Wyoming County Soil & Water Conservation District

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Happy Holidays!

December 2013

Conservation Farm of the Year

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 Sregnuoy Farms, LLC. Gus, Kathy, Brian, Amy, Billy, Shelly, Meghan, and Ashley all take part in the farm.

Back Row - Gus, Kathy, Brian, Amy and Ashley
Front Row - Shelly, Meghan and Billy

Sregnuoy Farms is a 600 head dairy farm, milking 300 cows and raising 300 heifers. Gus and Brian are the 3rd and 4th generation to farm on the land. William Youngers Sr. began the farm in 1919. In 1942, William Jr. bought the land where the main farm is now. Gus bought into the farm in 1965 and Brian joined the partnership in 2000. In 2013, crops were raised on over 600 acres, 535 of those owned, leasing the remaining.

The farm has always taken the responsibility of caring for our resources. Implementation of conservation practices have been at the forefront. Some of the practices include: Residue Management, Cover Crops, Zone Tillage, Miles and Miles of Drainage Tile according to Gus, and Diversion Ditches. Most recently, Sregnuoy Farms has installed an armored waterway that utilizes a geotextile fabric instead of conventional rock rip-rap. Sregnouy Farms also participates in the Recycling Agricultural Plastics Program of Wyoming County.

Sregnuoy Farms has been an active participant in the Wyoming County Agricultural Environmental Management (AEM) program. They received the "Partnering to Protect Our Environment" award in 2011 for their involvement in the AEM program. They have participated in NYS Agricultural Nonpoint Pollution Abatement & Control projects and the Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP). They developed a Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plan (CNMP) in 2003. Since then, they have implemented an Ag Waste Storage, Composting Facility, Ag Waste Transfer System and Silage Leachate Management System with a Vegetated Treatment Area.

The Youngers family has been involved in many community organizations, including the Farm Bureau, which Gus serves as a County Board Member, Upstate Niagara, Cooperative Extension, St. Michael's Church, and St. Mary's Church. Gus also sits on the Farmland Protection Board.

AEM Awards

This AEM Sign Recognition Program is made possible by the NYS Department of Agriculture & Markets and NYS 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 statewide program that is utilized by farms to address water quality concerns from agricultural activities through a tiered approach that includes:

- **Initial assessment 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 enterprise 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:**
- **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.**

So far, 35 Wyoming County farms have received an AEM Recognition Sign which is the highest number for any county in the entire state.

Broughton Diversified Farming

Pete Broughton - Silver Springs, NY

Woodvale Farms, Inc.

Damen Harwood - Perry, NY

T.L. Hodnett Farms

Terry Hodnett-Portageville, NY

Bowhill Farm, Inc.

Loren Bowman & Family -Wyoming, NY

Partners in Conservation Award

This year the Ronald P. Herman Sr. Partners in Conservation Award was presented to Scott Cornett, NYSDEC Region 9 Bureau of Fisheries, for outstanding cooperation and dedication to stream channel stabilization and trout habitat restoration projects throughout Wyoming County.

Pictured Right to Left:
Assemblyman, Hon. David DiPietro,
Allen Fagan, Scott Cornett and Greg McKurth

unlock the SECRETS IN THE SOIL

Managing for soil health is one of the best ways farmers can increase crop productivity while improving the environment.

What's critical about soil health now?

1. World population is projected to increase from 7 billion in 2013 to more than 9 billion in 2050. To sustain this level of growth, food production will need to rise by 70 percent.
2. Between 1982–2007, 14 million acres of prime farmland in the U.S. were lost to development.
3. Improving soil health is key to long-term, sustainable agricultural production.

Soil health matters because:

1. Healthy soils are high-performing, productive soils.
2. Healthy soils reduce production costs and improve profits.
3. Healthy soils protect natural resources on and off the farm.
4. Franklin Roosevelt's statement, "The nation that destroys its soil destroys itself," is as true today as it was 75 years ago.
5. Healthy soils can reduce nutrient loading and sediment runoff, increase efficiencies, and sustain wildlife habitat.

Follow four basic soil health principles to improve soil health and sustainability:

Results are often realized immediately and last well into the future. Following are four basic principles to improving the health of your soil.

1. Keep the soil covered as much as possible
2. Disturb the soil as little as possible
3. Keep plants growing throughout the year to feed the soil
4. Diversify as much as possible using crop rotation and cover crops

Use the following to determine if you're using core Soil Health Management System farming practices. It is important to note that not all practices are applicable to all crops. Some operations will benefit from just one soil health practice while others may require additional practices for maximum benefit. These core practices form the basis of a Soil Health Management System that can help you optimize your inputs, protect against drought, and increase production.

Healthy Productive Soils

What is it?	What does it do?	How does it help?
Conservation Crop Rotation Growing a diverse number of crops in a planned sequence to increase soil organic matter and biodiversity in the soil.	Increases nutrient cycling Manages plant pests (weeds, insects, and diseases) Reduces sheet, rill and wind erosion Holds soil moisture Adds diversity so soil microbes can thrive	Improves nutrient use efficiency Decreases use of pesticides Improves water quality Conserves water Improves plant production
Cover Crop An un-harvested crop grown as part of planned rotation to provide conservation benefits to the soil.	Increases soil organic matter Prevents soil erosion Conserves soil moisture Increases nutrient cycling Provides nitrogen for plant use Suppresses weeds Reduces compaction	Improves crop production Improves water quality Conserves water Improves nutrient use efficiency Decreases use of pesticides Improves water efficiency to crops
No Till A way of growing crops without disturbing the soil through tillage.	Improves water holding capacity of soil Increases organic matter Reduces soil erosion Reduces energy use Decreases compaction	Improves water efficiency Conserves water Improves crop production Improves water quality Saves renewable resources Improves air quality Increases productivity
Mulch Tillage Using tillage methods where the soil surface is disturbed but maintains a high level of crop residue on the surface.	Reduces soil erosion from wind and rain Increases soil moisture for plants Reduces energy use Increases soil organic matter	Improves water quality Conserves water Saves renewable resources Improves air quality Improves crop production
Mulching Applying plant residues or other suitable materials to the soil surface to compensate for loss of residue due to excessive tillage.	Reduces erosion from wind and rain Moderates soil temperatures Increases soil organic matter Controls weeds Conserves soil moisture Reduces dust	Improves water quality Improves plant productivity Increases crop production Reduces pesticide usage Conserves water Improves air quality
Nutrient Management Managing soil nutrients to meet crop needs while minimizing the impact on the environment and the soil.	Increases plant nutrient uptake Improves the physical, chemical and biological properties of the soil Budgets, supplies, and conserves nutrients for plant production Reduces odors and nitrogen emissions	Improves water quality Improves plant production Improves air quality
Pest Management Managing pests by following an ecological approach that promotes the growth of healthy plants with strong defenses, while increasing stress on pests and enhancing the habitat for beneficial organisms.	Reduces pesticide risks to water quality Reduces threat of chemicals entering the air Decreases pesticide risk to pollinators and other beneficial organisms Increases soil organic matter	Improves water quality Improves air quality Increases plant pollination Increases plant productivity

Oatka Creek Watershed Erosion & Sediment Control Update

The Genesee, Monroe and Wyoming County SWCD's are continuing to assist farms in the Oatka Creek Watershed with the implementation of agronomic and structural erosion and sediment control projects on agricultural lands throughout the watershed. Using Great Lakes Commission cost share funds provided through the Black & Oatka Creek Sediment Reduction Project, the District has assisted two farms in the implementation of erosion and sediment control best management practices (BMP's) to reduce agricultural erosion.

On the R.L. Jeffres and Sons, Inc. farm in the Town of Middlebury, two large drainage ditches were stabilized with the construction of 533 feet of rock-lined waterways and 1,752 feet of grass waterways along with the construction of a rock-lined water and sediment control basin at the culvert outlet with an 8" underground outlet.

Rock-lined waterway under construction at R. L. Jeffres & Sons Farm.

Completed rock-lined waterway at the Jeffres Farm.

Rock-lined water and sediment control basin with surface inlet at the Jeffres Farm.

Winter wheat cover crop established after silage corn on the Harkins Dairy Farm.

Erosion & Sediment Control

On the Harkins Dairy Farm in the Town of Middlebury, a cropland gully erosion problem was repaired with the construction of 3 water and sediment control basins with an 8" underground outlet and 750 feet of rock-lined waterway. The farm has also established over 500 acres of winter cover crop in the past two years.

Water and sediment control basin with surface inlet at Harkins Dairy Farm.

Completed rock-lined waterway at Harkins Dairy Farm.

With the installation of these erosion control systems, it is estimated that over 690 tons of soil will be kept from eroding from Wyoming County cropland each year, leading to a significant reduction in the total amount of sediment entering into the Oatka Creek Watershed.

Soil & Water welcomes Conservation Technician, Kim Falbo

My name is Kim Falbo and I am the new Conservation Technician at Wyoming County SWCD. I grew up in the Rochester area and love Upstate NY.

I received both my undergraduate and Masters degrees from the Department of Natural Resources at Cornell University. My Masters research examined bacterial water quality in roadside ditches. Since graduating, I have conducted sustainable watershed research at Cornell, worked with the Canandaigua Lake Watershed Council on watershed management, and taught science.

In my free time, I enjoy knitting, hiking, kayaking, cross-country skiing, fishing, and playing with my puppy. I look forward to working with you all!

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, 2014. 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, Allen Fagan 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 address to our office.

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