



# St. Lawrence County Soil & Water Conservation District

2020 Annual Newsletter



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## AGRICULTURE

### Soil Health for Dairy Farms Field Day

In August the St. Lawrence County Soil and Water Conservation District, in cooperation with the Cornell Cooperative Extension North Country Regional Ag Team, organized a Soil Health for Dairy Farms Field Day. This took place at the McKnight's River Breeze Farm in Madrid to allow for equipment demonstrations in an open field. Speakers included Kitty O'Neil & Mike Hunter from the Ag Team and Joe Lawrence from Cornell Pro-Dairy as well as an expert farmer panel that included Travis McKnight, Jacob Fisher and Dave Magos.

The talks and discussions about soil health practices were targeted towards dairy farms, but the information was valuable to all. In an article by Kitty O'Neil about soil health, she says dairy farms have a tougher time implementing cover crops and reduced tillage cropping methods compared to mid-western style crop farms with no livestock as there are compaction issues, shorter growing seasons and manure applications to deal with here on dairy farms.

Despite a little bit of rain, attendance was high (38 people in attendance including farmers, consultants and technical specialists) and the speakers and discussion panel were well received, there was great discussion amongst the farmers both on the panel and in attendance. The group discussion included methods and strategies that some of the dairy farmers have been experimenting with such as modifying existing planters to incorporate no-till practices.

The District and the Ag Team will be working on another Soil Health for Dairy Farms Field Day to be put on in the next year or two...stay tuned!



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# AGRICULTURE

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## Cover Crops

In 2019, the St. Lawrence County Soil & Water Conservation District was able to secure funding to implement around 207 acres of cover crops in fields that were currently in row crops. The fields were successfully planted in September and October with winter rye and showed signs of growth by November.

Planting cover crops is a very beneficial practice for soil health and productivity. Cover Crops help reduce erosion from wind and water, maintain or increase soil health and organic matter and reduce water quality degradation by utilizing excessive soil nutrients. They also help to suppress excessive weed pressures and break pest cycles, improve soil moisture use efficiency, and minimize soil compaction.

There is potential for funding in 2020. If you are interested in participating call our office and we will add you to the call list if funding becomes available. Priority will be given to producers that have not previously participated in the cover crop program with us before. Participation in our Agriculture Environmental Program is required.



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# EDUCATION

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## Summer Internship

Each year the District hires a summer intern to assist the staff with fieldwork relating to our programs. In 2019, the District hired Daniel Dominy who was a freshman at St. Lawrence University.

Summer interns learn the principles and practices of natural resource conservation on private and public lands while assisting the staff and working with a variety of people from the agricultural community, schools, local government and private landowners. The focus of the internship is on the monitoring of wetland easements by —organizing, scheduling, and record keeping of onsite evaluations. Other duties include education and outreach programs such as the St. Lawrence County Fair, and supporting the Agricultural Environmental Management Program by collecting data, creating maps in ArcGIS and field work such as soil sampling and stream crossing assessments.

Keep an eye out for our announcement of internships available in 2020.

# EDUCATION

## Envirothon



St. Lawrence, Franklin, Essex and Clinton Counties make up the North Adirondack Regional Envirothon. High school students from these counties come together at the beginning of May to compete in the event focusing on Wildlife, Aquatics, Soils, Forestry, and current environmental issues. The top Team for each county goes on to compete against other teams in the NYS Envirothon.

The 2019 St. Lawrence County winning team was from Canton High School. Pictured from left to right are Daniel Laddison, Jacob Tyler, Cooper Stuntz, Abrinel Seeder and Hannah Tupper.

## iMapInvasive Training

In July the St. Lawrence County Soil & Water Conservation District organized an iMapInvasive Training conducted by Megan Pistolet from SLELO-PRISM that took place at St. Lawrence University's Wachtmeister Field Station in Canton. The training included an indoor session covering invasive species identification, online iMap 3.0, and an introduction to the mobile app with a hands on field session!

Nyimapinvasives.org is New York State's online mapping tool and database for invasive species observation and coordination. Early detection of invasive species is critical to help reduce their impacts. With invasive species in our area, such as the Emerald Ash Borer, and new ones on the horizon, reporting observations will be a key component in reducing their spread and impact!



## Erosion & Sediment Control Class

Last April, the St. Lawrence County Soil & Water Conservation District organized the 4-Hour Erosion & Sediment Control Training which took place at the Gouverneur Community Center. Dave Mosher from Fulton County came up to teach the class, with 36 people in attendance!

This training is required under the NYS DEC's Stormwater Permit for all developers, contractors and subcontractors. At least one trained contractor must be represented from the company that will be responsible for implementation and on site daily when soil disturbance activities are performed.

The certificates from this training are valid for three years, so we plan on organizing another training in 2022!



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# EDUCATION

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## Conservation in the Schools Grant

This was the first year that a funding opportunity was available to St. Lawrence County Schools to apply for a grant to allow students to do an environmental conservation or environmental education project. The mission of this grant was to engage students with hands on learning about the environment and environmental conservation. Any K-12 school group could fill out an application to apply with an environmental conservation or environmental education project proposal.

Keep an eye out in 2020, if funding is available, we will offer another grant opportunity! It's not too early to start thinking about project ideas now. Other project ideas can include but are not limited to invasive species removal, cleaning up a public area, building and putting up bird, duck or bat boxes, setting up a compost bin, water sampling and many more!

Check out below what this years grant recipients did!

### 2019 Conservation Grant Recipients

Carol Wright, a teacher from Canton School applied for and was awarded a grant to plant fruit trees and berry plants with her Agricultural classes, FFA and Green Team. Students started with soil samples to make sure the site was suitable for trees, and then learned about proper planting techniques and maintenance.

When fruit is produced, it will go to the schools cafeteria and be offered as part of lunch and breakfast options benefiting all grade levels! The students planted four apple trees, two cherry trees and over a dozen raspberry plants!



Megan Smith, a teacher from Canton School applied for and was awarded a grant to create a pollinator garden with the schools Green Team. This project fit in perfectly with the Team's mission which is to educate their members and others about way to help and protect the environment. Students had an additional component of applying practical math skills into the project by measuring dimensions, calculating volume and creating a project budget!

The Green Team will be maintaining the garden and it will serve as an educational space and living, learning laboratory! The garden location will be accessible to the entire school community to enjoy.

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# COMMUNITY PROGRAMS

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## St. Lawrence County Fair

Staff brought two fun activities to the 2019 St. Lawrence County fair. The first day kids learned about pollinators and habitats, they made bees and a bee hotel to take home!

The second day kids participated in tree identification of a few native tree species by labeling 'wood cookies' and coloring sheets to take home with them!



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## Agricultural Value Assessments - Possible Tax Reductions!

The St. Lawrence County SWCD is accepting applications for the agricultural value assessment program. If you own or rent land that is used for agricultural purposes, you may qualify for an agricultural assessment. This program generates a report based on the productivity of the soil types on your property. Your tax assessor then uses the information to determine whether you qualify for a reduction in property taxes. It's important to remember that only land used in agricultural practices qualifies for the assessment and a reduction in taxes is not guaranteed. Talk to your assessor to determine whether you qualify for an assessment.

Applications for the program are due to your assessor by March 1st. It may take the Soil and Water Conservation District some time to do the necessary paperwork, so please start the process early. There is a fee of \$30 for each tax parcel and a late fee of \$10 for each parcel submitted after February 15th.

If you are already enrolled in the program, make sure to fill out your annual renewal form if nothing has changed. You can find the renewal form at [taxny.gov](http://taxny.gov) or stop by our office to pick up a copy.

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## Agricultural Environmental Management

AEM is a voluntary, incentive-based program that helps farmers operate environmentally sound and economically viable businesses. The primary goal is to protect and enhance the environment while maintaining the viability of agriculture in New York.

This program supports agriculture of all types and sizes such as dairy, beef, sheep, fruit and vegetable, forestry, green houses, pastures, hay fields, vineyards and more.

All information collected for this program is confidential, state law protects the confidentiality of AEM plans, on-farm surveys, and assessments.

Common conservation and best management practices planned to address resource concerns include but are not limited to: Barnyard Water Management Systems, Nutrient Management Planning, Waste Storage Facilities, Prescribed Grazing, Soil Management and Erosion Control

Benefits to farmers and the environment includes but is not limited to: Manage manure and fertilizer nutrients, Manage barnyard runoff and process wastewater, Conserve soil, Protect drinking water

### Getting Started

The first step is to call our office and set up a free, confidential risk assessment. This will start with a questionnaire to identify current activities, future plans and potential environmental concerns.

An onsite risk assessment can then be conducted to document current environmental stewardship while identifying and prioritizing environmental concerns.



# FORESTRY

## Emerald Ash Borer Update

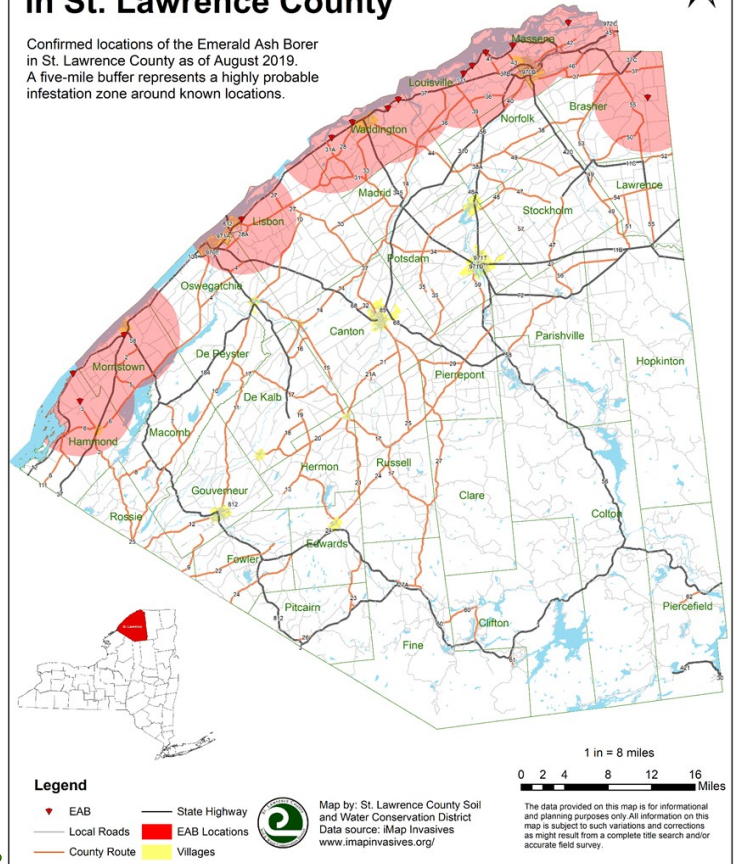
The invasive beetle, the Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) has now been detected in St. Lawrence County in the towns of Hammond, Morristown, Lisbon, Waddington, Louisville, Massena, and Brasher. These findings are a result of the combined efforts of the St. Lawrence County EAB Taskforce, the NYS DEC Division of Forest Health and Protection, National Grid, the Saint Regis Mohawk Tribe Environment Division, and Franklin and St. Lawrence County SWCD's through detection methods utilizing green funnel traps and sentinel trees placed across the county. With its presence in St. Lawrence County, woodlot owners, homeowners, and municipalities alike will need to plan and prepare for the destructive force this forest pest presents.

EAB infested ash trees quickly decline within 3 to 5 years and lose almost all of their structural integrity, making them very likely to fall/collapse which makes them extremely hazardous.

St. Lawrence County residents and municipalities are encouraged to reach out to the St. Lawrence County Soil and Water Conservation District for guidance on preparing for EAB and the resources that are available. Please contact Aaron Barrigar at (315) 386-3582 for more information.

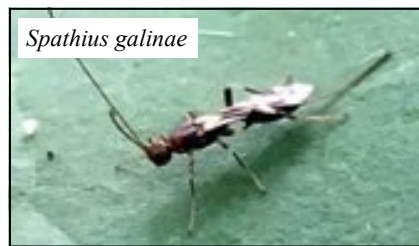
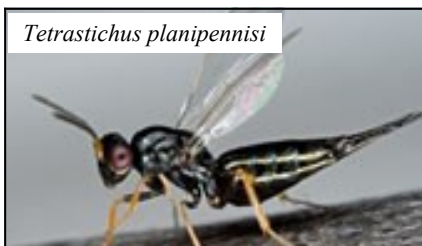
## Known Locations of EAB in St. Lawrence County

Confirmed locations of the Emerald Ash Borer in St. Lawrence County as of August 2019. A five-mile buffer represents a highly probable infestation zone around known locations.



## EAB Biological Control

EAB Biocontrol Parasitoids; these three insects are natural enemies of EAB which parasitize EAB eggs and larvae and help to keep EAB populations in check.



The SLC SWCD is joining the efforts of the U.S. Forest Service and USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) through the EAB Biological Control Program. This program involves the release of natural insect enemies or "parasitoids" of EAB, to help reduce EAB populations in specific areas. There are currently three different species of parasitoids that have been approved for release in the United States since 2007. Release of EAB parasitoids has begun in many infested areas throughout the U.S. and are now establishing and spreading. These introduced parasitoids, along with woodpeckers and native parasitoids, will help in protecting the regenerating ash saplings and young trees of the next generations forest.

These are a few of the efforts that the St. Lawrence County Soil & Water Conservation District is attempting to complete to help the residents of the County with this invasive beetle. To learn more about EAB, how to identify it, and recommendations and resources, check out the NYS DEC's website at: <https://www.dec.ny.gov/animals/7253.html>.

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# FORESTRY

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## We've Got EAB, Now What?

### **Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) Projects through the St. Lawrence County Soil & Water Conservation District (SLC SWCD)**

We have been hearing a lot about the Emerald Ash borer (EAB) for over a decade now; how it got here and what could be done to help prevent its spread, such as not moving firewood or “burn it where you buy it”. In 2017 it was discovered in St. Lawrence County and has been spreading along the St. Lawrence River and the Canadian border ever since. There is no stopping EAB in our County at this point, but we can help slow the spread and reduce some of the impacts it presents. As part of the mission of the SLC SWCD, our staff helps landowners and municipalities care for their natural resources and we have put a large focus on ways to assist with EAB mitigation. The District currently has four projects that target EAB which include: Reducing Outlier Populations of EAB Project, Right-of-Way Ash Tree Assessment Project, Public Ash Tree Replacement Assistance Program, and Urban Tree Resource Inventory to Increase Municipal Readiness for EAB.

#### Reducing Outlier Populations of Emerald Ash Borer and the Progression of Ash Mortality in St. Lawrence County

The goal of this project is to slow the progression of ash mortality and reduce the rate at which EAB populations build and expand from known infestations in St. Lawrence County. This is done by creating annual trap tree clusters around infested sites, allowing clusters to become infested, and then removing the infested trees to reduce the size of EAB populations. This project is comprised of several tiers of action; a delimitation survey around the initial EAB discovery location, a characterization of the size and extent of the infestation, notification to landowners and municipalities within the known infested areas, and the annual creation of clusters of girdled trap trees around the outer limits of the infestations. The “trap” trees encourage adult EAB to lay their eggs in the girdled trees which are then removed, destroying EAB larvae life stages before they can become adults and disperse/reproduce the next emergence season. This essentially attempts to hold EAB populations within the known infested extents as long as possible and reduce its outward expansion into the surrounding, non-infested areas. This management tactic will take place on lands surrounding known infestations and consist of establishing trap tree clusters just ahead of these infestations to reduce the outward expansion of population growth. This effort will continue until the generally-infested area in the County becomes so large that this approach is deemed ineffective. This project will not eradicate EAB, nor will it eliminate tree mortality, it will simply slow the local invasion process and allow local land owners, towns and villages time to be proactive in budgeting, treatment or removal of often overwhelming numbers of hazardous trees.

#### St. Lawrence County Right-of-Way Ash Tree Assessment Project

The purpose of this project is to preemptively mitigate impacts of the Emerald Ash Borer for public safety and accessibility along 574 miles of roadway in St. Lawrence County. All species of ash trees are susceptible to EAB with a 99.8% mortality rate. Once ash trees are infested, they become extremely hazardous very quickly, losing 80% of their structural integrity within 3-5 years. Because of this, it is important to take a prioritized, preemptive approach in removing or treating ash trees before they become too dangerous to do so. An inventory and assessment of ash trees along right-of-way's as well as any within striking distance of roadways will take place this summer. From this information, a database will be created of ash trees that will become a hazard to public safety and a liability to municipalities after the inevitable infestation of the emerald ash borer. This inventory will help facilitate realistic management of EAB by prioritizing removals, identifying trees to potentially treat, and budgeting for either treatment or removal.

This project was completed this past summer, a total of 11,856 ash trees and 3,144 hazard trees were found to be within striking distance of county routes. These trees occurred on an average of 25.6 trees per mile and will be scheduled for either removal or treatment over the next several years in accordance with a multi year action plan.

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# FORESTRY

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## St. Lawrence County Public Ash Tree Replacement Assistance Program

In partnership with the City of Ogdensburg Department of Public Works, the Ogdensburg Parks & Recreation Department and the St. Lawrence County Emerald Ash Borer Task Force, the SLC SWCD put on a tree planting workshop that took place near the Dobisky Center in Ogdensburg this past November. This public workshop, led by Paul Hetzler, ISA Certified Arborist, focused on proper tree selection, planting techniques, and how to maintain and care for trees into the future.

This tree planting event arose from concern that the ash trees within the city would be lost to the invasive beetle, the Emerald Ash Borer and would need to be replaced. With the help of community volunteers, Ogdensburg DPW and Parks & Recreation, 20 new trees were planted to replace 12 ash trees that were preemptively removed along the downtown Arterial. A variety of native tree species were selected to replace the ash trees including Kentucky Coffeetree, Honey Locust, Burr Oak, and Shagbark Hickory. These species were selected for this planting location because of their tolerance to high soil pH, salt spray from the roadway, and drought resistance.

These new trees will aid in diversifying the city's urban tree population, increase local stormwater runoff capacity, and help beautify a widely used roadway.



## St. Lawrence County Urban Tree Resource Inventory; Increase Municipal Readiness for EAB

This summer the Village of Potsdam began an inventory of their village owned trees with help from the District's forester. This tree inventory will help outline overall management, budgeting, and long-term planning for the village's urban forest and provide valuable information for the land managers and decision makers of Potsdam. It will also provide a better understanding of current state of the urban forest and help with mitigating public safety issues, leverage funding for future tree maintenance and management activities, and qualify the village for future grant funding opportunities.

A tree inventory and management plan were created in 1999 to help manage the urban forest after the devastating ice storm of 98'. This new inventory and management plan is intended to be an update to this previous document and provide the Village of Potsdam with a comprehensive survey, which will include the location, species, diameter, % die-back, health assessment, and recommendations for maintenance of every village owned tree, along with other information such as new potential planting locations, and recommended tree species.

The inventory and management plan are expected to be completed this coming summer.

