

Oneida Lake Watershed Agricultural Program

Winter Newsletter

Volume 2



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The Oneida Lake Watershed Ag. Program Makes Progress

The Oneida Lake Watershed Agricultural Program Committee has been busy this year contacting farmers, completing AEM and prioritizing farms throughout the watershed. Soil and Water Conservation District employees in Madison, Oneida, Onondaga and Oswego spent time during the summer and fall months working with the farmers to complete the AEM Tier II worksheets. AEM stands for Agricultural Environmental Management, a tiered conservation planning approach. AEM is New York State's official tool to address agricultural nonpoint sources of pollution. Tier I is a one page inventory sheet of the farm's resources including animal numbers and acres of cropland and pasture. Tier II is a series of worksheets that are used to identify resource concerns

and environmental stewardship on the farm. Most farmers who've completed AEM have indicated that the process isn't too bad! The table below indicates the farms in the watershed in each county that have completed AEM so far. So what's next? Each farm will be prioritized using the same ranking criteria. The result will be a listing of farms that are considered priorities. If a farm is considered a priority and the farmer chooses to continue to participate in the program, grants will be sought to offset the cost of Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plans (CNMPs). CNMPs are required on farms that receive federal or state grant dollars to implement Best Management Practices or BMPs. BMPs on farms may include heavy use protection (barnyard improvement), milkhouse waste disposal improvement, manure storage or pasture management. Once the SWCD staffs finish AEM Tier IIs on watershed farms, we'll start focusing on grant writing to offset the cost of the CNMP development on priority farms. Further down the road, when the CNMPs are completed for the priority farms, we can write grants to hopefully obtain funding to install BMPs on those priority farms. The table below indicates the progress made so far for AEM on farms in the watershed.

County	Active Farms in W/S	# Farms participating in AEM
Lewis	0	0
Madison	176	110
Oneida	93	67
Onondaga	37	21
Oswego	11	8
TOTAL	317	206



(Photo of cows courtesy of Central New York Reg. Planning & Dev. Board)

Pathogen Management Plans

Why should you consider developing a pathogen management plan for your farm? Johne's Disease, Salmonella, Mastitis, Bovine Viral Diarrhea, and environmental pathogens are a few reasons to consider developing such a plan. If you're interested, the New York State Cattle Health Assurance Program (NYSCHAPs) may be a good place to start. NYSCHAPs is an integrated disease prevention program that utilizes a team of advisors to develop a farm-specific herd health plan. There is no enrollment fee for participation. The objectives of this plan are to increase the herd's health, productivity and profitability, to assure food safety, public health and consumer confidence in dairy products, and to promote environmental stewardship. The NYSCHAP farm team is comprised of the NYSCHAP herd planner (NYS Field Veterinarian or certified NYSCHAP Veterinarian), the producer, the herd veterinarian, key farm employees and other consultants used on the farm. Baseline information is collected and a walk-through risk assessment is completed. Intervention strategies are negotiated within the goals and resources of the farm operation and are the basis for the herd plan. The herd veterinarian will work with the producer over the next year to ensure progress is made with the herd plan.

NYSCHAP is a sponsored program of the NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets. The Department of Ag and Markets compensates the herd veterinarians for time spent on plan development. Some plans will focus on changes in management practices while other plans may include disease testing or construction of facilities. All plans address basic biosecurity and best management practices that cover all management areas and disease issues. If the farmer chooses, the plan can also include specific disease modules, such as Johne's disease. If you are interested in participating in the NYSCHAPs program, contact your herd veterinarian or regional NYS veterinarian. Or, check out the NYSCHAPs home page at <http://www.nyschap.vet.cornell.edu>.



Water Quality Testing

Water quality around a farmstead can become contaminated with a variety of pollutants like coliform bacteria and nitrates. Even though the milk inspector tests your well, do you know how frequently or what is tested? A few farmers in the watershed have expressed an interest in a drinking water quality workshop and a water quality testing session. Cornell Cooperative Extension of Onondaga County and the Oneida Lake Watershed Agricultural Program are willing to set up a meeting to collect water quality samples, provide a 1 hour information session about water quality and transport the samples to a local certified laboratory.



We're also looking into the possibility of obtaining a grant to further offset the cost of the tests. Test results will be mailed directly to program participants within 2 weeks of the workshop. In order for this workshop to happen, we need to know if, when and where people would be willing to attend. If you're interested, please call Jo-Anne Faulkner at (315) 736-3334. **If we hear from at least 20 people, we'll go ahead and plan a session.**



BUFFER: BEFORE AND AFTER (ONONDAGA CO.SWCD)

MEET THE MANAGERS

In this edition we introduce you to two more of the SWCD Managers that serve on the OLWAP Committee.

John DeHollander



Conservation and farming in Oswego County have a longtime advocate in John DeHollander. In his words: "It is hard to visualize the worldwide influences that occur locally with our small family farm operations. We are operating in a global market. I believe that that is the demise of America's family farms. In order to compete on this larger scale, farms need to be more efficient and aggressive in their management and operations. This usually translates to bigger operations forcing the small neighborhood farms out of business. When this occurs, neighborhoods and auxiliary businesses suffer. The financial security of our local farmers is balanced on a pinhead. It doesn't take much movement one way or the other to cause a change to their livelihood. Too much vacant farmland is being developed into residential and commercial sprawl. The strength of this country is in its food/fiber supply resources within agriculture. The more the US becomes dependent upon foreign countries for our daily food supply, the weaker and more vulnerable this country becomes. In our practices of conservation with area farmers, we must make sure that we accomplish our goals while at the same time protect the financial stability of our farmers. I feel blessed to live in a country that you don't have to worry about where the next meal is coming from or having enough clothes to keep you warm. We must make every attempt to maintain this standard of living for our society's future generations." So who is John DeHollander? John was raised on an Oswego County muck farm and he earned his BS in Education at SUNY Oswego. John began his career with the SWCD in 1978 as a Technician. Now, as Manager of an office staff of four, his specific role is working in the arena of stormwater management and erosion and sediment control. In addition, he administers the County's Aquatic Vegetation Control Program where he harvests water chestnut, an invasive aquatic weed. John also oversees the District's stream monitoring program. With the valuable assistance of his competent staff, five Sandy Pond Watershed sites and seven Oneida Lake Watershed sites are monitored throughout the year. Speaking of competent staff, this District is chock full of talent. Three of the current staff have received the New York State Conservation District Employees Association Division Merit Award. The entire District was recognized by the same organization in 2002

for its management of the County's reforestation lands. When John's not fighting water chestnut or controlling erosion, he dabbles in photography, woodworking, kayaking, camping and loves being a grandfather to four "marvelous" grandchildren.

Kevin Lewis



It's a bird...it's a plane... if it's a green Ninja motorcycle pulling into the Oneida County Soil and Water Conservation District office, it's Kevin Lewis, the District's Executive Director. Kevin has led the District for 15 years through the challenges of agricultural conservation, urban stormwater, wetland development and geographic information systems. He was a Senior Airman in the US Air Force and worked on the survey, design and construction of airport runways. He then went on to work for the New York State Department of Transportation as a Transportation Construction Inspector, a job that included inspecting bridges like the Syracuse interchange on Route 81. He came to the Oneida County SWCD in 1988 as a technician and quickly built a reputation as a hardworking, innovative and dedicated conservationist. Kevin's staff includes Eileen Lavier, Jo-Anne Faulkner and Mike Lippacher. Eileen is the District Clerk who handles all the finances as well as coordinates the Farm Safety Day Camp for the County, Jo-Anne works on the Oneida Lake Watershed Agricultural Program, and Mike handles nearly all of the nutrient management planning on farms throughout Oneida County. Always on the cutting edge, Kevin was one of the first in New York State to include Geographic Information System technology into District programs. Kevin serves as the Vice President of the Finger Lakes-Lake Ontario Watershed Protection Alliance (FL-LOWPA) and is also the Vice President of the New York State Conservation Districts Employees Association. In his spare time, Kevin serves as a pastor and college professor at the Greater Grace Christian Fellowship. He also plays paintball but is nursing an arm injury from a recent football game. Kevin is hopeful that the Oneida Lake Watershed Agricultural Program will be the much needed avenue for agricultural nonpoint source pollution prevention.

MEET THE AAC MEMBERS

In this edition, we introduce you to two more members of



the Agricultural Advisory Committee for the Oneida Lake Watershed Agricultural Program. The Agricultural

Advisory Committee meets to provide guidance and set direction for the Agricultural Program Committee and the Watershed Agricultural Resource Specialist.

Meet Jeff Hopkinson



Jeff Hopkinson represents Oswego County on the Agricultural Advisory Committee. He is a sixth generation potato grower and operates his 475 acre farm in Williamstown New York. Jeff and his Dad began their potato farm in Maine but came to Central New York in 1974 to be closer to markets. Jeff gets some help around the farm from his son, daughter and nephew and hopes that a 7th generation may take over the operation some day. When he's not farming, Jeff keeps busy with his duties as an Oswego County Farm Bureau Director, a Town Councilman for Williamstown and a Director of the Upstate Potato Advisory Committee for Cornell University. Jeff is also a past director of the Empire State Potato Growers. Jeff's a great addition to the Oneida Lake Watershed Agricultural Advisory Committee. Not only does he represent vegetable growers, he also recognizes that farmers are often unfairly depicted as polluters rather than conservationists. We're glad that Jeff is on the AAC team!

Meet Bud Nurse



Since 1989, Bud Nurse and wife Carol have operated their 173 acre dairy farm in Lafayette. Together, they milk approximately 100 cows and have help with the calves from daughter Kelly. Bud was first exposed to farming as a youngster on his grandparents' farm in Taberg New York. He would later graduate from Morrisville College in 1974 with a degree in Dairy Science. Bud joined the AAC because he was concerned with the dwindling population of dairy farms in Central New York and he was eager to have input into a program that could benefit agriculture. Bud's doing a great job on the AAC!

AAC update

The Oneida Lake Watershed Agricultural Advisory Committee held its second meeting in November. Maurice Kelsey, AAC Chairman, provided the group with an update on the activities of the Oneida Lake Watershed Advisory Council where he serves as the agricultural liaison. In other business, discussion was lively about a variety of topics including farm prioritization, farmer participation and funding approaches. Farm prioritization is currently occurring based upon a score from the prioritization system developed specifically for this program. The question remains how many farms will be originally considered "priorities". Farmer participation in the AEM portion of the program is not at 100%. However, we are hopeful that the opportunity to participate has been extended to all farmers in the watershed. Suggestions were made to include testimonials in the newsletter about Best Management Practices and their effectiveness (see the back page). Mike Johnston provided some information about the funding opportunities available to farmers within the watershed. Thanks to all of the AAC members for their great suggestions and their enthusiasm. The next meeting of the AAC will most likely be in February. In the meantime, if you'd like a farmer's perspective on the program, speak to one of the AAC members. They are: Maurice Kelsey, Richard Carrier, Dave Scheifferstine, Bill Boice, Bud Nurse, Pete Mapstone, Jeff Hopkinson and June Wood.



LANEWAY BEFORE & AFTER (ONON.CO.SWCD)

Oneida Lake Watershed Initiative Program Update

The Oneida Lake Watershed Agricultural Program is only one of many ongoing activities under the umbrella of the Oneida Lake Watershed Project. The table below

highlights just a few of the other efforts in the watershed. For more information on any or all of the other programs, visit the Oneida Lake website at cnyrpdb.org/oneidalake.

Tributary Monitoring: A four county team monitors tributaries during 6 baseline conditions and 6 storm events over a 12 month period. The purpose of the program is to determine the pollution contributed by each tributary to the lake. So far, 4 baselines have been completed as have 4 storm events. The next non-event session is scheduled for mid-February of 2003.

State of the Lake and Watershed Report: A comprehensive document designed to identify a multitude of lake and watershed issues including water levels, natural setting, agriculture, water quality and economic issues. The draft was released in the Fall of 2002 and was reviewed by a diverse team of stakeholders, agency personnel and municipal officials. The document is available at cnyrpdb.org/oneidalake. The final document will be available for release in early 2003.

Watershed Advisory Council: A committee of lake and watershed stakeholders and municipal officials that meet regularly to guide the development of a Lake and Watershed management plan. Agriculture is represented on the Council by Maurice Kelsey, a Madison County dairy farmer. The newly elected Chairperson is Daniel Ramer. The next meeting of the Council is scheduled for the end of January of 2003.

Education: A committee designed to address educational needs in the watershed including water chestnut control and community issues.

Forestry Tips for Farmers

Planning to harvest your timber from the woodlot on your farm? Here's a checklist that may help with your plans.

- ✓ Choose a forester among the Department of Environmental Conservation's (DEC) list of Cooperating foresters. (See below for contact information).
- ✓ Work with the forester to mark the trees that are going to be part of the sale.
- ✓ Mark the property boundary lines.
- ✓ Obtain all necessary permits prior to the harvest.
- ✓ Comply with local ordinances.
- ✓ Obtain competitive bids between logging contractors to ensure the best price.
- ✓ Draw up a contract to cover the sale of your product.
- ✓ Consult an attorney when you're selling any timber products.
- ✓ Inspect the progress of the sale.
- ✓ Find out what kind of taxes you'll be required to pay from a forester, a tax consultant or the IRS.
- ✓ Advertise the sale to harvesters, pulpmills and sawmills available on DEC's list.

Remember, poorly planned timber harvests can result in massive soil erosion and water pollution. Best Management Practices for forestry include

- ✓ Minimizing stream crossings,
- ✓ Protecting vegetative buffers alongside streams and wetlands,
- ✓ Harvesting during dry weather or on frozen ground,

- ✓ Re-seeding all disturbed areas, and
- ✓ Obtaining all necessary permits prior to the harvest.



The DEC can be contacted directly about forestry plans and practices. If you're in Onondaga or Oswego counties, your contact is Charley Porter 298-7467. If you're in Madison County, you can contact Richard Pancoe in Sherburne at (607) 674-4036. If you're in Oneida County, your contact would be Gary Miller at the Herkimer office. He can be reached at 866-6330. If you're in Lewis County, your contact would be Fred Monk who is in Lowville and can be reached at 376-3521 or 785-2310.



MANURE LOADING AREA BEFORE & AFTER
(ONON.CO.SWCD)





Barnyard (heavy use protection) before and after
(Oneida County SWCD and USDA NRCS).

Madison County SWCD
Contact: Mike Johnston 684-9577

Oneida County SWCD
Contact: Jo-Anne Faulkner 736-3334

Onondaga County SWCD
Contact: Doug Fisher 677-3851

Oswego County SWCD
Contact: Erica Schreiner 592-9663

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Marcy, NY 13403

AEM & BMPs

Throughout this newsletter we've included a series of Before and After photographs of Conservation Best Management Practices (BMPs). How are AEM and BMPs related? AEM Tier II helps us to figure out which resources on your farm need the most attention. AEM Tier III allows us to develop a plan to improve the resources during AEM Tier IV. There's still time to set up an AEM appointment with your County SWCD! Remember, first AEM then BMP. Thanks to Dale Gates, the Skaneateles Lake Watershed Agricultural Program, the Onondaga County SWCD (Megan Henderson) and the staff in Oneida County for the photographs.

Lewis County SWCD
Contact: Jon Stewart 376-6122