

NEW YORK ASSOCIATION OF
CONSERVATION DISTRICTS, INC.

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

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

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BARGAINS!

On November 17, two districts and the Envirothon all got excellent bargains. Due to the fact that NYACD's office is located in space rented from Hudson Valley Community College in Troy, Gregg Bell, our Executive Director, discovered that the college has a sizable surplus equipment operation.

The college's surplus office had accumulated numerous office desks, file cabinets, computers, Selectric typewriters and other equipment which they offered for sale. Once Gregg got the details, he notified districts of the opportunity for bargains. Both the Schoharie County and Columbia County districts sent staff members and trucks to the sale. Both got several items each. The most unique of the items were two almost-new, table-top display units. New, they retail for \$1,200 each. Columbia County got one. Gregg got the other one for the State Envirothon. All together, the value of the items, if purchased new, was \$3,400. The combined cost actually paid for the items was a whopping \$8.

Fortunately this good news is not over. The college still has a lot more office furniture and equipment available. They expect to have another sale in a few months. If you are interested, please contact Gregg at (518) 629-7645. If you are too far from Troy for this to be practical, this experience has taught us something which can be useful to you anyway. If your district needs office equipment, we suggest that you contact your local colleges and ask for their surplus inventory office. Find out if they have what you need. You might be able to get almost-free equipment too!

WE NEED YOUR HELP!

FEEDBACK

FYI... is NYACD's monthly newsletter—a newsletter specifically for Soil & Water Conservation District Directors. Please send us your ideas, suggestions, articles and questions. Contact Maggie Atkins, Phone: 585-396-9973; Fax: 585-554-3070; email: magneil@att.net

MAILING LIST

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

STRATEGIC PLANNING

Your Board of Directors will be working through a strategic planning process this year. Inserted in this newsletter, is a list of the types of questions the NYACD Board will be tackling. Please take a look and give these questions some thought. We'll be asking for your input during the year.

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FYI...

NYACD NEWSLETTER • DECEMBER 2005

FROM THE PRESIDENT...

Thank you to all who made our 2005 Annual Meeting in Alexandria Bay a great success. To the members of the Annual Meeting Committee, our partners, our speakers and to all the attendees, thank you.

The NYACD Annual Meeting is more than just a meeting to get together; it is the kick-off for our upcoming year's game plan. We determine who will be the coaches; what games we will play; what rules will be used; who will be the players; as well as what our desired goals are. However, as in any effort, the other teams are training and strategizing their game plans to reach their desired outcome.

The stats and recap of the plays and events of the last year were provided in our annual reports - a great snapshot of what has been happening during this very busy year. However, while this year was a busy one, it was just the minor leagues; the next few years will be even busier and on a grander scale. The SWCDs, along with NYACD and its partners will continue to face issues concerning the economics of putting sound conservation practices on the ground; but we WILL be faced with greater competition for the dollars that have been provided to accomplish that end. We WILL find ourselves having to educate even more people about the diversity of activities that SWCDs find themselves actively working with. Believe it or not, we WILL even have to negotiate with other SWCDs from other states, from other parts of the country.

So the question is: Where do the Soil and Water Conservation Districts in the state of New York want to be in relation to how they are viewed by others outside of the State of New York? Does what happens in a SWCD in the state of Wyoming have any bearing on programs here in NYS? Does the work in Ohio on the Great Lakes Annex have any impact on programs here in NYS? What about safe harbor programs for farmers in California? What about the grazing and rangeland programs? The answer to each is of course yes; each of them has an impact on programs here in NYS. The policies and funding regulations are determined not only on the state level

but also on the federal level. We need to tell our story about the importance of agriculture as well as urban conservation in NYS. We need to let others know of the diversity of activities that involve NYS SWCDs.

To that objective, we will continue to work hard to make sure that agencies in NYS know what we do. With your help, we will continue to work hard in the state legislature to tell the story. We will remain active with the National Association of Conservation Districts and the Northeast regional division to be sure that New York is heard. We will, again with your help, work with federal agencies and government representatives.

I attended a NACD Environment and Resources Policy Committee earlier in November in Flagstaff, Arizona. During that meeting there were discussions about SWCDs across the country supporting a National Fish Habitat Initiative program, discussions on global warming and SWCD's impact on the topic; there was discussion as well on biomass, controlled burning, wildlife habitat enhancement programs, alternative energy production, forestry practices related to environmental controls, the farm bill 2007 and other federal conservation bills, and urban-rural interdependency. Additionally, the North East Region of NACD is working on a survey to ask each of you and your districts about the issues of importance in agriculture and urban/coastal conservation in the North East. I urge you to respond.

All of this, is not to say that our involvement on the state level will diminish, but rather it can increase, with your help. The resolutions from the Annual Meeting will help set that course. Legislative Days will be coming soon; we need you there. Surveys were distributed at the Annual Meeting as well; we hope you will take the time to fill them out and return them. I will end with a question. Who sets the policies that your district must follow for the programs that you currently have?

By Linda Coffin

Best Wishes for a Happy & Safe Holiday Season!

NYACD MISSION:

The NYACD provides the 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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NYACD ANNUAL MEETING

"1000 Islands, 1000 Opportunities" was the 2005 NYACD Annual Meeting theme. From guest speakers to a panel on Funding Opportunities & Success Stories, there was considerable information about new issues, alternative funding and future directions.

Speakers on Water Usage, Air Emissions, Invasive Species and Carbon Sequestration each gave an overview of what may lie ahead for Districts.

Senator James Wright and Assemblyman Darrel Aubertine both acknowledged the work that SWCDs have done and WILL support an increase in funding for Districts.

Commissioner Nathan Rudgers addressed the issues of farmland protection, alternative energy and Northeastern agriculture. He laid out the income opportunities for substantially increasing agricultural bio-fuel production.

Bill Horvath, NACD Forester addressed the importance of District involvement in forestry and that private lands have great unmet needs. He left us with a template for Conservation District Forestry Programs.

Monday afternoon everyone took a break and enjoyed a boat tour of the 1000 Islands, where ocean-going freighters pass through the St Lawrence Seaway. We were able to view Boldt Castle, built in the 1800's, up close.

A neighboring District just across the St Lawrence River gave an outstanding presentation on how their District differs from ours. Denis O'Grady of South Nation Conservation, Ontario, Canada has

managed watersheds for Conservation Authorities across Ontario for 25 years. He told us that being an authority is a benefit that enables them to flourish with the enthusiasm and support of the local people for its programs in fisheries, water quality, flood control and forestry.

At the business meeting, District Directors decided to pass resolutions : Investigate Soil and Water Conservation Districts holding Conservation Easements, Support the Creation of a Statewide Non-Profit Organization which will Specialize in Protecting Farmland through Agricultural Conservation Easements, Permit CP-29 as a fundable practice for CREP & CRP in NYS, Opposition to Proposed Changes in NYS Wetlands Regulations, Investigate District Involvement in Emergency Response, Encourage State Support of Emergency Watershed Protection Program, Support District Involvement in Pesticide Amnesty, Investigate SWCD Special Stream Disturbance Permit/Exemption, Support the Increase of Energy Self-Sufficiency within NYS through Agricultural Production, Increase funding for the Environmental Protection Fund Farmland & Conservation Programs, Withdraw support for Proposed Legislation A5449, Allow for Additional Funding to SWCDs, Address the NYS Retirement System Payments, Evaluate NYACD Division Boundaries, and Amend NYACD By-Laws to add the office of the Second Vice President. This is where you as Directors play an important role. This is where the policies, positions and directions of The New York State Association of Conservation Districts are set.

On Tuesday, many found that District Law enables Districts to seek out cooperative working arrangements with local municipalities and county governments to get work done. Also discussed were the importance of being visible through use of the media and public presentations; and reaching out for new ideas in funding programs.

Let's welcome NYACD new Officers; Linda Coffin, President; Brad Rogers, First Vice President; George Proios, Second Vice President; Chuck Colby, Treasurer; and Mary Beth Goodwin, Secretary.

By Anne Tibbetts

NEW YORK AGRICULTURAL LAND TRUST

For over a year the New York office of the American Farmland Trust has been meeting with county SWCDs, NYACD, and other players in the farm world of New York concerning the loss of productive land to commercial and residential development. Their focus has been how best to develop an organizational capacity to promote and implement the purchase of development rights. This concept has been used in many places as a mechanism to pay farmers to not sell their land and to facilitate the continued use of the land as a productive farm.

In the West, several agricultural land trusts have been established by cattle ranchers who are alarmed at the suburbanization of their wide-open ranges. Here in New York, no single organization had emerged to specialize in this work, so the AFT has organized a series of meetings in Syracuse to create one. While there are over

eighty land trusts in New York, none specializes in protecting farm land, and most are located in the eastern part of the state. I have represented NYACD and Amanda Barber has represented the Cortland County SWCD at several of the organizing meetings. Considerable progress has been made. The new legal entity will be called the "New York Agricultural Land Trust." Bylaws and a Certificate of Incorporation have been drafted and thoroughly debated. It is expected that the office will be in Onondaga County. Although the goal is to cover the full state, for the first year, the organization will focus on Central New York. It is hoped that the new organization will be able to administer some of the farmland protection funds provided by the State through the Environmental Protection Fund.

At the NYACD Annual Meeting in Alexandria Bay on November 1, a resolution was passed endorsing the new land trust and committing us to support it. This resolution was received gratefully by the new organization.

By Gregg Bell

NACD GREAT LAKES COMMITTEE

When addressing districts' budgets during fiscally trying times, we as district directors seek ways to reduce district expenditures. A simple way to reduce expenditures could be to eliminate paying state and national association dues. However, this may in fact cost more money in future budgets. Districts may perceive NACD and NYACD as failing to communicate adequately with them and therefore view dues to associations as expendable. However, we know the only way we can truly succeed as conservation districts is by strengthening our relationship with NACD and NYACD. The following example of collaboration of the two associations demonstrates the influence each association has and the way they impact their member districts.

The NACD Great Lakes Committee is the only financially funded committee of NACD. NYACD has a line item in its budget to send a division director from a dues paying district that lies within the Great Lakes Basin to represent them. The Committee working with the eight Great Lakes States helped the New York State Great Lakes Basin Districts accrue additional federal funding for programs. These monies go to the land owner and not to the respective districts. However, the economic impact they will have on the counties becomes the bargaining point for the districts when seeking additional local funds.

The Great Lakes is the largest system of surface freshwater on the earth. It contains about 20% of the earth's fresh water and about 90% of the fresh water in the United States. The NACD Great Lakes Committee represents 209 Great Lakes conservation districts (31 districts are in New York), as an advocate for Great Lakes natural resources, by facilitating activities and strengthening the abilities of conservation districts to help restore the chemical, physical and biological integrity of the waters of the Great Lakes Basin ecosystem. Our New York State Conservation Districts, through the efforts of NYACD, are helping to achieve healthy populations of plants, fish and wildlife and to protect human health throughout the Great Lakes.

The NACD Great Lakes Committee petitioned the USDA Farm Service Agency for flexibility and continued funding of successful federal conservation programs (including CRP, CREP and CSP) to maximize conservation treatment opportunities. Practices funded by these programs continue to provide effective sediment control at low cost. The Committee requested a change in the Environmental Benefits Index (EBI) to reflect an increase in the percentage offered Great Lakes basin acres being accepted into the Conservation Reserve Program. Support for our case was the fact that the Great Lakes Basin is currently designated as a National CRP Conservation Priority Area, but recent General CRP sign-up results indicated that this designation was not enough to ensure acceptance into the program even at the National average level. It was argued by the Committee that this could be accomplished through the addition of a water quality sub factor (N2d) that provides additional EBI points for Great Lakes basin offers.

The NACD Great Lakes Committee recently received notice that as of November 11, 2005, "All National CRP Conservation Priority Areas (CPA), of which the Great Lakes Basin is one, will receive an additional 25 points to a contract's original Environmental Benefits Index (EBI) through this process. WDC FSA staff indicated that this should over time shift additional CRP acreage to the Midwest and Northeast. The Great Lakes Committee deserves credit for this policy; for I believe it was developed due to your recent efforts in getting National CPA offers recognized beyond name only." This memo was respectively submitted, by Dale A. Allen USDA-FSA Committee Advisor.

This is only one example of your district's professional organizations helping you to exist financially. If NYACD and NACD are to continue as your advocates, they need 100% support from all conservation districts. Therefore, when working on your 2006 and future budgets, make sure your dues to NYACD and NACD are included.

By Brad Rogers

UPCOMING EVENTS

NYACD Legislative Days—Albany, NY—dates to be announced

NYSSWCC, State Committee Meeting—Utica, NY—December 19-20, 2005

January FYI—Deadline for Articles —December 22, 2005
Please send articles to Maggie Atkins at magneil@att.net,
Phone: 585-396-9973; Fax: 585-554-4077. Thanks.

REALLY GOOD INFORMATION

A couple of web sites you should check out:

www.nyacd.org

New York Association of Conservation Districts, NYACD
This web site is all new. Please take a look and give us some feedback on what you'd like to see.

www.nacdnet.org

National Association of Conservation Districts, NACD
This web site has tons of great conservation information and links. There are several newsletters available from NACD also. We recommend eNotes & Conservation Briefs, both available for free by email.

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