

Wyoming County Soil & Water Conservation District



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2011 CONSERVATION FARM OF THE YEAR

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Each year, Wyoming County Soil & Water Conservation District recognizes a farm which has excelled in conserving our soil and water resources by installing Best Management Practices on their farm to prevent soil erosion and improve water quality.

This year's "Conservation Farm of the Year" is awarded to Bliss Cattle Company. Robert & Ronalda Bliss have 5 children. Ronalda is a RN with the Wyoming County Health Department.

Bliss Cattle Company was established in 1998. The farm is a heifer boarding operation.

They house approximately 1000 animals from wet calves to springing heifers. The Bliss family has been involved in many community organizations including: Farm Bureau, Ag Committee of the Wyoming County Cooperative Extension, Pike Community Church and Wyoming County 4-H.

The farm has always taken the

responsibility of taking care of our resources. Implementation of conservation practices have been at the forefront.



**Pictured Left to Right:
Jared, Ronalda, Robert & Dustin Bliss**

Bliss Cattle Company has been an active participant in the Wyoming County Agricultural Environmental Management (AEM) program. They received the "Partnering to Protect Our Environment" award in 2009 for their involvement in the AEM program and have participated in two NYS Agricultural Nonpoint Pollution Abatement & Control projects in a high priority watershed.



2011 AEM AWARDS

By Bethany Bzduch, Water Quality Technician

Agriculture is the largest single land use across rural New York, making it important ecologically, economically, aesthetically and culturally.

This is especially true in Wyoming County. Most farmers are dedicated stewards of land and water resources. Many farms across New York are involved in their local AEM Programs to take their level of commitment to protecting the environment to an even higher level. New York State wants to recognize these farms with a new “Farmers Partnering to Protect Our Environment” sign program.

The AEM Sign Recognition Program is made possible thanks to funds from the NYS Department of Ag and Markets and the New York State Soil & Water Conservation Committee. The signs are to be awarded to farms in each county that are utilizing the AEM Program as excellent stewards of our natural resources.

The AEM Program is a voluntary state-wide program that is utilized by farms to address Water Quality Concerns from Agricultural Activities through a Tiered Approach that includes:

- Assessments and identification of environmental concerns,
- Documentation of current stewardship and prioritization of environmental concerns,
- Development of environmental farm plans,
- Implementation of sound Best Management Practices to address identified concerns,
- And finally, evaluation of their success.

Farms must meet the following criteria to be eligible for a “Partnering to Protect Our Environment” sign:

- Must be a commercial farm enterprises located in New York State.
- Must be in compliance with all applicable state and federal regulations, and free of any water quality violations.
- Engaged in the AEM process and set an example of a high level of environmental stewardship for other farmers and the public:
- The farm must have made a solid commitment toward implementing practices by enrolling in state or federal conservation programs to address priority concerns and have implemented at least one recommended conservation practice. A high level of environmental stewardship must also be documented, such as the proper maintenance of any previous conservation practices installed.

Farmers who receive an AEM Sign will represent what all farms can do to protect and enhance our natural resources. The District recognized five Wyoming County farms for their accomplishments in the AEM program at this years Annual Awards Banquet.



Fontaine Farms LLC, Strykersville

Fontaine Farms is operated by third generation farmers, brothers Jim and Steve Fontaine in the Town of Sheldon. The Fontaine’s have a total herd size of approximately 510 animals and operate on 750 acres. They grow corn, hay, soybeans, and implement conservation, zone, and no till practices. Fontaine Farms has been a cooperator with Wyoming County Soil and Water Conservation District since 1976 and has been very active in maintaining water quality in the Buffalo Creek Watershed.

In 2004, funding was received to complete a Bunk Silo Leachate Collection System and an Ag Waste Storage facility. Additionally, Fontaine Farms

have completed a vegetated treatment area and filter strip to control runoff and prevent contamination. More recently, Fontaine Farms has been awarded funding through the NYS Department of Ag and Markets Agricultural Non-Point Source Pollution Abatement and Control Program.

The grant funding will be utilized to complete a second Bunk Silo Leachate Management System. It was the District's pleasure to present the Fontaines with the Agricultural Environmental Management award for continuing to practice and implement environmental stewardship.



Maple Grove Dairy, Cowlesville

Maple Grove Dairy is owned and operated by third generation farmer, Richard Pilc, whose grandfather started the farm during the Depression. They currently run a tie stall milking operation and milk

approximately 98 animals with a young stock herd of 80. Maple Grove Dairy works approximately 380 acres of land and received funding through state and federal sources to implement cover cropping and zone tillage which protects the soil and prevents erosion.

In addition to their dedication to soil conservation, Maple Grove Dairy is also dedicated to protecting water quality. They have recently received funding from the NYS Agricultural Non-Point Source Pollution Control Program through the NYS Department of Ag and Markets to construct an Ag Bag Storage Pad. The new pad not only prevents contaminants from entering nearby streams via runoff, but also speeds up traffic flow during harvest and maximizes feed recovery from the bags. The new pad will comfortably hold 8-99'x200' bags and will continue to protect water quality in the Cayuga Creek Watershed.



West Flats Dairy, Varysburg

West Flats farm has been in operation for 178 years, since 1833, when a man by the name of Peter West migrated from Germany and settled in the Town of Orangeville. West Flats is currently owned and operated by Alan West and the West Family. Located in the Tonawanda Creek watershed, West Flats

operates approximately 500 acres of land and maintains a herd size of 260 milking and young stock.

West Flats have taken a proactive step in protecting water quality by recently completing a Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plan with the assistance of Western New York Crop Management and the Natural Resource Conservation Service. West Flats has been working cooperatively with the Wyoming County Soil and Water Conservation District since 1979 and was able to be awarded funding through the NYS Ag Nonpoint Source Pollution program to complete a silage leachate collection system with filter strip, as well as a milkhouse waste transfer system. Construction of the silage leachate system and filter area was completed in November of 2010 with the milkhouse waste transfer project currently in progress. Each year, with great success, West Flats utilizes zone tilling and cover cropping to reduce soil erosion and soil loss.

AEM AWARDS *continued from page 3*



Maple Ridge Farm , N. Java

Walt McCormick currently owns and operates a heifer farm in the Town of Java which he took over from his father in 1977. His farm is based in the Cattaraugus Creek watershed and operates on approximately

800 acres of land. The farm has been a cooperator with the Wyoming County Soil and Water Conservation District for 34 years and since taking over, Walt has implemented several agricultural best management practices to protect and preserve soil and water quality.

Maple Ridge Farm completed a Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plan to address natural resource concerns involved with a CAFO operation. Residue management and cover cropping is utilized by the farm to protect fields from soil erosion. Walt received NYS Agricultural Non-Point Source Pollution Control funding to construct a Bunk Silo Leachate Management system, filter strip, and an Ag Waste Storage facility. Additionally, Maple Ridge Farm has implemented exclusion fencing, a heavy use protection area, and diversion ditches all which prevent contamination and preserve water quality.



Wyo. Co. SWCD Annual Award Banquet Sponsors



Sregnuoy Farms LLC, N. Java

Sregnuoy Farms has been in operation since the early 1900's in the Town of Wethersfield. Located in the Tonawanda Creek Watershed, the farm is owned and operated by 3rd generation farmer Gus Youngers, and his son, 4th generation farmer Brian Youngers.

They currently have a herd size of approximately

575 milking and young stock and operate over 500 acres of land.

Over the years, Sregnuoy Farms has worked cooperatively with the Wyoming County Soil and Water Conservation District and the Natural Resources Conservation District to implement various agricultural best management practices to protect and preserve water quality. In 2002, Sregnuoy Farms developed a Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plan as the result of a farm expansion. Sregnuoy has also been awarded funding through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) with NRCS and the Agricultural Non-Point Source Pollution Abatement and Control Program through the NYS Department of Ag and Markets to complete several large projects. The projects include an agricultural waste storage, ag waste transfer system, silage leachate collection system with filter area, and a milkhouse waste transfer system. In addition, Sregnuoy Farms has been successful in the implementation of diversion ditches and have practiced zone tilling for approximately 7 years.

Partners in Conservation Award

By Greg McKurth, District Manager

The Wyoming County Soil & Water Conservation District is pleased to announce that a new award was presented at the District's Annual Awards Banquet on November, 16th at the Byrnclyff Conference Center in Varysburg. The purpose of this award is to recognize conservation partners of the Soil & Water Conservation District as well as to honor our former Director and Chairman, Mr. Ronald Herman, a past Supervisor from the Town of Wethersfield, who served on the District Board for over 23 years.

The inaugural Ronald P. Herman, Sr. Partners in Conservation Award was presented to the Western New York Chapter of Trout Unlimited for outstanding achievement in the protection and restoration of trout streams in Wyoming County. For over 40 years, Trout Unlimited has worked closely with the District, NYSDEC Bureau of Fisheries, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service and many other groups, organizations and municipalities to maintain and enhance the fisheries resources in the Wiscoy, East Koy, Cattaraugus and

Oatka Creeks in Wyoming County and throughout Western New York.



Pictured Left to Right:
Trout Unlimited Stream Projects Chairman - Chuck Godfrey,
District Manager- Greg McKurth,
Western NY Trout Unlimited President - Gary Coons.

North Branch of the Wiscoy Creek Trout Habitat Restoration Project

Landowner:

Donald Smith, Orchard Park, NY

Agencies:

Wyoming County SWCD

NYS DEC Region 9 Bureau of Fisheries

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

WNY Chapter of Trout Unlimited

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Reisdorf Bros., Inc., North Java, NY

E.J. Prescott, Inc., Corfu, NY

Five Corners Repair, Bliss, NY

Worth W. Smith, Co., Olean, NY

Robert Baehr, Fillmore, NY

Lanny Clark, Fillmore, NY



How Environmental Quality Incentives Program Works in Wyoming County

By Mia Halter, District Conservationist

The Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) is one of the largest programs in the 2008 Farm Bill. This voluntary conservation program promotes environmental quality and helps producers meet local, state and federal regulations. The program provides a payment to install one or more “conservation practices.” Implementing certain conservation practices improves or maintains the health of New York’s natural resources.

The 2008 Farm Bill recognizes landowners or operators who are socially disadvantaged, or have limited resources, or are beginning farmers as eligible for special incentives. These incentives include increase payment rates, and evaluation under special funding pools for which a separate payment schedule has been developed.

Historically Underserved individuals and groups

A Beginning Farmer or Rancher means an individual or entity who:

- Is an applicant who has not operated a farm or ranch, or who has operated a farm or ranch for not more than 10 consecutive years.
- Will materially and substantially participate in the operation of the farm or ranch.

Socially Disadvantaged:

- Is a group whose members have been subject to racial or ethnic prejudice because of their identity as members of a group, without regard to their individual qualities. These groups consist of the following:
 - American Indians or Alaskan Natives
 - Asians
 - Blacks or African Americans
 - Native Hawaiians or other Pacific Islanders and
 - Hispanics

Limited Resource Farmer or Rancher:

- Is an applicant with direct or indirect gross farm sales not more than the current indexed value in each of the previous 2 years, and
- Who has a total household income at or below the national poverty level for a family of four, or less than 50 percent of county median household income in each of the previous 2 years.
 - Legal entity or joint operation can be a Limited Resource Farmer or Rancher if all individual members independently qualify.

The NRCS Website Limited Resource Farmer Self-Determination Tool

- The purpose of this self determination tool is to enable potential limited resource farmers and ranchers to ascertain eligibility for various USDA programs and benefits.
- The **On-Line Limited Resource Self-Determination Tool** can be found at:
<http://www.lrftool.sc.gov.usda.gov/>

Please contact the Warsaw NRCS Field Office to find out more about available financial assistance Farm Bill conservation programs or technical assistance at (585) 786-5070 Ext.3.



Visit www.wcsacd.org
for a full listing of
District programs
and services!



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News Release

Agricultural Value Assessments for Tax Exemption

It's that time of year again! Applications for the Agricultural Value Assessment must be submitted to your Assessor by **March 1, 2012**. Applications must be **renewed annually** with the assessor – they are **not** carried over year-to-year.

The Agricultural Assessment Program provides a partial exemption from real property taxes for eligible farmland. Land is taxed based on its agricultural assessment rather than the fair market value. The landowner must apply each year.

If you are applying for the first time or if there have been changes in your parcel, the first step in applying for an Agricultural Value Assessment is to have a RA-100 Soil Group Worksheet completed. You may call the Wyoming County Soil and Water Conservation District to make an appointment to assist with the completion of the worksheet.

If you need to update a Soil Group Worksheet or have purchased a new parcel, please call for an appointment before March 1, Bethany Bzduch at the Wyoming County Soil & Water Conservation District Office, 31 Duncan Street, Warsaw, NY, 14569, telephone 786-5070.

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 landowners and land users, and to the general public. To receive this newsletter, simply send your complete mailing or email address to our office.

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