

SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT



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Students Compete for Top Spot in Regional Envirothon Competition

At the Trailside Lodge, at Letchworth State Park, students from both Allegany and Wyoming Counties competed in the 2014 Trailside Regional Envirothon. 95 students from 5 local schools including Attica, Perry, Warsaw, Fillmore, and Cuba-Rushford, participated in the hands-on, outdoor event that tests the student’s knowledge in various environmental subjects.



Wyoming County Winning Team: Perry High School Team #2 (Standing left to right) –Josh Preston, Darlene LaGeorgia, Jake Kelly, Tyler Elliott, Mike Nobbs
Advisor (not pictured) – Bill Augrom

Despite the rain storm that hit the competition, students endured the elements to be tested on subjects including Aquatics, Soils, Forestry, Wildlife, and the Current Issue: “Sustainable Agriculture / Locally Grown.”

Test scores ranged across the board and it can be seen that there are many young teams that will be great competitors in the coming years. After the testing was completed, the winners of each county were announced with Team #2 of Perry being the winner for Wyoming County with a score of 421 out of a possible 530. For Allegany County, Cuba - Rushford Team #2 came out on top with a score of 437. Both of these teams will now go on to represent their county at the New York State Envirothon on May 21st and 22nd at SUNY Morrisville.

This program would not be possible if it were not for the contributions made by area sponsors, the work that instructors put into their training and tests, and the help of the volunteers during the training and competition days!

The Wyoming County Soil & Water Conservation District Board of Directors and Staff would like to thank all of the sponsors, volunteers, instructors, and Letchworth State Park and their staff for making the 2014 Trailside Envirothon a great success!

If you have any interest in volunteering or helping out in some way with upcoming Envirothon events, please feel free to contact the Wyoming County SWCD! For more information on the Envirothon Competition, please visit: www.nysenvirothon.net

Recycling Agricultural Plastics Project INNOVATIONS by FARM OPERATORS

By Debra Welch, Ag Program Community Educator

“Plastics have taken the place of the longer lasting and/or natural materials that use to be widely used on farms. Many of these substitutions make good sense; plastics are often safer to use, improve production efficiency, cost less, and permit more flexibility in management....” *Recycling Agricultural Plastics Project*

In the case of storing forages on the Burley family’s East Hill Farm in Perry, plastic wrapped bales are used in a variety of locations. The East Hill dairy is a pastured herd that is moved to new areas (paddocks) on a regular basis. Since the herd is out-wintered, baled forage is stored near the paddocks where it will be used for winter feeding. Disposal of the bale wrap located at far-flung pastures presented a few unique challenges. Initially, the plastic had to be picked up and brought to the home farm for collection by a waste company and transport to a landfill. Over time, the plastic accumulated and the garbage disposal company would leave whatever wouldn’t fit in the truck behind.

When RAPP (Recycling Agricultural Plastics Project) came on the scene in 2012, it offered an alternative to landfill disposal for ag plastic. Through recycling, the used ag plastics could be reclaimed and put to a new use. Some of these uses include sidewalk pavers, composite decking lumber or fencing. It also offered the opportunity for the ag plastics used by East Hill to be baled right on the farm.

This left the challenge of collecting and storing the used bale wrap until it could be baled for shipment to recyclers. Ryan Burley decided that the solution could be simple and inexpensive, using materials around the farm. He created plastics storage boxes complete with press boards and lids. Since many farm materials are delivered on wooden pallets, a pallet serves as the bottom of the box. Ryan made a frame built directly onto the pallet with scrap lumber. The simple frame was then covered with leftover metal roofing pieces. A tight-fitting lid constructed of the same materials helps keep the plastic contained and dry.

When waste bale wrap is loaded into the box, a press board made from other scrap lumber is placed on top of the plastic. This helps compress the plastic and keeps it from flying out of the box. On windy days, the press board can be placed on the lid to keep it intact. Even fully loaded, the boxes are easy to move by a skid loader or tractor forks since the exposed bottom is the pallet.

When transferring plastics into the RAPP baler, the boxes are easy to unload. Ryan designed them so that the front panel can be quickly taken off by loosening only 6 screws.

After the panel is removed, the entire box can be lifted to the baler for easy transfer of plastics.



Ryan: “The entire process of building a storage box took only about 2 hours. Costs were about \$100 including labor. The materials were a pallet, scrap lumber, scrap metal roofing, and 3” deck screws. Given the current market prices, someone looking to build a plastics storage box may be looking at a slightly higher cost if they must purchase all the materials instead of having the supplies handy.”

Other Innovators: At Breezy Hill Dairy in Strykersville, used bunk plastic is also being recycled. The method used there is when a strip of bunk plastic is removed, it is shaken out and folded and then placed on a pallet.

Roger Almeter: “The biggest challenge is a place to store the plastic. We have a couple of van trailers that seem to work pretty well. It’s not a big deal to fold up the plastic and put it in the trailer as opposed to folding up plastic to put in a dumpster. In order to get all the plastic and other waste in the dumpster, we found it necessary to pack it in. And then the garbage doesn’t come out very well.”

Other farms have utilized shed areas, garages, and even a large horse trailer as temporary storage for waste plastic prior to baling. There is no doubt that new methods of storage and handling waste plastics will appear - farm operators are the ultimate innovators!

The Recycling Ag Plastics Project (RAPP) is developing infrastructure and markets for waste film and rigid plastics from dairy, livestock, and horticulture. RAPP is a collaboration of Cornell University with agriculture producers and agriculture, environment, economic development and solid waste-recycling agencies, organizations, and businesses. Funding has come from the NY Farm Viability Institute, NYS DEC Environmental Protection Fund, US EPA Region 2 Pollution Prevention, NYS Empire State Development Environmental Services Unit, USDA Rural Utilities Services, NEWMOA, Hatch/Smith-Lever. The recommendations expressed in this material are solely the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official views of any of these agencies.

Farm Service Agency Disaster Assistance Programs LIVESTOCK, HONEYBEE, FARM RAISED FISH and TREE LOSS PROGRAMS

By Kate Hemstreet, Wyo. Co. CED - Farm Service Agency

The 2014 Farm Bill included permanent disaster programs administered by the Farm Service Agency. These programs are retroactive covering weather related losses experienced since October 1, 2011.

There are three disaster programs covering losses:

- The Livestock Indemnity Program, **LIP**, provides compensation to eligible livestock producers who have suffered livestock death losses in excess of normal mortality due to adverse weather. Eligible livestock includes beef cattle, dairy cattle, bison, poultry, sheep, swine, horses, and other livestock as determined by the Secretary. Livestock **MUST** be for commercial uses as part of an eligible farming operation.
- The Emergency Livestock Assistance Program, **ELAP**, provides emergency assistance to eligible producers of livestock, **honeybees** and farm-raised fish who have losses due to disease, adverse weather, or other conditions as determined by the Secretary of Agriculture. This program includes feed losses due to eligible weather events.
- The Tree Assistance Program, **TAP**, provides financial assistance to qualifying orchardists and nursery tree growers to replant or rehabilitate eligible trees, bushes and vines damaged by natural disasters. Eligible trees include maple trees and Christmas trees for commercial use.

Information on the application process, including the types of records necessary to support the application is available from FSA, 585-786-3118.

Conservation Compliance DON'T LOSE YOUR BENEFITS

By Kate Hemstreet, Wyo. Co. CED - Farm Service Agency

Important Reminder for Agricultural Producers and Contractors * Don't Jeopardize Your USDA Benefits.

Doing any of these things requires USDA review **PRI-OR** to starting work:

- Land clearing
- Working new land
(land that wasn't cropland previously)
- Excavation
- Stump removal
- Creating a new drainage system
- Improving, modifying or maintaining an existing drainage system
- Land leveling
- Dredging an area
- Filling an area
- Planting a crop on land where an NRCS Highly

Erodible Land or wetland determination has not been made.

File an updated AD-1026 with FSA to request NRCS review the work you intend to complete **BEFORE** you start the project.

What Are Wetlands?

A wetland is an area of land that exhibits the following three criteria. All three criteria must be present for an area to be considered a wetland:

1. Predominance of hydric soils (soils formed under wet conditions).
2. Prevalence of hydrophytic vegetation (vegetation adapted to wet soil conditions).
3. Inundation or saturation by surface or groundwater (hydrology) enough to support hydrophytic vegetation.

Although the term "wetland" brings to mind areas of shallow water, cattails, and landing ducks, most of our wetlands are forested wetlands or cropped wetlands that only hold surface water temporarily, but are seasonally saturated.



Wyoming County Highway Department Sediment and Erosion Control Workshop

By Kimberly Falbo, Conservation Technician

On April 3rd, Wyoming County Soil and Water hosted the Wyoming County Highway Department Sediment and Erosion Control Workshop. The goal was to provide local highway staff with techniques they can use to stop sediment pollution to local waterways. Forty five highway staff attended the workshop, representing 12 Towns, the County and New York State Department of Transportation!

The five hour workshop covered a diversity of topics. Kelly Emerick of Monroe County Soil and Water started off the workshop with the basics of sediment and erosion control techniques. Scott Cornett of NYS DEC then discussed State-required permits and designing culverts for flood resiliency and fish passage. Greg McKurth, our District Manager, finished up the morning, discussing de-watering techniques.

The afternoon session focused on private sector solutions to sediment and erosion control. Doug McCluskey of EJ Prescott discussed the installation and maintenance of silt fencing, compost filter socks and inlet protection. Aaron Rowe of Environment 21 then covered oil/water separators. The workshop finished up with Mike Kistner of Kistner Concrete, who discussed precast concrete applications for stormwater, stream stabilization and road construction.

The workshop was a success! Wyoming County Soil and Water, with financial assistance from business sponsors and the Finger Lakes - Lake Ontario Watershed Protection Alliance, was able to reach the majority of highway departments in the County. By covering such a wide range of techniques, we hope everyone left the workshop with something they can do to help prevent sediment pollution!



Sediment and Erosion Control Workshop at Byrnclyff Resort & Conference Center, in Varysburg, NY

Cover Crops: A Brief Overview

By Allen Fagan, Conservation Technician

As spring finally begins to roll around after this past drawn out winter, fields are beginning to be worked for this year's production. Before we know it, our little world will be green with crops, covering much of the landscape with what some people see as food, what others see as a lot of hard work, and what others might see as protection. What I mean by this, is protection from erosion.

Vegetative cover over exposed soil is the simplest tool we can use to reduce erosion potential on the fields that grow the crops that we need. During the late spring, summer, and early fall, this is not much of a concern since the soil is protected by the crops that grow out of it. But what about in the late fall, winter, and early spring? Throughout the winter and spring, how often did you see fields of bare dirt? Can you describe your field as having reduced root growth, excessive fertilizer / nutrient requirements, weak ability to hold / drain

water, or is easily eroded by wind or water? Cover crops, when properly planned and executed, will protect farmland during this vulnerable period.

The main purpose of a cover crop is to benefit the soil or other crops, but is not intended to be harvested for feed or sale. Used as a "tool", cover crops can provide substantial benefits to improving soil health, productivity, and farm profitability. First and foremost, a cover crop slows the velocity of runoff from rainfall and snowmelt, reducing soil loss due to sheet and rill erosion. Over time, a cover crop regimen will increase soil organic matter, leading to improvements in soil structure, stability, and increased moisture and nutrient holding capacity for plant growth.

When using a legume as a cover crop (red clove, white clover) substantial amounts of available nitrogen are added

to the soil. Non-legumes can be used to take up excess nitrogen from previous crops and recycle the nitrogen as well as available phosphorus and potassium to the following crop. This is very important after manure application, because cover crops can reduce leaching of nutrients. When using a legume for a cover crop, the application of a nitrogen fertilizer for the subsequent crop may be less, thereby lowering costs of production, reducing nitrogen losses to the environment and reducing the need for nitrogen fertilizer produced using fossil fuels.

Cover crops enhance soil structure while increasing biotic soil activity. They reduce soil compaction while increasing water percolation and retention. Cover crops such as forage turnips create large "pockets" in the ground once they have decomposed in the spring, providing aeration, as well as

water infiltration.

While providing nitrogen management, erosion control, and improving soil quality, cover crops can also aid in weed suppression and insect management. As the cost of fertilizer and herbicides continue to increase, the benefits of using cover crops in a sustainable farming system will become more and more attractive to farmers. Cornell University has developed a Cover Crop Decision Tool that can help identify which cover crop may be best for your situation, and can be found at: <http://covercrops.cals.cornell.edu/decision-tool.php>

Although at this time of year, thoughts in the farming community are targeted towards production crops being planted, take a second or two to think about the benefits that could be gained by having crops in place year round.

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Saving Soil in Black and Oatka Creek

By Kimberly Falbo, Conservation Technician

The Wyoming County Soil and Water Conservation District has been collaborating with the Districts from Monroe and Genesee Counties on the Black and Oatka Creek Sediment Reduction Project. Utilizing funding from the Great Lakes Commission, each District is installing sediment and erosion control projects on agricultural lands.

Wyoming County completed 4 projects in 2013 that led to significant soil savings (see the table below). From the three counties combined, almost 1,600 tons of sediment have already been saved, which would lead to about 9,000 tons saved over the lifespan of the practices! More projects are going to be completed this year in Wyoming County and the other counties, so total soil savings will be even higher!



2013 Projects	Soil Savings
<p>Before: severely eroding waterway After: constructed a rock-lined culvert plunge pool, re-graded channel, partially rock-lined and partially grass-lined the waterway.</p> 	<p>280 tons/year</p>
<p>Before: eroding waterway After: installed water and sediment control basin, re-graded and vegetated channel, installed underground outlet.</p> 	<p>110 tons/year</p>
<p>Before: eroding waterway After: installed 3 sediment and erosion control basins, re-graded and rock-lined the waterway, installed underground outlet.</p> 	<p>21 tons/year</p>
<p>Before: little soil protection after harvest After: cover-cropping on ~220 acres</p> 	<p>132 tons/year</p>

STOP AQUATIC HITCHHIKERS!



STOP AQUATIC HITCHHIKERS!

Prevent the transport of nuisance species.

Clean all recreational equipment.

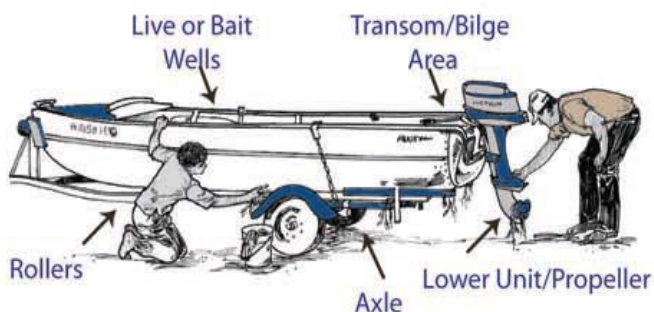
www.ProtectYourWaters.net

Aquatic invasive species are non-native plants and animals that can degrade a body of water, impair boating and fishing, threaten native plants and animals, and destroy habitat. Once aquatic invasive species are established, eradication is almost impossible.

When you leave a waterway:

- Check for and remove any visible plants or debris
- Clean and drain your boat and equipment
- Dry everything that came into contact with water

WATERCRAFT CHECK POINTS



Aquatic Invaders to Look Out For:



H. Smith, APIPP

Water Chestnut

- Triangular leaves with toothed edges
- Sharp-edged seeds
- Can form dense mats



J.E. Marsden, UVM & D. Jude

Zebra/Quagga Mussel

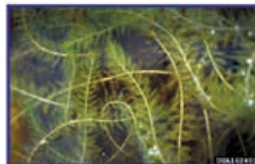
- Tiny D- or oval-shaped striped shells
- Can cover hard surfaces
- Sharp shells can cut feet



E. DeBoldt

Asian Clam

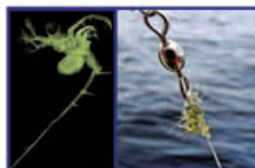
- Light green to brown shells with circular elevated ridges
- Typically less than 1/2-inch in size
- May outcompete native clams/mussels



A. Fox, Bugwood.org & Michigan DNR

Eurasian Watermilfoil

- Feathery leaves in whorls of 4
- Forms dense beds
- New plants sprout from fragments



DFWI & J. Gunderson, MN Sea Grant

Spiny Waterflea

- Tiny crustacean with long, barbed tail
- Competes with small fish for food
- Masses can clog guides of fishing rods



D. Moorhead, R. Vide'ki, Bugwood.org

Hydrilla

- Four to eight blade-like, slightly toothed leaves form whorls around stem
- Can form dense plant beds
- Thrives in a variety of environments



To learn more about how you can help stop the spread of aquatic invasives, scan this QR code with your smartphone or visit www.dec.ny.gov/animals/48221.html



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This publication is the quarterly newsletter of the Wyoming County Soil and Water Conservation District and is available at no cost to all District cooperators, all interested landowner and land users, and to the general public. To receive this newsletter, simply send your complete mailing address to our office.

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