

www.slcswcd.org

St. Lawrence County Soil & Water Conservation District

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2023

Annual Newsletter

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AGRICULTURE

Agricultural Environmental Management

AEM is a voluntary, incentive-based program that helps farmers make environmentally sound and economically viable decisions. The primary goal is to protect and enhance the environment while maintaining the viability of agriculture in New York. The program coordinates agricultural and environmental conservation agencies and programs as well as consultants to provide the most up to date information and create site-specific plans. AEM uses a 5-tiered approach to develop and implement comprehensive, site-specific plans.

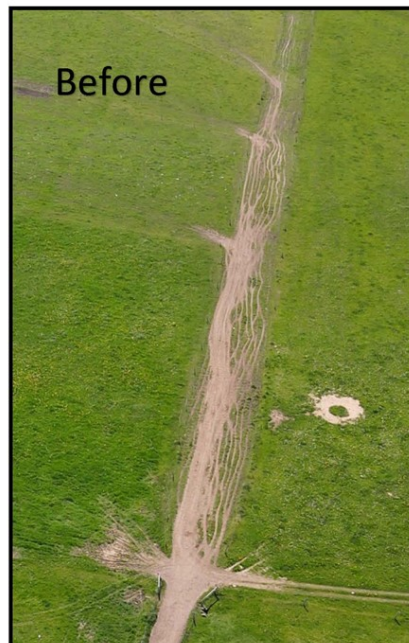
All information collected for this program is confidential, state law protects the confidentiality of AEM plans, on-farm surveys, and assessments.

Common conservation and best management practices planned to address resource concerns include but are not limited to: Nutrient Management, Waste Storage Systems, Prescribed Grazing, Cover Crops, and Erosion Control Systems.

Most recent plans from our office include comprehensive nutrient management plans, nutrient management plan updates, cover crop plans and prescribed grazing plans. Contact our technician Jevonnah Foster for more information on planning! Email: Jevonnah@slcswcd.org

Erosion Control System—Trail & Walkways

The St. Lawrence County Soil & Water Conservation District was able to secure funding through the NYS Agricultural Environmental Management Base Program Technical Assistance Track to help cost share the implementation of an animal walkway. The successful construction of the walkway facilitates the movement of dairy cattle in a rotational grazing system. The plan was designed in the spring of 2022 after the farms Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plan (CNMP) recommended this best management practice to address the resource concerns of soil erosion and water quality degradation.



Before



After

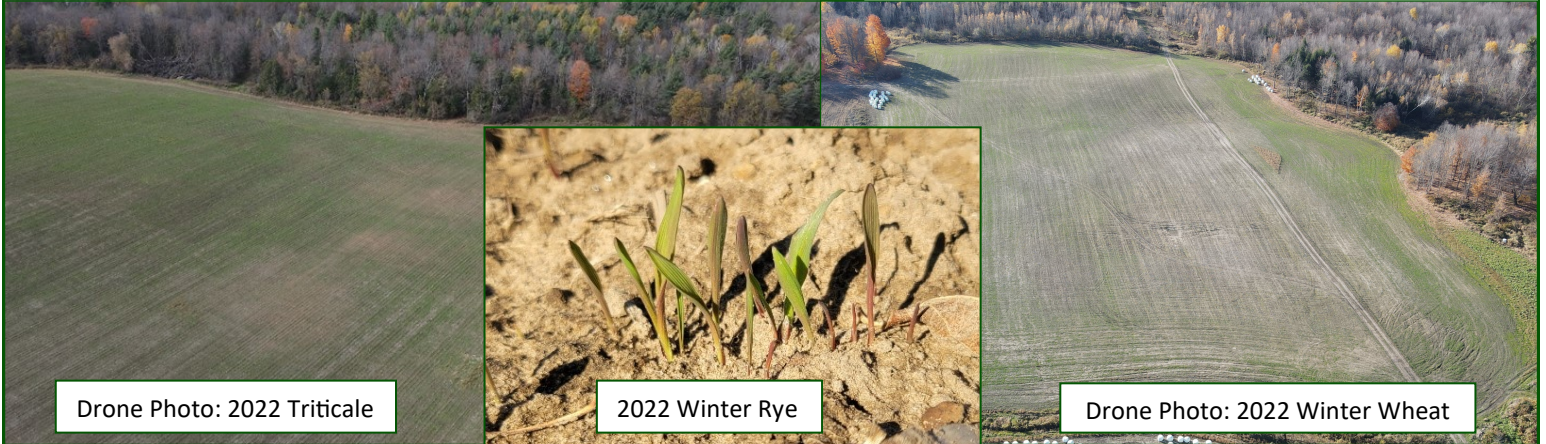
**AGRICULTURAL
ENVIRONMENTAL
MANAGEMENT**

Cover Crops

This fall, 2022, the St. Lawrence County Soil & Water Conservation District was able to secure funding from two different sources to help cost-share the implementation of approximately 390 acres. Funds were secured through the NYS Part-C funds and the NYS Agricultural Environmental Management Base Program Technical Assistance Track. The fields, which were in row crops this year and will be row crops next year, were successfully planted in late September and early October following the written cover crop plan and were showing signs of growth by November.

Planting cover crops is an important practice for soil health and crop productivity. There are many benefits to planting them such as improving crop diversity, reducing wind and water erosion, building stable soil aggregates, improving soil organic matter, supporting beneficial insects and breaking pest-insect cycles, nutrient cycling, nitrogen fixating, adjusting carbon/nitrogen ratios, integrating livestock, and can also be beneficial to wildlife in winter. This is a best management practice

Many times, after trying cover crops through cost-share funding opportunities, producers realize the benefits firsthand and they continue to implement this best management practice on a majority, if not all their fields.



FORESTRY

Trail Improvement on Parcel 25

Trail maintenance was recently completed on county reforestation land in Stockholm at parcel 25. The goal was to promote public use of the parcel while protecting it from negative environmental impacts that can occur from increased use. Partnering with the Town of Stockholm Highway Department, a handicapped accessible parking area and path was created to provide fishing access to Trout Brook. SWCD Staff cleared brush and downed trees, pruned branches, and installed foot-trail markers along the hiking trail. Intermittent stream crossings, such as bridges and rock paths, were installed as well to allow for easy passage over wetter areas along the 0.6-mile loop trail.

This trail runs along the Trout Brook, which is fed from the West branch of the St. Regis River and stocked with trout yearly. Three-tenths of a mile of new trail was added along the ridge; bench cuts were used to flatten steep sections to make for easier hiking. 150 live stakes were planted along the riverside to reduce erosion, as well as by the parking area to diversify wetland species in the parcel. This trail now provides accessible river views, trout fishing, and a quick and easy half mile hike.



Forestry

Emerald Ash Borer Mitigation Along County Roadways

The Emerald Ash Borer (EAB), an insect that infests and kills Ash trees, has been found throughout St. Lawrence County. There is no cost-effective treatment that will save our Ash trees stands from this insect. While the inevitable death of these trees is a sadness for our region, the EAB infestation is already creating a hazardous situation for travelers, road crews, and homeowners, and it will only get worse as the infestation spreads. The removal of ash trees within County highway bounds will begin in the fall of 2022 under the supervision of the St. Lawrence County Soil & Water Conservation District.

The State has estimated that approximately 8% of the trees in St. Lawrence County are ash. EAB attacks all species of ash trees and feeds on the living parts of the trees, just under the bark. This damages the trees nutrient-conducting tissues, causing it to starve and inevitably die, typically within 2-7 years. Dead and dying ash trees are susceptible to branch and trunk failure, causing them to become a hazard. Tree removal must be managed proactively prior to or just after infestation to reduce risks to the public and hired tree removal contractors. For more information about EAB and how and why it is killing ash trees across the County, go to the US Forest Service's Emerald Ash Borer website: www.emeraldashborer.info

Local agencies and the St. Lawrence County EAB Task Force - a group of experts, regulators, educators, municipalities, utility company representatives, and others - have been monitoring the movement of EAB and now recommend that efforts be taken to reduce the impacts of EAB. An inventory of ash trees along approximately 574 miles of County highway bounds has been conducted and has identified ash trees within these rights-of-way.

The options available to the County to protect the safety of those using County Routes from dead and dying ash trees is to either remove the trees before they die and become a hazard or treat them with pesticides every few years indefinitely. Based on the number of ash trees and the cost of treatments, it is not feasible to implement treatments on such a large scale. St. Lawrence County is following the recommendations to remove ash trees within its highway bounds, with a goal of doing so before they die and become a hazard to the traveling public.

The Soil & Water Conservation District will follow the progression of EAB and target ash trees that are infested, dying, or already dead. These trees are likely to become a safety hazard sooner than other ash trees in the County.



County Forestland Inventory and Management Plan Update

This past year, SWCD staff have been busy conducting forest inventory on the 4,200 acres of county owned reforestation land. This is the second and final year of collecting all of the in the field data on forest health, composition, wildlife habitat, timber volume, tree density, recreation, and carbon storage were collected. This information will present insight into the needs of the forest and be used to write a forest management plan.

When complete, the forest management plan will provide a resource assessment and schedule for how the forest will be used, protected, and maintained over time.



Community Programs

North Adirondack Regional Envirothon

St. Lawrence, Franklin, Essex and Clinton Counties make up the North Adirondack Regional Envirothon (NARE). 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 from each county goes on to compete against other teams in the NYS Envirothon.

Pictured to the right is the 2022 St. Lawrence County winning team from Colton-Pierrepont Central School. Pictured from L to R are: Amanda Woods, Maura Richards, Noah Rousell, Alannah Long, and Jaleigh Jacot.



District Staff Changes

2022 brought about a few staff changes with the hiring of two new employees and the retirement of Liz Gallup who served as our Secretary/Treasurer for many years. We were sad to see her go but wish her the best in her new journey!

McKenzie Church—Secretary/Treasurer

McKenzie was hired as the St. Lawrence County Soil and Water Conservation District Secretary/Treasurer in August of 2022..

Heidi Knafelc—District Technician

Heidi was hired as the St. Lawrence County Soil and Water Conservation District Technician in August of 2022 after interning with the District for two years. She graduated from Paul Smith's College with a B.S. in Wildlife Science and a minor in Botany.

USDA-NRCS

WHAT ABOUT NRCS?



The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) offers technical and financial assistance for a wide variety of conservation practices aimed to help farmers, ranchers, and forest landowners. This year alone, the St. Lawrence County NRCS office has funded projects for high tunnels, conservation forestry, as well as manure storage and farmstead water management. We offer a variety of short-term contracts through EQIP (Environmental Quality Incentives Program) and CSP (Conservation Stewardship Program); as well as long-term and perpetual contracts through ACEP (Agricultural Conservation Easement Program).

Don't let the acronyms hold you back! All it takes is a call to your local NRCS office to receive a one-on-one consultation and discuss your vision for your property. NRCS can evaluate your current management systems and assess the natural resources on your land. From there you'll work together with the NRCS planner to develop a conservation plan that addresses the identified resource concerns.

NRCS HIGH TUNNEL PROGRAM

Do you currently manage a garden? Do you sell vegetables at a local farmers market, or operate a small farm stand? Would like to extend the growing season? The NRCS High Tunnel initiative may be a fit for you.

A high tunnel, also commonly called a "hoop house," protects plants from severe weather and allows farmers to extend their growing seasons – growing earlier into the spring, later into the fall, and sometimes, year-round. And because high tunnels prevent direct rainfall from reaching plants, farmers can use precise tools like drip irrigation to efficiently deliver water and nutrients to plants. High tunnels also offer farmers a greater ability to control pests and can even protect plants from pollen and pesticide drift.

If you'd like more information or to discuss the ways NRCS may be of service to you please, check out our website or contact me directly by email or phone.

CONTACT

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