



PROVIDING TODAY...
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FYI...

NYACD NEWSLETTER • DECEMBER 2006

Wishing You All -
Happy Holidays



and a
Joyous and
Peaceful New Year

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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ANNUAL REPORT 2006

By Brad Rogers, 1st Vice President

The New York Association of Conservation Districts (NYACD) has had a multitude of successes this year, each of which has been documented in the monthly edition of your association's FYI. For this reason I will be changing my annual report --- not because the past should not be in review, but it is time, I believe, to envision the future of NYACD and its relationship with its partnerships.

Our partnerships in soil and water stewardship must continue to reflect an important element: the joining of committed citizens, organizations, and government agencies to achieve social, economic, and ecological goals. NYACD has worked successfully with partners throughout its long, storied history. However, the natural resources' problems of our state have grown more complex and the needs of the public have varied greatly over time. Today New Yorkers are voicing their concerns strongly about how the state is addressing the stewardship of land and water and how its decisions affect their communities. Consequently, NYACD and its partners must respond by strengthening and sustaining their partnership.

Over the past several years, there appears to be a steady decline in the duties performed by NYACD directors as they fail to exercise their powers as written in Chapter 9-B of the Consolidated Laws of New York. Furthermore, there has been a weakening in the relationship within the 4-Way Partnership. If NYACD and the 4-Way Partnership are to regain the prominence and prestige they once held throughout our great state and the United States, we must enter into mutually agreed upon objectives. Through a renewed partnership we will be more successful in sustaining the health, diversity, and productivity of our state's natural resources to meet the needs of the present and future generations.

As a starting point for the 4-Way Partnership renewed vision for fiscal year 2007, I should like to propose the following:

A. Building Relationships

Good relationships build trust and good will for partners to work together to achieve mutual goals.

B. Working Guide of Each Partner

A brief overview, including organizational structure and responsibilities of the participants of the organization, would help partners understand the role of those within the organization and serve as a reference when working in a partnership.

C. Communicating Partnership Successes

Communicating the accomplishments created by partnership can increase the visibility of projects and partnership.

Partnership can mean many things, but it is up to us to decide whether it means business as usual or a true attempt to change the fundamental structure of human interactions in our relationship. The alternative to control and domination/submission is there; it is up to the 4-Way Partnership to enact and create the alternative.

NYACD ANNUAL MEETING

The NYACD 2006 Annual Meeting in Cooperstown was packed full of interesting and useful presentations. A total of 29 speakers were included in the program. They ranged from federal officials to the chairs of both the State Assembly and State Senate Committees on Agriculture and the State Commissioner of Ag & Markets. Our NACD chief lobbyist in Washington and experts on emergency management, farmland protection, the Farm Bill, and alternative energy also gave great presentations.

District Board and staff members who registered for the Annual Meeting were given three ring binders full of printed information. In them were the proposed resolutions, reports, biographies of speakers, the program, and copies of some of the speakers' slide shows. If you were not at the Annual Meeting and would like any of these documents, please contact our Executive Director, Gregory Bell at NYACD@nycap.rr.com.

NEW FUNDING REGULATIONS

As part of the 2006 Annual Meeting, attorneys and other staff from the State Soil & Water Conservation Committee gave a presentation on the proposed new State funding regulations for Districts. When we got a bill passed for new funding at the State Legislature this year, it laid out the general guidelines for how the new funding would work. However, it left the specific details to be determined by the State Committee and the Commissioner of Ag & Markets.

The session at the Annual Meeting was the first large presentation of the State Committee staff's ideas on the topic, although they were explained at two smaller meetings previously. The new law sets up three categories of State funding for Districts. Reflecting these same categories, the proposed regulations go into more detail.

Category A is a re-statement of the same \$30,000 per district per year as has existed for several years. As before, it is a reimbursement of 50% of eligible expenditures which have already been made.

Called "Conservation Project Funding - Baseline," category B is new money. It will be provided in amounts up to \$6,000 per district per year, depending on availability. To get this piece, Districts will have to carry out any of a long list of conservation activities. Up to the limit, it will pay for 100% of those costs, not 50% as in Category A.

Called "Conservation Project Funding - Performance Based," category C is also new money. It will be earned in amounts currently averaging \$17,000. However, this level can be less or more, depending on the work done by the District for the year and on annual Legislative appropriations. To get this money, Districts will have to do conservation projects and compete against five standards. These standards are:

- 1) "Extent and sufficiency of district board activity,"
- 2) "District reporting and outreach activities,"
- 3) "Ability of the district to use the funding to leverage additional funds,"
- 4) "Delivery of State natural resource conservation programs," and
- 5) "Compliance with policies which have been adopted by the committee...."

Each of the five standards have been weighted and are explained by the draft regulations in detail beyond the above headlines.

While very detailed and polished-looking, the proposed regulations are still only a proposal. Next will come public comment meetings in locations around the State. It is expected that NYACD will co-sponsor these meetings. These new regulations are carefully-written and take numerous concerns into consideration, but the State Committee will shortly be looking for input from your District. In whatever form these regulations end up, they will probably be with us for many years and they will provide new ways for your District to bring in income. Your thoughtful review of them will insure that they are as good as we can get them.

By Gregory Bell, Executive Director

NYACD LEGISLATIVE DAYS

This year's NYACD Legislative Day will begin at 7 PM on Monday, February 12 with a seminar on the issues and details on lobbying. The next day, Tuesday, February 13 will be the day of actual meetings with legislators.

These dates have been chosen to maximize the effectiveness of our efforts with the State Legislature. When the Legislature passed its State Budget many weeks late every year, it made sense to hold our Legislative Days in mid-March. However, with a chastened Legislature now actually passing the budget on time on April 1, it is considerably less effective to meet with legislators concerning budget items only two or three weeks before the budget is passed. Changed conditions have required a changed date.

Building on our 2006 legislative successes, for 2007, our agenda will be different. We will not be requesting the passage of a new law. Instead, our agenda will focus on funding the stormwater technical assistance program being proposed by Districts and funding of the EPF.

We need you, the Directors of Soil & Water Conservation Districts, to help us in Albany. Please plan to attend.

SWCD/TWIN OAKS DAIRY RECOGNIZED WITH STATE AEM AWARD

Cortland County SWCD was recognized in August at the Empire Farm Days by the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets, Empire State Potato Growers, Inc., and American Agriculturist Magazine for our efforts to promote and implement the Agricultural Environmental Management (AEM) Program in the county. This award recognizes extraordinary efforts of both an individual farm family and their supporting SWCD.



New York's AEM program has become the framework for delivery of agricultural programs and services to assist farmers in their continued voluntary stewardship efforts statewide. With the support of local SWCDs utilizing AEM, the state's farming community is doing its part to conserve and protect our state's water quality and natural resources. Cortland County has been a leader in AEM activity in the state, promoting agricultural environmental assessment through the Farm*A*Syst program in the mid 90s before AEM was even created. SWCD staff are active implementing AEM locally, with every dairy farm completing AEM Tier 1 and 2 and a total of 218 farms engaged in the program. Staff also participate in state level capacities on the AEM Steering committee and technical and education sub-committees. In 2004, SWCD created an AEM promotion video and distributed it statewide.

Along with SWCD, the Arnold Family of Twin Oaks Dairy LLC, was recognized with the Agricultural Environmental Management Award for their efforts to implement AEM on the farm. The Arnolds operate a 140 cow organic dairy with 250 head of cattle and nearly 700 acres. They grow mainly hay, corn and pasture with some small grains on rolling, highly erodible hill land and flat river bottom land in the Tioughnioga River Watershed. They were the Cortland County Conservation Farmers of the Year in 1988 because of their efforts to implement erosion control and other conservation practices. The Arnolds were one of the pilot participants in the Cortland County Farm*A*Syst program and have continued to be engaged in the program. They completed a CNMP in 2003 and continue to implement nutrient management and other best management practices on the farm.

Twin Oaks Dairy LLC and the Arnold Family have a long standing reputation and commitment to natural resource conservation and environmental protection on their farm. They are recognized leaders in the industry and have employed many unique and innovative practices over the years, including ICM, cultivating, elimination of antibiotic use, conservation tillage, rotational grazing, and organic dairying. They have approached these concepts with an open mind and a sound plan, and have been successful. The farm maintains over a 21,000 pound herd average.

The Arnolds' commitment to environmental stewardship is exhibited not only on the farm, but in their daily lives. For over twenty years, Rick and Kathie have lived in an earth sheltered, passive solar home. They have a composting toilet, wood space / hot water heater with a catalytic converter and solar pre-heating in the summer, compact fluorescent lighting, gravity spring flow water, and energy efficient appliances. In 2003, they installed a photovoltaic system which provides a large share of the power to their home.

These producers are always willing to share their experiences and knowledge with others. They are often the subject and location for farm tours and workshops. They have shown a continued commitment to the principles and practices of the AEM program and exemplify good agricultural and environmental stewards.

Congratulations to the Arnolds and Cortland County SWCD for a job well done!



**THE MADISON COUNTY SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT,
THE GRAZE-NY PROGRAM AND ITS REGIONAL PARTNERS
ANNOUNCE A SPRING GRAZING CONFERENCE SET FOR MARCH 31ST, 2007
AT THE WHITE EAGLE CONFERENCE CENTER IN HAMILTON, NEW YORK.**

**Inspired by a young 5th generation farmer's daughter the event is named
"GRAZE-A-PALOOZA"**

***No, it's not a concert of singing graziers but it is
A celebration of healthy grass-based farming, food and families***

We are pleased to have on our program:

- ◆ Dr. Kate Clancy, Senior Scientist and Consultant from the Union of Concerned Scientists. She has authored *Greener Pastures: How grass-fed beef and milk contribute to healthy eating*. Her interests are in pasture-raised animal systems, policies related to agriculture, farmland preservation, farm viability and food systems planning.
- ◆ Mr. Jerry Burnetti, author, speaker and founder of Agri-Dynamics whose focus is on preserving our soils, our health, our families and our communities utilizing grassland ethics.
- ◆ Dr. Susan Beal DVM, Big Run Healing Arts who specializes in Homeopathic medicine and herbal remedies for pets, horses and livestock.

PLUS topics on young grazing families, soil life, stocking rates and paddock designs, tree crops, dairy and livestock grazing strategies, grassland birds, biomass usages and start custom grazing operations.

The Noon time meal will feature an array of all New York State Grass-Fed meats and dairy products. **YUM!!**

Pencil in your calendars for this unique and exciting event for all Landowners, Farmers and Consumers of this Great Central New York Region.

LOCAL 5TH GENERATION FARMER HEADS TO MISSOURI

Troy Bishopp, of Bishopp Family Farm in Deansboro and Grazing Specialist from the Madison Co. SWCD has been invited to speak at the Third National Conference On Grazing Lands being held December 10th to 13th in St. Louis, Missouri. The agenda includes over 180 speakers from around the nation and the globe discussing topics on grasslands, rangeland health and human health attributes of grass-fed animal products. The conference is hosted by the Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative (GLCI), a grassroots organization that promotes conservation of private grazing lands through technical assistance to landowners.



NEWS YOU CAN USE

USDA Alternative Ag Website

The Alternative Farming Systems Information Center at USDA's National Agricultural Library recently launched a redesigned Web site including several significant enhancements to make it easier to find information on a wide range of agriculture-related subjects, including sustainable agriculture, alternative crops, organic farming and farm energy. The Web site can be accessed at <http://afsic.nal.usda.gov>.

25x'25 Renewable Energy Initiative

Visit the website: www.25x25.org for information on the initiative and related renewable energy happenings. Also, you can sign up for an e-newsletter that will keep you up to date on the initiative. 25x'25 Steering Committee Co-chair Read Smith recently spoke about the 25x'25 renewable energy initiative.

"This initiative really will touch everyone in America," said Smith. He explained that, "It has three primary goals. The first one is to help us toward energy independence and to reduce our reliance on foreign oil. Obviously, the state of the world today makes us very vulnerable to interruptions in our traditional energy supplies.

The second major component of this initiative is the value to rural America. It's rebuilding the infrastructure and supporting the sustainability of rural America.

The third leg of this initiative is the environmental components of using renewable energy versus the traditional fossil-based fuels."

Sign-up for Conservation Programs

State Conservationist Ron Alvarado announced last month that the USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is accepting applications for the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), the Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP), and the Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP).

Although farmers and producers can sign up any time, EQIP and WHIP applications must be received by January 12, 2007 to be considered for fiscal year 2007 funding. To be considered for the first round of WRP funding, applications must also be received by January 12, 2007. If WRP funds remain available after January 12, additional rounds of funding will occur later in 2007.

"I encourage all who may be interested in these programs to get their application in quickly," Alvarado said.

The EQIP program offers financial and technical assistance to help eligible participants install or implement structural and management practices on eligible agricultural land. The WHIP program helps landowners develop and improve important wildlife habitat. The WRP program offers landowners the opportunity to protect, restore, and enhance wetlands on their property through easements or restoration agreements. Because of the popularity of these programs, applications are ranked according to established criteria, and are funded based on their ranking.

"These cost-share programs are designed to help farmers address natural resource problems on their farms, such as soil erosion, animal waste management, or lack of wildlife habitat," Alvarado said.

Additional information is available at www.ny.nrcs.usda.gov/programs. Or contact your local NRCS Field Office with questions.

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UPCOMING EVENTS

- **State Committee Meeting**, December 19, 2006, Albany, NY
- **NACD 61st Annual Meeting**, February 4-8, 2007, Los Angeles, CA
- **NYACD Legislative Days**, February 12-13, 2007, Albany, NY
- **“Graze-A-Palooza” Spring Grazing Conference**, March 31, 2007, Hamilton, NY
- **2007 New York State Envirothon**, May 23-24, 2007, Cobleskill, NY
- **2007 Canon Envirothon**, July 29– August 4, 2007, Hobart and William Smith Colleges, Geneva, NY

January FYI—Deadline for Articles —December 29, 2006.

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