

Conservation Connections

Erie County Soil and Water Conservation District

50 Commerce Way, East Aurora, New York 14052-2185
 Telephone: (716) 652-8480 Fax: (716) 652-8506
 www.ecswcd.org



Quarterly District Newsletter

Fall 2003

Phase I of Streambank Partnership Complete

Erie County Soil and Water Conservation District has completed the Buffalo Creek Partnership I streambank stabilization program with the completion of Joint Board site 8-62 on Buffalo Creek in West Seneca. This project was 350 feet in length and repaired an ice damaged structure that was constructed in the 1950's. Through the grant we successfully completed ten projects in the Buffalo River watershed on Buffalo, Cayuga and Cazenovia Creeks.



This project site on Cazenovia Creek in West Seneca was designed to minimize damage from ice and was put to the test this past winter. As shown in the photo, it was successful!



The completed restoration project JB 8-62 on Cazenovia Creek.

Work has commenced on the Buffalo Creek Partnership II streambank stabilization program funded mainly by the

Environmental Bond Act through the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation. Eight private sites and five public sites will be designed and constructed over the next three years. This program will provide a fund through a partnership involving private landowners, municipalities and Erie County.

This project supports the Erie County regional watershed management philosophy. The associated environmental benefits will include aquatic habitat improvement, reduction in sedimentation, increased recreational opportunities and improved water quality. ♦

Farmer Information Meeting to be held in Tonawanda Creek Watershed

October 2, 2003 ♦ 7:00 PM
Darien Town Hall
10569 Allegheny Rd, Darien, NY
(Rte 77 just north of Rte 20)

An information meeting will be held on October 2nd at the Darien Town Hall to discuss Agricultural Environmental Management (AEM) planning in the Tonawanda Creek Watershed. Agricultural producers and landowners are encouraged to attend to hear about available technical assistance and funding opportunities. Refreshments will be provided. Please register by calling the District office at 652-8480.

Farmers will be receiving a Tier I survey in the mail, requesting basic farm information. Farmers that submit completed surveys will be contacted to set up appointments for a Tier II farm visit. During farm visits, District technicians will identify areas of environmental concern and discuss ways to address those concerns. District and NRCS staff will

(Continued on page 3)

You're Invited!

Rural and Urban Neighbors Banquet

Hosted by
 Erie County Soil and Water Conservation District
 and Cornell Cooperative Extension of Erie County

Tuesday, October 21, 2003 ♦ 12:00 PM

McKinley Park Inn, Blasdell

We will also be honoring various partners who joined us in our conservation efforts in the past year

For tickets call 652-5400 or 652-8480

ENVIROTHON RAFFLE

Great Prizes!

Kissing Bridge Lift Tickets

Colden Tubing Company Lift Tickets

Autographed Buffalo Sabres Hockey Stick

Tickets available at Erie County SWCD or call 652-8480

Donation: \$1.00

*All proceeds support the Erie County Envirothon
 Drawing will be held October 30, 2003*

Invasive Plants

Now Spreading: *Giant Hogweed* and *Cow Parsnip*

We've featured Giant Hogweed in a past issue, but because of numerous landowner concerns we think folks could use some updated information. Giant Hogweed, *Heracleum mantegazzianum*, is a native of Eurasia, and a member of the carrot and parsley family. It was brought to North America in the early 1900s as a landscape plant, escaped cultivation and has become established in rich, moist soils along roadsides, stream banks and disturbed areas. The plant is easily recognized because of its large stature and enormous leaves.

Giant Hogweed is on the Federal Noxious Weed list, which makes it unlawful to sell, propagate or transport the plant.



The plant grows to 8-14 feet at maturity, has hollow, ridged stems with coarse hairs and purple blotches. The leaves are sharply incised and unevenly lobed, and can be up to 5 feet wide. The white flower umbels, which look like Queen Anne's lace, appear mid-summer in clusters above the leaves and may reach 2 feet across. After flowering the plant produces large flattened elliptic dry seeds. One way the plant may be spread is by consumption of the fruits by birds. The shoots die down in the fall, leaving tall dried stems.

Cow parsnip (*Heracleum lanatum*) seldom exceeds 5 feet tall, lacks the purple blotches on the stems, and its flower umbels are white to pale yellow. It is easy to confuse Giant Hogweed and Cow Parsnip with angelica or rhubarb, which have similar features, but do not reach the mature size of Giant Hogweed. Avoid look-alikes if you are not sure which plant it is!

Giant Hogweed and Cow Parsnip sap cause a skin reaction known as photodermatitis on susceptible people. Exposure to the toxic sap sensitizes the skin to sunlight and results in swelling, blisters and eruptions of affected sites. The blisters emerge when skin coated with the sap is exposed to sun and may develop into purplish, blackened scars. Do not touch the plants with bare hands, and do not allow children to play near hogweed or cow parsnip! Wash immediately with soap and water if you touch the leaves or sap.

Remove hogweed or cow parsnip plants in early summer, before they flower and spread seed. Wear protective clothing and dispose of entire plants, secured in bags, to a landfill. An herbicide such as glyphosate can be applied to the actively growing plant, but must be applied before the plant has flowered. Removing the green growth will help to exhaust the root and will weaken the plant, so digging it out and chopping it is feasible. Even after the parent plant is completely removed, the seeds left behind can come up 7 or 8 years later. Do not use a weed trimmer to cut the plants as airborne fragments of the stems and leaves could spread the phototoxin. Don't compost the plants or dispose of the cut stems and leaves unbagged.

NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets is tracking the location of Giant Hogweed statewide in an effort to set up an eradication program. If you find Giant Hogweed you may report its location by calling Cornell Cooperative Extension of Erie County at 652-5400, ext. 138. For more information on invasive plants consult these websites: invasivespecies.gov, ipcny.org, tncweeds.ucdavis.edu or call the District office. ♦



District Spreads Conservation Message at Summer Events

The Erie County Soil and Water Conservation District has been busy spreading the conservation message this summer. Educational exhibits highlighting District projects and offering information on various conservation practices and programs were displayed at events throughout the county including Fleet Waterfest at Erie Basin Marina, the "Make Every Day Earth Day" Family Expo at the Buffalo Zoo, and the Erie County Fair.

Visitors to the District's booth at the Erie County Fair and the "Make Every Day Earth Day" Family Expo had a chance to sign up to win a free bundle of evergreen tree seedlings. The seedlings will be available for pickup at the District seedling distribution in April. Congratulations to the following seedling winners:

Carol Clark, Lakeview
Dave Clark, Holley
Michael Gerhardt, Williamsville
Dave Jelliff, Williamsville
Kim Klubek, Lackawanna
Jim Kumpf, Akron
Bernie Lawn, Lakeview
Rebecca Leitten, Hamburg
Connie Lindsley, Sardinia
Barb Schunk, Hamburg
Stefanik family, Alden
Patricia Strohm, Buffalo
Christopher Waggoner, Williamsville

The District will also participate in the Family, Food and Farm Tour on September 27th. The Tour includes visits to several agricultural operations in Erie County and provides an opportunity for participants to increase their understanding of and appreciation for agriculture. For registration information please call 652-5400.

Through participation in these numerous events, the District hopes to increase public awareness of the importance of natural resource conservation within in our community. Many of these events take place annually, so if you missed us this summer, be sure to stop by next year! ♦

We're on the Web!
www.ecswcd.org

- Check out the Erie County Soil and Water Conservation District website for past issues of *Conservation Connections*, project updates, publications, and much more! We're adding new things every day!

**Erie County
Family, Food and Farm Tour
and "Taste of Western New York"**

Saturday, September 27, 2003

8 AM to 2:30 PM

Tours begin at Broadway Market or Erie County Fairgrounds

Pre-registrations are first come-first served

Adults \$5.00 Children \$3.00 Family \$15.00

For registration or more information, call 652-5400 ext 143

**Spotlight on Mark Schreier,
District Intern**

Mark Schreier is the District's new environmental intern. Mark graduated from the University of Buffalo with a degree in Environmental Studies and has had an internship with the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation, where he performed in-house screenings for environmental permit applications, and an internship with the US Fish and Wildlife Service participating in numerous studies on the round goby, mudpuppies, and an Erie Canal study. He was also employed with Sienna Environmental Technologies as a laboratory technician and conducted asbestos abatement monitoring as well. Mark is a native of Western New York who enjoys snowboarding, fishing, hiking and biking, and when the weather doesn't cooperate (a rare occurrence in these parts), he can be found listening to music with friends.

Mark's duties with the District include assisting with surveying, streambank stabilization projects, stream inspections, Geographic Information Systems mapping, technical assistance requests, and just about anything that might come up. With all the experience he has, Mark is a valuable complement to the staff. ♦

District Products and Services

Backyard Conservation Kits	\$14.00
USGS Topographic Maps	\$8.00
Erie County Base Map	\$5.00
Bluebird Nest Boxes	\$11.00
Bat Houses	\$12.00
Wood Duck Nest Boxes	\$23.00
Marking Flags or Fertilizer Tablets	10¢ ea.
Tree Shelters - 5 foot	\$4.45
Tree Shelters - 3 foot	\$3.25
Finder Pocket Field Guides	\$4.00
Peterson's Flash Guides	\$6.00
Bird Watcher's Digests	\$3.50
Fish Management in NY Ponds (CCE #116)	\$5.00

Please add 8.25% sales tax to above items

Technical Assistance: Erosion control, farm drainage, water quality, conservation planning, streambank restoration (please call our office for more information)

On-Site Evaluation and Pond Layout	\$600.00
Soil Group Worksheets (per parcel)	\$15.00

Agricultural Environmental Management

(Continued from page 1)

work with farmers in Tier III to develop conservation plans and preliminary designs in preparation for the District application to receive cost-share funds to implement the plans. Landowners' environmental protection plans developed in Tier III are implemented in Tier IV, through the use of Best Management Practices and/or cost-sharing programs. Evaluations of the process and environmental outcomes are conducted in Tier V. Funding for the AEM program comes from the New York State Soil and Water Conservation Committee/New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets.

Farmer and landowner participation in the planning process is required to be eligible for state ag non-point source and federal grant funds for cost-sharing to implement the Best Management Practices identified in the planning process. Farmers and agricultural landowners in the Tonawanda Creek Watershed are encouraged to complete the AEM Tier I Survey to begin the process and establish eligibility for cost-share assistance. For further information, please contact the District office. ♦

Coming Events

- September 20 Great Lakes Beach Sweep, to volunteer visit: www.fbnr.org or call 549-4330
- September 27 Family, Food and Farm Tour, call 652-5400 for registration information
- October 2 Tonawanda Creek Watershed Agricultural Environmental Management meeting, Darien Town Hall 7:00 pm, see page 1 for information
- October 21 Rural and Urban Neighbors Banquet, 12:00 pm, see page 1 for more information

**Building Local
Land Protection Programs**

A FREE workshop for local officials, landowners and other interested residents to investigate options for protecting important farmland and open space

**September 30, 2003 ♦ 7:00 PM
Erie County Cornell Cooperative Extension
21 South Grove Street, East Aurora**

Sponsored by American Farmland Trust, Erie County Department of Environment and Planning, Trust for Public Land, Erie County Environmental Management Council, League of Women Voters of Buffalo/Niagara, and Western New York Land Conservancy

**Contact Diane Held Phillips at (716) 337-2254
for more information**

**Wild Things Electronic Field Trip
FREE Live Interactive Satellite Learning Adventure
for Grades 5-7**

October 2 ♦ 1:00pm-2:30pm

For more information visit www.wildthingsfws.org

USDA Conservation Funding Assistance – Don't Give Up on It!

The 2002 Farm Bill *authorized* significant increases in funding for many USDA conservation programs and added a few new programs. Actual *appropriations* (the amount Congress budgets on an annual basis) have been impacted by economic, national and world events. Still, conservation funding nationwide is much greater than in the years prior to the passage of the 2002 Farm Bill.

Unfortunately, this has not translated into significant additional funding for conservation work on Erie County farms. None of the 36 applications for financial assistance under the 2003 **Environmental Quality Incentives Program** (EQIP) were funded! This was very disappointing and suggests some inequities in the ranking system that we hope will be fixed next year. The main problem was the much publicized \$450,000 contract payment limit. Enough big farms in other parts of the state applied for the maximum amount and essentially all the 2003 funds were used up on these large contracts. One way of looking at this is that “the big ones” are now out of the way so next year more, smaller applications should be funded, especially if the EQIP appropriation increases as expected.

The **Wetland Reserve Program** (WRP) continues to be a well funded program. Two recent Erie County applications were funded and we anticipate additional applications will be funded over the coming months. Ten-year restoration agreements, 30-Year Conservation Easements and Permanent Conservation Easements remain options for landowners willing to restore

areas that were once wetlands but were converted for agricultural use.

Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program (WHIP) applications are also being accepted. While funding is more limited for this program, we have had a number of applications approved over the last year. The focus of WHIP in New York State remains protection and enhancement of grassland habitat.

We are hopeful that funds will be appropriated for the **Agricultural Management Assistance** (AMA) program in fiscal year 2004. This program provided cost-sharing for small cropland erosion control, water management and planned grazing system projects but was not funded in 2003. Many Erie County farmers benefited from this program in the last year it was funded. Applications can be made at any time in anticipation of future funding.

Municipalities and land trusts can apply, on behalf of local farms for purchase of development rights funds through the **Federal Farm & Ranch Lands Protection Program**. The Town of Clarence applied this year, although the application was not funded due to lack of funds. We are hopeful appropriated funding levels will approach authorized levels in fiscal year 2004 so that more projects can be approved.

Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) general sign-up opportunities have been limited over the past few years. During this year's sign-up, only 2 of 19 applications were approved. The **continuous sign-up option** through the **Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program** remains available with nearly automatic approval for those fields or sections of fields that would protect wellhead areas or create riparian (stream-side) buffers.

Final rules should soon be out on the 2002 authorized **Conservation Security Program**. This new program will provide financial assistance for a variety of conservation measures, potentially including support for measures previously installed.

In July of 2003, with very short notice, we were allowed to take applications for the new **Grassland Reserve Program**. This program pays for management contracts or conservation easements on managed pastureland and hayland. Unlike CRP, the enrolled land can still be harvested for hay or pasture. Applications are currently being accepted although no new applications will be considered until additional funds are appropriated.

In recent years, the application and approval process has gotten more complicated, both because of the timing of release of funds and because of the number of different program options. Statewide or watershed-based ranking processes also complicate the application process. We will gladly help Erie County landowners sort out the options and assist with applications. While it is frustrating when deserving applications are not approved because of lack of funds or ranking systems that may not reflect local priorities, we encourage Erie County farmers and landowners to continue to apply for USDA programs. **Don't give up on the USDA programs! Next year should be better.**

For more information about USDA conservation programs or to apply for various programs, contact the USDA Service Center and Erie County Soil and Water Conservation District office. Visit the NRCS web page at: www.nrcs.usda.gov for more program information. ♦

AmeriCorps Provides Valued Service

For many years now AmeriCorps has been providing valuable assistance to the Erie County Soil and Water Conservation District and USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service in a number of ways, from planting trees and bundling seedlings for distribution to creating electronic mapping data. The West Seneca Youth Bureau hosts AmeriCorps programs such as the Service Action Corps, Urban Corps and VISTA, which have provided assistance to the District and NRCS.

AmeriCorps is a national program through which people of all ages and backgrounds provide service to their community in exchange for a stipend and educational awards. Locally, AmeriCorps members are involved in tutoring programs, assistance to elderly residents, food bank deliveries, parks refurbishment and community cleanups, and many other much-needed services.

The West Seneca AmeriCorps has put in many hours over the past few years preparing seedling orders for the District's annual Conservation Tree and Shrub Seedling distribution. AmeriCorps teams have worked alongside District technicians to plant bare-root seedlings, live stakes and wattles at streambank stabilization projects (sometimes working in rain and snow), and helped conduct stream inspections.

Also, in the 1990s the East Aurora NRCS office had a special program with an AmeriCorps “GIS and Conservation Technology Team,” comprised mainly of college students, who worked on data gathering, cataloging and wetland map digitizing for the Niagara Frontier Wetlands Initiative and many Western New York communities.

We can't even begin to count the many thousands of hours team members have put in over the years, and we appreciate each one. The AmeriCorps motto is “Getting Things Done” - and we agree. ♦



**Erie County Soil and Water Conservation District
2003 Trout Stocking Order Form**

**Order Deadline:
October 9, 2003**



**Pickup Date:
October 18, 2003**

Species	Price	Qty Ordered	Cost
3-5" Rainbow Trout	25 fish for \$29.00	_____	\$ _____
3-5" Brook Trout	25 fish for \$29.00	_____	\$ _____
Name _____			Subtotal \$ _____
Address _____			+ 8.25% Sales Tax \$ _____
City _____	State _____	Zip _____	TOTAL ORDER \$ _____
Phone _____			

Fall Trout Stocking

The District's annual fish stocking program continues with a fall distribution of rainbow and brook trout.

Stocking other fish, even minnows, with trout is not recommended. Most other fishes multiply much more rapidly than trout and will diminish the food supply. Trout feed primarily on insects in the pond.

Trout should be stocked in cold-water ponds that are spring fed. Summertime water temperature should not exceed 70°F. Trout survival is more successful if they are stocked in the fall (after September 30) in

New York ponds. Trout should be stocked at a rate of 600 fall fingerlings per acre (43,560 sq. ft.) of pond surface.

Proper transport of trout is necessary to ensure that the fish enter the pond in good condition. The air temperature should be cool. The trout may need to be acclimated to the pond water if a difference of 5°F exists between the pond water and transport water. The trout will be provided in oxygenated bags of 25 fish per bag.

Additional information about fish stocking can be found in the Cornell Cooperative Extension Information Bulletin #116 *Fish Management in New York Ponds* which can be

purchased at Erie County Cooperative Extension (phone 652-5400 ext 160), or at the District office.

Don't forget, a pond stocking permit from the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) is necessary to stock pond fish. A simple NYS DEC application is available at the District office.

To order trout, please send the above order form and a check or money order payable to Erie County SWCD, 50 Commerce Way, East Aurora, NY 14052. ♦

**Fish will be available for pickup
on October 18, 2003
at 10:00 AM ONLY.**

Ag Construction Continues

The Erie County Soil and Water Conservation District, in partnership with NYS Ag & Markets and USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service, is working with participating farmers in putting conservation practices on the ground throughout the Upper Buffalo River Watershed. This watershed encompasses a large percentage of Erie County and neighboring project partner Wyoming County. The Agricultural Environmental Management (AEM) tiered planning approach was used to identify environmental concerns associated with farming activities and to implement best management practices (BMPs) to reduce the impacts of these concerns on water quality in this watershed.

Two additional farms have completed projects this summer through this cost share program. On one 400-cow dairy operation a milking center waste collection system, a silage leachate collection system and associated filter areas have been installed. The milking center waste collection system consists of a 2000-gallon double cell concrete collection tank to settle out solids that make their way into the system such as milk solids, manure and sediment. Effluent then is directed to a level lip spreader which will induce even distribution of effluent into a grassed filter area. The grass will remove excess nutrients in the effluent before it enters any hydrologically sensitive areas.

The silage leachate collection system consists of adding a concrete apron to the front of an existing bunk silo to direct leachate and runoff to a screened flow separator. The screened flow separator allows the leachate and runoff up to the 25-year 24-hour storm event to enter low and high-flow conduits while keeping chaff from entering the conduits. The most concentrated leachate is collected

in the low-flow conduit and directed to a manure storage lagoon while the high flow is directed to another level lip spreader and grassed filter area.

One circular concrete manure storage lagoon has been constructed for a soon to be 200-cow dairy heifer replacement operation. Soils on the farmstead were not conducive to constructing an earthen manure storage; this left concrete as the only option to collect and hold manure wastes until they could be applied to farmland at correct rates according to a nutrient management plan.

The District applauds these farmers' environmental stewardship and looks forward to assisting other farmers in their conservation efforts. ♦



Concrete manure storage lagoon under construction in the Upper Buffalo River Watershed.

Directors:

Francis Gernatt - At Large
 Jeanne Z. Chase - County Legislator
 David Dale - County Legislator
 Calvin Kohn - Grange
 Stanley Travis - Farm Bureau
 Darlene Vogel - At Large
 Rosemary Bapst - At Large



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 Brian Andrzejewski, Senior Civil Engineer
 Don Stribick, District Technician
 Ellen Hahn Ilardo, Water Quality Technician
 Chris Enser, District Technician
 James Sroka, Water Quality Technician
 Denise Goinski, Account Clerk Typist
 Megan Gollwitzer, Program Assistant
 Philip Mogavero, GIS Analyst

USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service:

John Whitney, District Conservationist
 Michael Shinnick, Area I Ag. Engineer
 Sarah E. Kron, Soil Conservationist

District Board meetings are held at 9:30 AM on the second Wednesday of each month.

Office Hours:

7:30 AM - 5:00 PM Monday through Friday

Conservation Connections is a quarterly publication of the Erie County Soil and Water Conservation District. Advertiser support helps make this newsletter possible. Remember these businesses when you need the products, services and expertise they offer.

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