

SUMMER

## MADISON COUNTY SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

2026

-WELCOME TO OUR NEWSLETTER-

# For Land's Sake

### County Flood Mitigation Project

Wescott Road, along Bradley Brook Reservoir in the Town of Eaton has experienced significant flood damage repeatedly over the past several years. Phase one, completed a couple of years ago, consisted of stream bank stabilization directly above the road to reduce damage. Phase 2, completed recently, was the construction of a stormwater detention basin above the road and homes that were effected during these severe storm events.



*Site at start of construction.*



*Project site post-construction, showing the newly constructed detention basin that will hold back stormwater during severe rain events and slow release it over a 24 hour period reducing damage to homes and roads below.*

### Upcoming events:

7/30/26-8/2/26: Madison County Fair  
8/15/26: Informational Seminar on Wastewater  
Treatment Systems for Waterfront zones  
8/27/26: Soil Health Field Day  
8/26/26-9/7/26: New York State Fair

### In this Newsletter:

Latest projects, upcoming events, new  
employee bios and more.  
Keep Reading!

## Covering up Madison County Soil

"A farmer's productive capacity is directly related to the health of his or her soil," said Iowa crop farmer, Howard Buffet. Farmers across the county are partnering with the district and planting acres of cover crops to meet nutrient management strategies each season. Because of the TMDL pollution diet regulations, resources are being directed to the Upper Susquehanna River Watershed.

Cover crops and their roots reduce erosion and the cost of fertilizer by supplying nutrients to the soil and if planned, can be used as additional forage in the spring. Area-wide, the trend of planting cover crops is going up and is moving from annual and cereal ryes to more mixtures including oats and barley, clover and radishes, and peas and triticale.

Now in its 13th season of planting cover crops, the Madison County Soil and Water Conservation District sowed over 750 acres of certified annual rye in a rain-soaked 2026 fall season. The District used their 15-foot John Deere 750 no-till drill and a rental tractor from Clinton Tractor Company operated by Conservation Technician, Andrew Haslauer. Funding for the Cover Crop Initiative over the last 13 seasons has been provided by The Upper Susquehanna Coalition, NYS DEC, NYS Ag & Mkts, The Finger Lakes-Lake Ontario Watershed Protection Alliance, and participating farmers.

"The success is in the logistics and getting seed in the ground as soon as the corn choppers harvest the first plants", said District Manager Steve Lorraine. Contact the office if you're interested in pursuing cover crops.



## CNY Regional Envirothon



On April 30<sup>th</sup> several local high school students came together at Rogers Center in Sherburne, NY to compete in the 2026 CNY Regional Envirothon. Those students were part of 14 teams that represented 8 different schools from Madison, Chenango, and Onondaga Counties. The students completed tests in forestry, wildlife, soils, aquatics, and a current environmental issue with hopes of having the best score, gaining them bragging rights and a secure place at the NYS Envirothon. The Madison County winning team, "The Basic Birches", from Oneida City School, along with teams from Skaneateles and Greene advanced onto the state competition in Cortland. The Overall winner of the CNY Regional Envirothon was Hemlocked Inn from Skaneateles.

## Cowaselon Creek Grazing Project

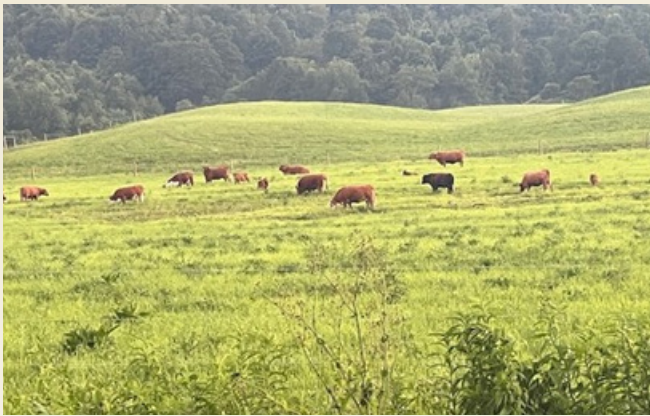
This project installed approximately 10,000 ft of high tensile fence, converting approximately 35 acres of highly erodible cropland to permanent pasture. It also installed a stream crossing, a pond to water the cattle at multiple watering stations through nearly 3000 ft of pipeline, and a cattle exclusion from 1,600 feet of a tributary to the Cowaselon Creek. Funding for this project was supplied by American Farmland Trust, FLOWPA and the farm.



*Watering pond before construction.*



*Pond after construction.*



*Cows grazing after construction.*



*One of multiple watering stations.*

## Ronny Raindrop

Madison County SWCD and Ronny Raindrop© attended Stockbridge Valley Central School's 4th annual STEAM Ahead in the Valley. This year, they were diving deep into the theme "World Seas and Waterways". From the historic local streams in the community to the vast, mysterious reaches of the open ocean. Approximately 300 people attended this high-energy, hands-on event designed for families and community members of all ages.

The District's theme was Barnyard Engineer: The Manure Challenge.

Students were given "building materials" such as craft sticks, aluminum foil, and straws to build a storage pit or barnyard with the goal that when you sprayed water on the cocoa paste "manure", it didn't wash into the nearby blue yarn "stream". The young engineers took their role very seriously.



## **Partnering with the Upper Susquehanna Coalition**

### **Trees for Tributaries**

For the past 20 years, the District has partnered with the Upper Susquehanna Coalition (USC) to protect and improve the water quality of the Upper Susquehanna River basin through various conservation practices. One of these practices is planting riparian buffers using the Trees for Tributaries program. The Trees for Tributaries program is a New York State Department of Environmental Conservation program that is coordinated by the USC to provide landowners with free trees, materials, and technical assistance.

A riparian buffer is a strip of native vegetation that consists of trees, shrubs, and forbs along waterways like streams, rivers, wetlands, and lakes. The goal of the program is to reestablish buffers along NYS tributaries that have been lost throughout the years. Riparian buffers along our tributaries help to reduce erosion and flooding damage, while increasing wildlife and aquatic habitat.

If you have a watercourse on your property and believe you may be eligible for funding, please contact Thomas Conklin at the Madison County Soil and Water Conservation District (315) 824-9849 ext.3446 or by email [thomas-conklin@madcoswcd.com](mailto:thomas-conklin@madcoswcd.com).

To learn more about the Upper Susquehanna Coalition and their initiatives please visit their website at [www.uppersusquehanna.org](http://www.uppersusquehanna.org).



### **Planting with Purpose**

In 2025, the Upper Susquehanna Coalition and The Nature Conservancy piloted a new grant called Planting with Purpose. This grant aims to provide landowners who are located within a member county of the USC but not within the Upper Susquehanna Watershed an opportunity for grant funding for upland tree plantings.

To be eligible for this grant your property must be located within a county that is a USC member. The property must also be privately owned, this includes trusts, individuals, families, and nonprofit organizations. The project area can be between .02 and 2 acres and must not have been forested within the past 10 years. Plantings must be native trees species only, this excludes commercial Christmas tree stock, fruit trees and shrubs, and all native shrub species.

If you believe you may be eligible and have an interest in planting trees on your property, please contact Thomas Conklin at the Madison County Soil and Water Conservation District (315) 824-9849 ext.3446 or by email [Thomas-conklin@madcoswcd.com](mailto:Thomas-conklin@madcoswcd.com).



## Chenango River Waste Storage Project

Working with a farm in the Chenango River watershed to improve waste management capabilities resulted in the construction of a 1.5 million gallon engineered lined earthen waste storage facility. The storage was sized based on the farms comprehensive nutrient management plan allowing for approximately 6 months of storage. This will allow the farm to better utilize the nutrients in the manure for growing crop, reducing synthetic fertilizer usage, and a reduced chance of runoff during land application. The storage is lined with a polyethylene liner similar to those used in landfill applications to protect ground water and incorporates a leak detection system to ensure the system does not become compromised.

Project was designed and installed according to NRCS NY 313 design standards.



*Site work under way.*



*Site work complete with leak detection installed, awaiting liner installation.*



*Polyethelene liner being installed.*



*Project completed. Safety fence installed and ready for use.*

## Battling Water Chestnut in the Oneida Lake Watershed



In 2025, the Madison County Soil and Water Conservation District worked with the other county soil and water districts in the Oneida Lake Watershed and were awarded a grant through the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) for the removal and monitoring of Water Chestnut (*Trapa natans*). This invasive species was first discovered in Oneida Lake in 2000 and soon became widespread throughout the shores of Oneida Lake from Big Bay to South Bay.

Water chestnut is a rooted plant that thrives in slow moving water and creates a thick mat of floating vegetation that invades all depths of freshwater habitats. This large mat of vegetation can reduce the amount of dissolved oxygen in the water and increase the water temperature. Together, these can cause other issues like algae blooms and a loss in aquatic ecosystems. They are mostly known for their spiny seed pods that can be very painful when touched without proper protection.

In July of 2026, members of the district assisted Oneida County SWCD in their Great Lakes Restoration Initiative Kickoff Water Chestnut Hand Pulling Event at the Oneida Lake Brew Haus on Oneida Creek. The event was successful in removing 1,600 pounds of water chestnut from Oneida Creek.

In August of 2026, the district will be supporting Oneida County SWCD with another Water Chestnut pull at the Oneida Lake Brew Haus. If you would like to join us in eradicating this invasive plant or would like to report a sighting, please contact Thomas Conklin at (315)824-9849 or by email at [thomas-conklin@madcoswcd.com](mailto:thomas-conklin@madcoswcd.com). Photos courtesy of Oneida County SWCD





## WATER CHESTNUT

*Trapa natans*  
Origin: Eurasia

**INVASIVE RANKING, NYS**  
Very High

**MANAGEMENT STRATEGY**  
Chemical  
Mechanical  
Physical  
Prevention

**DISTRIBUTION**  
(As of 2/2018)



[www.fingerlakesinvasives.org](http://www.fingerlakesinvasives.org)



Water chestnut is a floating-leaved, annual, aquatic plant. Linear, oppositely arranged submersed leaves are replaced by feathery adventitious roots early in the growing season. On the water surface, the plant forms a rosette of green, glossy, triangular floating leaves with toothed edges and inflated petioles. Plant stems are cord-like and can grow up to 5 m. Small, white, four-petaled flowers bloom from the center of the rosette during the summer, eventually producing large, four-spined seeds.

### HABITAT

Water chestnut grows best in quiet, shallow, high nutrient water bodies with a soft bottom substrate. They prefer waters with an alkaline or neutral pH.

### THREAT

Populations of this species can form very dense mats of interlocking and stacking rosettes. These thick mats completely shade the water column and suppress most other aquatic plant growth in the area. Dense mats also inhibit boating, swimming, and fishing. The seeds are painful when stepped upon.

### MANAGEMENT

Small populations can be controlled by hand pulling the plants prior to seed maturation. Large infestations have been controlled by the use of mechanical harvesters or the application of aquatic herbicides. Biocontrol options are in development. As always, the best management strategy is prevention through education and stewardship. As this species is most commonly spread through fishing and boating equipment, it is important to use precautions such as cleaning, draining, and drying your boat and other aquatic equipment before moving to another water body.

REFERENCE - U.S. Geological Survey. [2017]. Nonindigenous Aquatic Species Database. Gainesville, Florida. Accessed [6/8/2017].

HOBART AND WILLIAM SMITH COLLEGES

FINGER LAKES  
INSTITUTE

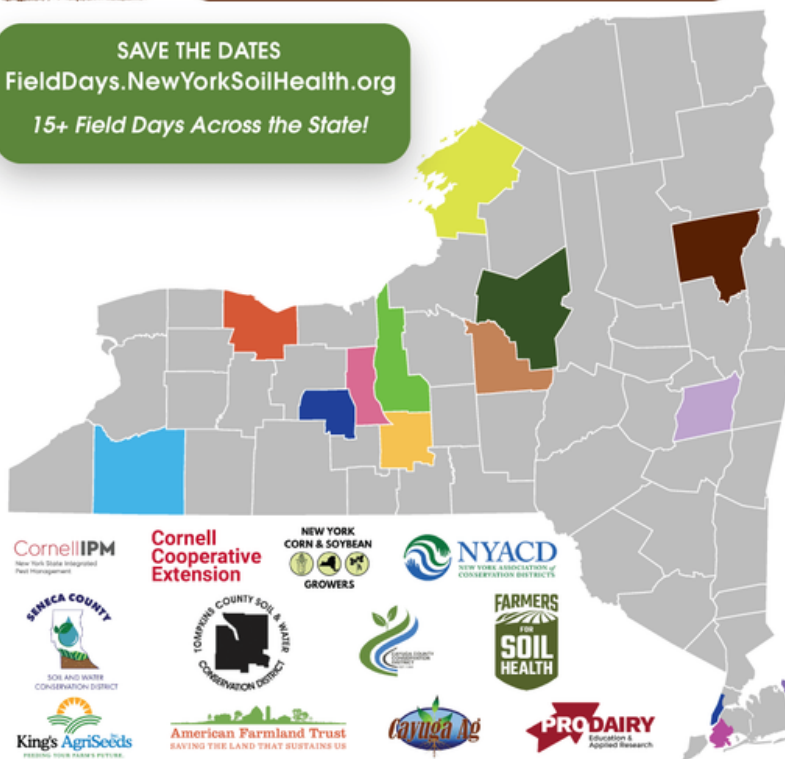


FINGER LAKES  
**PRISM**  
Partnership for Regional  
Invasive Species Management



# 2026 Soil Health FIELD DAYS

SAVE THE DATES  
FieldDays.NewYorkSoilHealth.org  
15+ Field Days Across the State!



Cornell IPM  
New York State Integrated  
Pest Management

Cornell  
Cooperative  
Extension

NEW YORK  
CORN & SOYBEAN  
GROWERS

NYACD  
NEW YORK ASSOCIATION OF  
CONSERVATION DISTRICTS

SENECA COUNTY  
SOIL AND WATER  
CONSERVATION DISTRICT

TOMPKINS COUNTY SOIL & WATER  
CONSERVATION DISTRICT

SENECA COUNTY  
SOIL AND WATER  
CONSERVATION DISTRICT

FARMERS  
FOR  
SOIL  
HEALTH

King's AgriSeeds  
PRESERVING YOUR FARM'S FUTURE

American Farmland Trust  
SAVING THE LAND THAT SUSTAINS US

Cayuga Ag

PRODAIRY  
Education & Applied Research

NEW YORK  
STATE OF  
OPPORTUNITY  
Agriculture  
and Markets

USDA  
United States  
Department of  
Agriculture  
Natural Resources Conservation Service

NOFA-NY  
ASSOCIATION OF FARMERS FOR  
NEW YORK

NEW YORK CENTER FOR  
Organics Recycling  
and Education

Sustainable  
Chesapeake

SENECA COUNTY  
SOIL AND WATER  
CONSERVATION DISTRICT

Cornell CALS  
College of Agriculture and Life Sciences

SCENIC  
HUDSON  
.ORG



June 25 | 9:00 AM – 12:00 PM | Adams, NY  
Sheland Farms (Jefferson Co.)  
Topic: Soil Health & Nutrient Mgmt in Dairy Systems



June 30 | 10:00 AM – 1:00 PM | Farmersville Station, NY  
Nichols Farm (Cattaraugus Co.)  
Topic: Soil Health



July 15 | 6:00 PM – 8:00 PM | New Hartford, NY  
Owens Farm (Oneida Co.)  
Topic: Soil Health & Grazing



July 17 | 4:00 PM – 6:30 PM | Riverhead, NY  
Long Island Hort. & Research Ext. Center (Suffolk Co.)  
Topic: Soil Health in Vegetable & Nursery Production



July 23 | 5:30 PM – 7:30 PM | Ithaca, NY  
Groundswell Farm (Tompkins Co.)  
Topic: Soil Health & Cover Crops



July 24 | 8:30 AM – 4:00 PM | Brooklyn, NY  
Cornell IPM Conf. | Brooklyn Botanic Gardens (Kings Co.)  
Topic: Urban Tree Health



August 4 | 10:00 AM – 1:00 PM | Glenmont, NY  
Bethlehem Environmental Commons (Albany Co.)  
Topic: Soil Health and Cover Crops



August 13 | 9:00 AM – 3:30 PM | Seneca Falls, NY  
Rodman Lott & Son Farms (Seneca Co.)  
Topic: Soil Health & Cover Crops in Field Crops



August 19 | 2:00 PM – 6:00 PM | Penn Yan, NY  
Martens Farm (Yates Co.)  
Topic: Biochar, Agrivoltaics, and Soil Health



August 27 | 9:30 AM – 3:30 PM | Cazenovia, NY  
Gianforte Farm (Madison Co.)  
Topic: Soil Health in Organic Field Crops



September 1 | 4:00 PM – 7:00 PM | Rochester, NY  
Foodlink Farm (Monroe Co.)  
Topic: Urban Soil Health & Heavy Metals



September 17 | 10:00 AM – 2:30 PM | Aurora, NY  
Musgrave Research Farm (Cayuga Co.)  
Topic: Cover Crops and Soil Health



September 30 | 2:00 PM – 5:00 PM | Queensbury, NY  
SUNY Adirondack (Warren Co.)  
Topic: Cover Crops and Soil Health

## NY Soil Health Field Day

Gianforte Farm, 5882 W Lake Rd, Cazenovia, NY

08/27/2026 9:30 am - 3:30 pm

Join us at Gianforte Farms for a NY Soil Health Field Day  
focused on soil health in organic field crop systems.

Free to attend, registration required. <https://www.newyorksoilhealth.org/fielddays/>

### Featuring:

- Dr. Erin Silva, (University of Wisconsin – Madison) – Reducing Tillage in Organic Systems
- Reduced tillage field tour
- Soil pit demo with NRCS
- Precision technology for soil health
- Grain cleaning and value-added processing tour with Luke Gianforte
- Soil Health trailer demos

### Co-sponsors:

Madison County Soil and Water Conservation  
Natural Resources Conservation Service  
CCE CNY Dairy, Livestock and Field Crops Program  
NOFA-NY  
Farmers for Soil Health

## **Please welcome our new employees**



### **Ryan Naughton, Nutrient Management Technician**

Ryan is originally from Huntington, NY and currently resides in Waterville, NY. Ryan graduated from Plymouth State University in New Hampshire with a bachelor's degree in Environmental Science and a G.I.S. minor. After college he worked throughout the western U.S. on wildland fire crews. For the past 6 years he has been working in agriculture with farms throughout New York in the field, in greenhouses, and indoor cultivation. Ryan is a Certified Crop Advisor and is currently working on becoming a certified AEM planner. Ryan operates a vegetable and flower garden at his home. He also enjoys running, fishing, and being the father to his 1-year-old daughter.



### **Jacob Bohnert, District Engineer**

Jake grew up and continues to live in Earlville with his wife and two kids. He grew up helping on his family and friends' farms around southern Madison County before going off to college at Clarkson University, graduating with a Civil Engineering degree.

After spending 10 years in the commercial engineering and construction industry he returned to his local community to serve the rural public through conservation efforts.

In his off time, he can be found wandering through the woods preparing for the next hunting season or working with his family on their maple syrup operation.



### **Rebekah Cullen - Seasonal Employee**

Rebekah Cullen is from Stockbridge. She will be attending Paul Smith's College this fall, where she will major in Environmental Science. Bekah loves all things science, community and the outdoors. In her free time, she participates in FFA events, playing sports, hiking, kayaking, camping, gardening and giving back to her community.

**INFORMATIONAL SEMINAR**  
**ONSITE WASTEWATER TREATMENT SYSTEMS FOR WATERFRONT ZONES**  
*What Lakefront Homeowners Need to Know*

- Types of septic systems: pros/cons of each
- Recent technologies for phosphorus removal
- Design, location, and installation considerations
- Regulations and permits
- Homeowner's maintenance responsibilities
- Lake-health connection



**Jim Cunningham**  
 Chairman of Madison County Board of Supervisors and Town of Nelson Supervisor

**Steve Lorraine**  
 District Manager for Madison County Soil & Water Conservation District

**August 15, 2026**  
 10:00 AM - 12:00 PM

**Madison Hall**  
 100 Main St., Morrisville

*Parking is across the street.  
 Two handicap parking spaces next to the building.*

*Hosted by Madison County Federation of Lake Associations*



Don't forget to visit us at the Great New York State Fair! Staff from our office will be at the NYS Conservation District Employees' Association booth on September 4th, sharing information with attendees about Soil & Water Conservation Districts across New York State, including the programs, services, and funding opportunities available. We look forward to seeing you there! The fair runs from August 26th to September 7<sup>th</sup>

**District Staff**

Steve Lorraine  
 District Manager

Carl Bartlett  
 District Technician

Jake Bohnert  
 District Engineer

Joann Burke  
 Agricultural Program Specialist

Thomas Conklin  
 Program Specialist

Rebekah Cullen  
 Seasonal Employee

Andrew Haslauer  
 District Technician

Amy Hayduke  
 District Clerk

Jessica Heim  
 Nutrient Management Planner

Ryan Naughton  
 Nutrient Management Technician

**NRCS Staff**

Evan Sweeney  
 Resource Conservationist

**SWCD Board of Directors**

Cedric Barnes III, Chairman  
 At-large Farming Public Rep

Allen Hough, Vice-Chair  
 Farm Bureau Rep.

Dana Krueger  
 County Legislator

TJ Stokes  
 County Legislator

Charlie Pace  
 Non-Farming Rep



**MADISON COUNTY SOIL & WATER  
 CONSERVATION DISTRICT**

6503 Wes Rd, Hamilton, NY 13346  
 Phone: 315-824-9849    [madcoswcd.com](http://madcoswcd.com)

All programs and services of the Madison County Soil and Water Conservation District and the Natural Resource Conservation Service are offered on a nondiscrimination basis, without regard to race, color, national origin, religion, sex, age, married status, or disability.