



www.slcswcd.org

St. Lawrence County Soil & Water Conservation District

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Fall 2024 Newsletter

STAFF

New Staff:

Alivia Bleau, District Manager: Alivia joined the St. Lawrence County Soil and Water Conservation District in July of 2024. She holds an Associates of Science in Environmental Science and a Bachelors in Conservation Biology from SUNY ESF. Alivia brings a deep passion for environmental stewardship, with particular interests in water quality, habitat restoration, and the preservation of rare and threatened species.



Existing Staff:

Aaron Barrigar, District Forester – A Forester and Certified Arborist with an extensive knowledge of trees and tree diseases. He manages the county forests, creates forest management plans for landowners, works with local governments on urban forest management, and helps with most tree related questions.

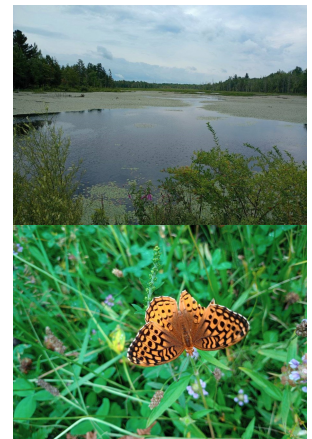
Jevonnah Foster, District Technician – A Certified Crop Advisor (CCA) and nutrient management specialist. She regularly assists farmers and landowners in trouble-shooting resource concerns, developing plans, and helping to obtain funding through state and federal cost-share programs.

Heidi Knafelc, District Technician – Our in-house pro at creating soil maps for Agricultural Assessments. She assists residents in completing applications for Agricultural Assessments and will be heading up new outreach opportunities.

And **Melissa Woods, Secretary/Assistant Treasurer** – Our expert switchboard technician (Secretary/Treasurer). For all the calls we receive that we cannot answer – she aids in directing a question to where it needs to go.

Summer Intern:

Sarah Manning, Wetland Reserve Program (WRP) Intern— Sarah worked for our office from June to October as our Wetland Reserve Program Intern. Her main focus was monitoring wetland easements throughout St. Lawrence County. She also helped other staff and with other district programs including soil sampling, county forest work, culvert monitoring and reporting, and more! She was a valuable asset to our team.



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. Once a farm has a plan, they can become eligible to apply for cost-share funding through a state and/or government cost-share programs such as the AEM program (state), the Climate Resilient Farming Program (state), the Agricultural Non-Point Source and Abatement Program (state) and the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP-government) just to name a few!

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

Common conservation plans 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. Contact Jevonnah Foster for more information on planning and cost-share funding opportunities at jevonnah@slcswcd.org

Climate Resilient Farming

St. Lawrence County Soil and Water was awarded 3 different Climate Resilient Farming (CRF) grants for 3 different farms. The CRF grant program provides cost-share assistance to farmers to mitigate the impact of agriculture on climate change while enhancing the farms adaptations and resiliency to projected climate conditions such as intense storm events, heavy rain fall, and drought. It is competitive funding awarded through Soil and Water Conservation District for waste storage, water management, and soil health systems. SLC SWCD was awarded a total of \$411,129 to implement these different projects.

Cover Crop Program

The SLC SWCD was able to secure funding from two different sources to help cost-share the implementation of approximately 300 acres. Funds were secured through the NYS Part-C funds and the NYS Agricultural Environmental Management Base Program Technical Assistance Track.

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.

After trying cover crops through cost-share funding opportunities, producers realize the benefits firsthand and they continue to implement this best management practice on their fields when rotations and weather allow.

Three different corn silage fields with winter rye establishment 2023.



FORESTRY

Emerald Ash Borer Mitigation Along County Roadways

The Emerald Ash Borer (EAB), a destructive insect that infests and kills ash trees, has been found throughout St. Lawrence County, creating significant challenges for both the environment and public safety. Unfortunately, there is no large scale, cost-effective treatment available to prevent the infestation from destroying the region's ash trees. EAB feeds on the living tissues beneath the bark, which damages the tree's ability to transport nutrients, eventually leading to its death, typically within 3 to 5 years. This widespread loss of ash trees poses an increasing hazard, as dead and dying trees become prone to branch and trunk failures, endangering travelers, road crews, and homeowners.



The St. Lawrence County Soil & Water Conservation District (SLC SWCD) began removing ash trees along county highways in the fall of 2022 to address the growing safety risks. An inventory of trees along 574 miles of County highway rights-of-way identified ash trees that need to be prioritized for removal. Given the large number of affected trees and the high cost of insecticide treatments, treating all trees is not a feasible solution. As a result, the County is focusing on removing ash trees before they die and become a hazard.

Local agencies, regulators, educators, and other stakeholders recommend proactive tree removal to reduce risks and protect public safety. While the loss of ash trees is unfortunate, these efforts aim to mitigate the dangers posed by dead and dying trees, ensuring a safer environment for the community as the infestation continues to progress.

To date, 397 miles of county routes have been cleared of ash and other hazard trees within the county roadway bounds.



For more information about EAB and how and why it is killing ash trees across the County, go to the US Forest Service's EAB website: www.emeraldashborer.info.

Forest Management Plans

For landowners interested in knowing more about their forest, how to manage it, or would like to apply for incentive programs, SWCD offers forest inventory and management plan services to landowners with private forestlands between 5-500 acres. After a consultation and site visit, SWCD staff will conduct a forest inventory assessing tree species, timber quality, wildlife habitat,

and other resources. Using this data and the landowner's goals and objectives, a customized forest management plan is created to promote sustainable practices, enhance forest stewardship, and address resource concerns surrounding streams, wetlands, invasive species and endangered species.

After completion, landowners will have access to various incentive programs such as US Forest Service's Forest Stewardship Program, the American Forest Foundation's American Tree Farm System, Forest Carbon Programs, 480a Forest Tax Law, Regenerate NY, and the Natural Resources Conservation Service incentive programs.

This year, staff completed 8 forest management plans for forest owners throughout the county on 1,918 acres of woodlands.



COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Annual Tree & Shrub Sale

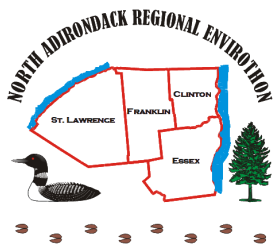
The 2024 tree sale was a success, with over 3,300 trees sold to residents throughout the county. Many of the trees and shrubs were utilized for various conservation efforts such as reforestation, creating windbreaks, controlling soil erosion, and enhancing wildlife habitat. Proceeds from this program are used to support conservation activities here in St. Lawrence County.

The 2025 tree and shrub sale is currently under way and ends March 7th, 2025, so get your order in soon! You can call our office, 315-386-3582 or go to our website at www.slcsxcd.org to browse the available trees, seeds, and tree care products, and place your order online.



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 end of April 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 2024 winning team from St. Lawrence County, Canton Central School.



Day at the Farm



The 2024 Day at the Farm event put on by our partners at the St. Lawrence County Farm Bureau, was at Kelly Dairy, LLC in Rensselaer Falls, NY. Soil and Water hosted a table of information coupled with an erosion demonstration. The set-up illustrated the importance of ground cover by mimicking rain on three different fields. Focusing on the benefits of having ground cover, such as cover crops, to reduce erosion and support water quality. Adults and children alike came by to guess the outcome and discuss the display.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Conservation Field Days



On June 4th and 6th Heidi and our two summer interns attended the Conservation Field Days hosted at the Indian Creek Nature Center. Approximately 200 fifth grade students from schools across St. Lawrence County were taught about erosion and soils. An experiment using bottles filled with bare soil and soil with cover-crops was demonstrated, students also had the opportunity to participate in a hands-on activity acting as different soil particles.



St. Lawrence County Fair

We had a fantastic time at the St. Lawrence County Fair, engaging with the community and sharing the fun of crafting with the kids! We hosted a hands-on animal puppet craft station, where children could create their own unique puppets. It was a wonderful opportunity to talk with the public about our programs, share our mission, and connect with families. Thank you to everyone who stopped by to craft, chat, and learn more about the exciting things we're doing!



HAVE SLC SWCD COME TO YOUR EVENT:

NEW for 2025: Watershed Non-Point Source Pollution Model!

Soil & Water can come to your classroom or event and can do demonstrations with sludge, pesticides, fertilizers, and misc. soil or debris around the model. Demonstrations can help learners understand:

- How water pollution occurs
- The impact of water pollution
- How to prevent water pollution



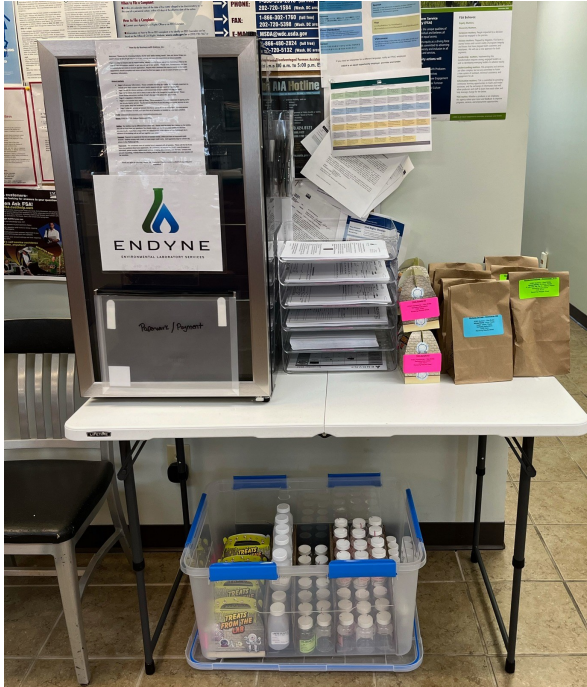
We are working to build our educational outreach calendar for 2025.

We can table, do informal interactive activities, or come into the classroom for more formal education.

To discuss the possibilities, email us: conservation@slcswcd.org

NEW SERVICE

Water Quality Testing



We're thrilled to partner with Endyne Labs to help you test your water! Whether you're an individual or a municipality, you can now pick up your water testing bottles and instructions from our location and drop them off to be picked up and tested.

Water Samples are picked up by Endyne Labs on the second Monday of every month at 10am. Samples must be dropped off between 7am and 10am on the second Monday. Samples should be taken within 24 hours of drop off time and kept cold (but not frozen).

It's recommended to test your well water yearly, after large weather events (like flooding), or if there are changes to your water system or household (such as moving to a new home, the arrival of a new baby, or if someone in your household is immunocompromised). Regular testing ensures your water stays safe and healthy for you and your family.

NEW LOGO

St. Lawrence County Soil & Water adopted a new logo this year to better represent our mission, what we do, and the county we serve!



COLLAB WITH CORNELL COOPERATIVE EXT



This year St. Lawrence County funded a new high tunnel at Cornell Cooperative Extension's Learning Farm in Canton! This solar-heated greenhouse replaced an aging model and will provide a valuable teaching venue for community education.

USDA-NRCS

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

If you'd like more information on this or our other programs, please reach out by phone or email: Allycia.Foote@usda.gov, 315-386-2401

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