very specific steps are required to develop a new rule.

State Committee attorneys and other staff recently created a series of steps which meet the requirements for this rule making. These steps were unveiled in Utica at the State Committee meeting on September 19 and a committee was appointed to carry it forward. The first meeting of the committee to discuss actual content of the formula is scheduled to be on October 5 at the Onondaga SWCD office in Fayetteville.

Since the new formula is currently a blank slate, the Board of NYACD would like to invite Districts to express their thoughts on it. Questions such as these need to be answered in order to have an effective funding formula:

- What activities should be funded under the new law?
- How would you define a unit of work for each of these activities?
- How much should be paid for each of these units?
- How can this new funding be used to raise the bar in the operation of Districts?

If you have ideas on this, please let me know at [NYACD@nycap.rr.com](mailto:NYACD@nycap.rr.com). We plan to use District comments to formulate our own formula and to respond to the State Committee's proposals.

The step following the October 5 meeting will be on Monday October 31. As part of the NYACD Annual Meeting, the State Committee staff will hold a meeting soliciting input. We urge you all to come to that with thoughts on the topic.

While the new formula is a blank slate, State Committee staff have given hints of some of their thoughts on what should end up in it. In addition to the performance of program activities, they are considering putting in activities which will strengthen the Boards of Districts, things like number of meetings held per year and participation in various training sessions.

By Gregory Bell, Executive Director

## NACD AUXILIARY QUILT By Pat VanLare, Wayne County

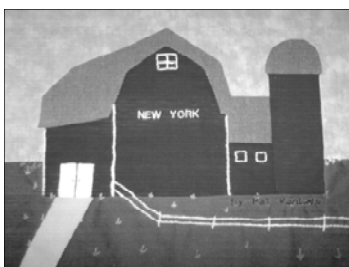
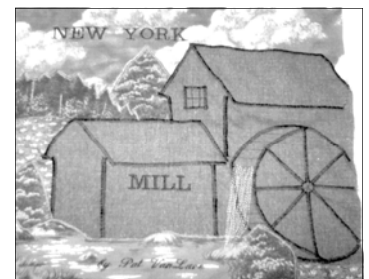
In 2005, NYACD was asked to contribute a quilt square for the auxiliary quilt to be raffled off at the NACD National Convention. In 2005 the theme of the quilt was a barn typical of your state. Since I was always doing needlework, I was volunteered or drafted to make the quilt block. After some research on barns, I was inspired to a design of a typical barn. NACD auxiliary provides the basic square fabric and then you do the design on it any way you wish.

In 2006 the theme was an outline of our state with some interesting or important places on it.

In 2007, the theme is "The Good Old Days". This theme was wide open to many possibilities. For inspiration, I looked through many "Country" magazines. Finally I decided on an old flour mill with water wheel. There are a few of these still in operation in New York, but many have gone by the wayside over the years. After planning and experimenting with many fabrics and threads to highlight the water falls on the water wheel, I finished and forwarded it to the person collecting the squares.

It has been an honor to make a quilt square for the National Quilt. Thanks for the opportunity.

These quilts are auctioned off at the NACD National annual meeting.





## AGRICULTURAL ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT - IT'S GOOD BUSINESS!

For many farmers, environmental stewardship is viewed not just as the 'right thing to do', but increasingly as an important strategic asset for their businesses. Farmers know that in order for their businesses to remain strong, they need to be vigilant about protecting the environment. New York's Agricultural Environmental Management (AEM) program provides the tools to help accomplish both.

"In today's business climate, it is key to employ every available opportunity that supports the economic viability of farming," said John Kriese of Spring Pond Farm in Yates County. "The AEM Program has certainly helped me to continue my commitment to conservation and benefit my bottom line. Through analyzing my soils and my farming operation the quality of cattle that we now produce has greatly increased because of the AEM practices that we have put into effect."

AEM is a voluntary, incentive-based program that assists farmers in their environmental stewardship efforts and protects the quality of their farms' natural resources, which are the foundation of their long-term economic viability. The AEM program coordinates agricultural and environmental conservation agencies and programs, as well as private sector consultants, to provide a one-stop resource for services. All agricultural counties in New York State are conducting AEM programs, and participation has grown to include nearly 10,000 farms.

Farmers work with a team of local AEM resource professionals to develop and implement comprehensive, site specific farm plans using a five-tiered approach:

- Tier 1:** Inventory current activities, future plans and potential environmental concerns.
- Tier 2:** Document current land stewardship; assess and prioritize areas of concern.
- Tier 3:** Develop a conservation plan addressing concerns and opportunities tailored to farm goals.
- Tier 4:** Implement the plan utilizing available financial, educational and technical assistance.
- Tier 5:** Conduct evaluations to ensure the protection of farm viability and the environment.

The first step to take part in AEM is to contact your County Soil and Water Conservation District and complete the Tier 1 Questionnaire and the Tier 2 Risk Assessment, which consists of a set of worksheets appropriate to your farm operation. This is an efficient way to take a comprehensive look at potential environmental impacts and identify the resources available to address them. It will document what you are doing to protect the environment and prioritize areas for improvement.

AEM addresses more than just nutrient management. The risk assessment covers farmstead water supplies, pasture management, pesticide use, and many other farm practices. There are also worksheets specific to equine operations, greenhouses, and vineyards. The risk assessment can even provide resources to build and maintain positive relationships with neighbors.

An environmentally friendly farm conservation plan can maximize profits by enhancing soil quality, improving herd health, and reducing unnecessary applications of fertilizers and pesticides. AEM helps manage pollutants such as manure and fertilizer nutrients, handle barnyard runoff and process wastewater, conserve soil, prevent sedimentation, and protect drinking water, all while promoting the economic and environmental benefits of agriculture in a community. When coupled with effective conservation practices, well managed farms are the preferred land use to improve water quality and protect valuable natural resources, which ultimately improves the lives of all New Yorkers. (Continued on Page 5)

### An AEM Risk Assessment can help you:

- ◆ Document your environmental practices and the benefits your farm provides to your community.
- ◆ Assess vulnerable areas of the farm that may present environmental risk.
- ◆ Identify practices at risk for regulatory action or neighbor complaints to prevent hassles and fines.
- ◆ Determine if your water supply or neighboring wells are at risk for contamination.
- ◆ Qualify for state and federal cost-share grants to address high risk issues.
- ◆ Acquire information for long-term business planning and better positioning in the marketplace.
- ◆ Consider conservation practices that could save you money when implemented.
- ◆ Earn "green" payments or participate in farmland protection programs.

## AGRICULTURAL ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT - IT'S GOOD BUSINESS!

(Continued from Page 4)

Farmers are critically important stewards of New York's natural resources, and the AEM program supports farms of all types and sizes in their efforts to be both environmentally sound and economically viable. In this time of environmental awareness, farm-neighbor tensions, and high production costs, AEM's technical and financial resources are particularly valuable to help farmers maintain their commitment to conservation.

"Our Yates County Conservation District AEM Coordinator, Tom Eskildsen, provided the options and the education we needed to make improvements on the farm that benefited our business, our neighbors and the environment," commented Kriese. "It's a win-win program!"

If you would like to schedule a free, confidential AEM Risk Assessment for your farm, contact your County Soil and Water Conservation District. To learn more about AEM or to locate your Conservation District office, visit [www.nys-soilandwater.org](http://www.nys-soilandwater.org).

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## NORTH EAST REGION OF NACD

Earlier this year the North East Region of NACD - Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware, West Virginia, Maryland and District of Columbia sent surveys to member soil and water conservation districts on two subjects - urban and community conservation and on agriculture and forestry in the north east. In the second, districts outlined their priorities for federal funding, including the 2007 Farm Bill. The Eastern Regional Conference of the Council of State Governments (ERC/CSG) through its ag program, the Northeast States Association for Agricultural Stewardship (NSAAS), provided staffing for the project. A booklet was formed with the results and data from various sources which highlights history, the industry today, the districts involvement now and for the future, and ideas on priorities as presented from the survey results. To make the booklet useful, it contains various charts and graphs to provide background, statistics and fuel, so to speak, as each state prepares to strategize its approach and prepares for their dialogue and input. These graphs include such information as : farm real estate values, net loss of northeast farmlands, average size of farms, timberland in the northeast, forest industry related figures, northeast conservation funded and unfunded programs/applications, 2002 Farm Bill funding 2002-2005, and more.

Why is this booklet important? Agriculture and forestry are critical to the northeastern United States' history, culture, heritage and economy. The 170,000 farms in the northeast produce products with a market value of more than \$10 billion! Forest products accounted for \$94 billion in sales. These industries account for more than 14% of the jobs in the entire northeast.

Farmers and foresters are good stewards of the land and water resources on which they depend for their livelihood, but they cannot and should not be expected to assume the entire responsibility. Every citizen benefits from clean water, clean air, and productive soil. Partnerships are **key** and Conservation Districts are the **key** to strong partnerships. There are about 243 soil and water districts in the northeast who are proud of their role for "getting conservation on the ground."

The booklet can be handed to others to provide information about the wonderful, unique qualities of northeast agriculture and forestry; the amazing effort of Soil and Water Conservation Districts and the very needs of farmers, foresters and rural communities from Maine to West Virginia. As the 2007 Farm Bill is developed and other state and federal decisions are made the regional NACD encourage that districts distribute this guide to others so the users will contact the Districts - you are the local experts on conservation with a strong track record of service and depth of knowledge.

This booklet will be available at the NYACD Annual Meeting. I had the pleasure of serving as the chair of the steering committee that worked on this project with members from New Jersey, Pennsylvania, West Virginia, Maine and Vermont. I believe it can be a very valuable tool. It will be as useful as you wish to make it. We need to tell our story.

By Linda Coffin, President NYACD

## NEWS YOU CAN USE

### **Carl L. Seymour**

NYACD notes with sadness, the passing of Carl L. Seymour, on Monday, Oct. 2, 2006. Carl was the Chairman of the Saratoga County Soil and Water Conservation District and a former officer of NYACD.

### **Teaching Communities How to Take Action to Protect Farms**

Two conferences are coming up that will address how local planning efforts can influence the future of farming in their communities.

**Planning a Future for Farms in the Hudson Valley** will be held at the Columbia-Greene Community College in Hudson, NY on November 4, 2006. For more information or to register, call 518-581-0078.

**Planning a Future for Farms in Western New York** will be held the Genesee Community College in Batavia, NY on November 9, 2006. For more information or to register, contact Patricia Szarpa at 315-687-1225.

Both conferences will feature success stories from communities in the region that are using a diverse array of tools to pro-actively plan for a future for farms.

### **Anaerobic Manure Digester Open House**

Tuesday, October 24, 2006, is the Open House for two new Anaerobic Manure Digesters that came on line over the summer. The tours, talks, panel discussions and exhibits are in Perry, NY. For more information or to register, contact Diane Almeter at 585-786-2251.

### **Finger Lakes Institute**

...dedicated to the promotion of environmental research and education about the Finger Lakes and surrounding environments.

Finger Lakes Institute, Hobart and William Smith Colleges, Geneva, NY 14456, <http://fli.hws.edu>



### **NASS to Assess Benefits of Conservation Programs**

How are farmers' and ranchers' conservation practices improving water, soil and air quality and enhancing wildlife habitat across the country? To help answer this question, the U.S. Department of Agriculture's National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) will discuss the Conservation Effects Assessment Project (CEAP) mid-September through mid-December. According to Stephen Ropel, Director of the NASS Field Office, "Producers' participation in CEAP will be especially critical this year as we gear up for the 2007 Farm Bill. CEAP provides USDA, policymakers and the public with a concrete measure of the benefits achieved through the federal investment in agricultural conservation programs."

### **AFT's National Conference**

American Farmland Trust's national conference will be held November 13-15, 2006, in Newark, Delaware. The theme of the 2006 conference is "The Next Generation" - the next generation of national farm policies, farmland protection programs, community plans, production practices and markets, and the next generation of farmers themselves. For more information, visit: [www.farmland.org](http://www.farmland.org).



### **Draft Handbook Available to Help Improve Watershed Planning Efforts**



The Draft Handbook for Developing Watershed Plans to Restore and Protect Our Waters was created to help communities, watershed organizations, and local, state, tribal and federal environmental agencies develop and implement watershed plans to meet water quality standards and protect water resources. The Draft Handbook is designed to help anyone undertaking a watershed planning effort, but should be particularly useful to persons working with impaired or threatened waters.

The document is available for download at:

[http://www.epa.gov/owow/nps/watershed\\_handbook/](http://www.epa.gov/owow/nps/watershed_handbook/).



## PARTNER PROFILE - NYSCDEA, INC.

NEW YORK STATE CONSERVATION DISTRICT EMPLOYEES' ASSOCIATION, INC.

### NYSCDEA, Inc.

- ◆ Formed in March 1975
- ◆ Incorporated in July 1983
- ◆ 501(c)(6) Non-for-Profit Corporation
- ◆ Purpose of promoting business interest of Soil and Water Conservation Districts



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### CORPORATE PURPOSES

- ◆ Mutual advancement of the interests of its members
- ◆ Strengthen Districts
- ◆ Provide assistance and information to Districts to resolve natural resource problems
- ◆ Assist any agency, organization, group or individual who supports Districts

### FOCUS

- ◆ Employee Development
- ◆ Education and Outreach
- ◆ District Advancement

### EMPLOYEE DEVELOPMENT

- ◆ Conservation Skills Workshop
- ◆ Annual Training Session
- ◆ Division Training
- ◆ Manager Forum
- ◆ Administrative Conference
- ◆ Management Certification Program
- ◆ Frank Bratt Scholarship

### DISTRICT AND EMPLOYEE OUTREACH

- ◆ Website: [www.nyscdea.com](http://www.nyscdea.com)
- ◆ Division Meetings
- ◆ Annual Meeting
- ◆ CDEA News Newsletter

### PUBLIC EDUCATION AND OUTREACH

- ◆ Envirothon
- ◆ Ronny Raindrop®
- ◆ State Fair Booth
- ◆ Commercial
- ◆ Publications

## NYSCDEA, Inc.

*ASSIST, IN THE SPIRIT OF COOPERATION,  
WITH ACTIVITIES THAT ADVANCE  
THE SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICTS  
OF NEW YORK STATE, AND RESULT  
IN THE CONSERVATION  
OF NEW YORK'S NATURAL RESOURCES.*

### DISTRICT ADVANCEMENT

- ◆ Recognition – Awards Program
- ◆ Resolutions
- ◆ Development of Legislation
- ◆ Committees and Representation
- ◆ Programs/Earned Income

### CURRENT ACTIVITY

- ◆ AEM Base Program Year 2
- ◆ Stormwater Vision and Strategy
- ◆ 4-Way Partnership and Change

### ISSUES OF INTEREST

- ◆ Evaluating 11B
- ◆ Leadership Training
- ◆ Forestry Opportunities
- ◆ Stream Disturbance and Wetland Permits

By Amanda Barber, President, NYSCDEA

NEW YORK ASSOCIATION OF  
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## UPCOMING EVENTS

- **North Country Regional Stormwater Tradeshow & Conference**, October 19, 2006, Lake George, NY
- **Conservation Skills Workshop**, October 23-27, 2006, Cortland, NY
- **Anaerobic Manure Digester Open House**, October 24, 2006, Perry, NY
- **NYACD's Annual Meeting**, October 29-31, 2006, Otesaga Hotel, Cooperstown, NY
- **Planning a Future for Farms in the Hudson Valley**, November 4, 2006, Columbia-Greene Community College, Hudson, NY
- **Planning a Future for Farms in Western New York**, November 9, 2006, Genesee Community College, Batavia, NY
- **American Farmland Trust's National Conference : *Farming on the Edge***, November 13-15, 2006, Newark, Delaware
- **2006 AEM Annual Meeting**, November 14 & 15, 2006, Holiday Inn, Waterloo, NY
- **2007 Canon Envirothon**, July 29– August 4, 2007, Hobart and William Smith Colleges, Geneva, NY

**November FYI**—Deadline for Articles —October 22, 2006.

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

**NYACD**

Annual Meeting



October 29-31

Otesaga Hotel

Cooperstown