

## COMMITTEES

- Beaver Dam Creek Tributary Restoration Task Force
- Canaan Lake Watershed Advisory Committee
- Cornell University's Long Island Horticultural Research & Extension Center - Advisory Council
- Environmental Education Foundation of Soil & Water Districts
- Great Cove Watershed Advisory Committee
- Forge River Task Force
- GIS Users Group
- Long Island Agricultural Stewardship Working Group
- Long Island Ag Forum Planning Committee
- Long Island Regional Envirothon
- Long Island Invasive Species Management Area
- Long Island Native Grass Initiative
- Lower Hudson-Long Island Resource, Conservation & Development Council Inc.
- New York Association Conservation Districts
- NYS Conservation District Employees Association
- New York State Envirothon
- Peconic Estuary Technical Advisory Committee
- Suffolk County Department of Health Services Peconic River Project
- Suffolk County Land & Water Invasive Species Advisory Board
- Suffolk Co. Vector Control Long Range Planning Committee
- Swan River Advisory Committee
- South Shore Estuary Reserve
- Suffolk County Farmland Preservation Committee

## UPDATE: LONG ISLAND NATIVE GRASS INITIATIVE

by Polly Weigand



A special thanks to Nicole Cardinale, LINGI intern, who helped organize our mailing lists this winter! Her efforts are greatly appreciated.

The Long Island Native Grass Initiative (LINGI) is a voluntary cooperative of over 30 non-profit organizations, governmental agencies, and citizens whose focus is providing the initial sources of Long Island native (ecotype) plant materials for use in commercial plant propagation and restoration activities. Since 2005, LINGI has conducted field collections and applied standard plant propagation techniques towards the creation of ecotypic seed for Indiangrass (*Sorghastrum nutans*), Little Bluestem (*Schizachyrium scoparium*), Big Bluestem (*Andropogon gerardii*), and Switchgrass (*Panicum virgatum*).

A great highlight of LINGI's 5<sup>th</sup> year was the formalization of a partnership with Ernst Conservation Seed (ECS) of Meadville, PA that ensures the commercial creation of Long Island ecotype seed. The commercial sale of Source Identified Certified seed is expected in 2011, marking a great milestone for LINGI, as the founding goal will have been achieved.

On Long Island, efforts remained focused on maintenance of the founder plot (the native grass nursery), in order to further expand ECS propagation fields, and create a seed bank for future propagation. LINGI volunteers dedicated their time to weed control during the season and this fall armed with equipment purchased from a Suffolk County ¼% Sales Tax grant, harvested the largest yield to date of founder seed!

In June, a native plant sale was held at the Suffolk County Community College greenhouse, in order to provide a more immediate source of native plant materials and to serve as a fundraiser for LINGI. Starting in February 2009, LINGI volunteers propagated five species of grasses and eight species of forbs from seed collected by LINGI volunteers and the Greenbelt Native Plant Center. Eager homeowners, contractors, and nurseries purchased these plugs for landscaping, shoreline stabilization, and native plant propagation activities. A notable application of LINGI plant materials can be spotted on the north side of Charles Lindbergh Boulevard by Nassau Community College and the Hempstead Plains. The NYS DOT utilized LINGI plugs propagated from Hempstead Plains' seed to reduce their mowing activities while supporting and protecting the ecology of the Hempstead Plains.

In the fall, LINGI joined Friends of the Hempstead Plains as they celebrated the 350<sup>th</sup> anniversary of "People and Nature on the Hempstead Plains" with a Heritage Symposium. Polly Weigand, Coordinator of LINGI, served on the Ecology Panel and presented LINGI's activities. Similar presentations were given this fall to various horticulture groups across Long Island to further promote LINGI activities. You may have also seen LINGI highlighted in *Newsday*, the *Times Beacon Record* and other newspapers across Long Island, thanks to the assistance of The Nature Conservancy.

By the close of 2009, LINGI gained ever-increasing momentum and demand due to its 1<sup>st</sup> annual plant sale and outreach activities. Thanks to the support and efforts of its volunteers, LINGI continues to successfully serve as the mechanism to identify and collect plant materials from the wildlands of Long Island for commercial plant and seed production. As such, the preservation of the genetic heritage of Long Island's native plant populations and thereby, biodiversity at a molecular level, continues to go to seed!

# Suffolk County Soil & Water Conservation District

## 2009 YEAR IN REVIEW

### Board of Directors

George Proios  
Chairperson

Joe Gergela  
Director  
L.I. Farm Bureau

Daniel P. Losquadro  
Director  
S.C. Legislator - District #6

Vivian Viloria-Fisher  
Director  
S.C. Legislator - District #5

Phil Schmitt  
Director  
Farmer



The District welcomes new Board Member, Phil Schmitt.

### District Staff

Paul A. TeNyenhuis  
District Manager

Elizabeth Condon  
Principal Account Clerk

Sharon Frost  
Soil District Technician

Nicole Spinelli  
Soil District Technician

Polly Weigand  
Soil District Technician

USDA-NRCS  
Allan Connell  
District Conservationist

Liz Camps  
Soil Conservationist

### Agrichemical Handling Facilities Update

by Paul TeNyenhuis

Here in Suffolk County there is a special program that does not exist anywhere else in New York State or possibly the nation. In coordination with the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYS DEC), the Suffolk County Soil and Water Conservation District (District) and the United States Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) has partnered to offer farmers a cost sharing program to install Agrichemical Handling Facilities (AHF) on their farms. The purpose of an AHF is to protect Long Island's sole source aquifer from pesticides associated with washdown, mixing, and loading of pesticide sprayers.

The program offers a seventy-five percent (75%) cost share rate up to a maximum of \$30,000 towards the installation of a AHF (permanent or portable pads) or a permanent roof structure for an existing AHF. Certain requirements must be followed to receive the funding, which can be explained during the application process. The NYS DEC is supply-

ing the funding and the District is administering the program along with completing



Paul TeNyenhuis, Suffolk County Soil & Water Conservation District Manager, placing a certification sticker on the Agrichemical Handling Facility located on George 'Butch' Starkie's farm in Cutchogue. Pictured behind Mr. TeNyenhuis from left to right: Legislator Viloria-Fisher, Legislator Losquadro & George Starkie.



The agrichemical handling facility installed at Starkie Family Farms in Cutchogue

the designs and conducting the installation supervisions. All AHFs must be designed and installed according to NRCS Standards and Specifications. Sign ups for the program are continuous.

To date the District has cost shared the installation of four permanent pads, one portable pad, and one permanent roof structure. Currently there are three additional pads under construction and several more that are ready to begin construction. If this program is of interest to you or someone you know give the District a call or stop by the office.

**IDENTIFYING THE INVADERS: 'Do Not Sell' list of non-native plants**

by Marilyn J. Jordan, Ph.D. - TNC  
Two years and 42 meetings – that's how long a dedicated group of 15 botanists, horticulture professionals and land managers from 14 different agencies and organizations have volunteered their time to assess the invasiveness of 180 plant species non-native to NYS. They used a ranking system developed by The Nature Conservancy and the Brooklyn Botanic Garden (BBG), which focuses on consequences to the native species and natural ecosystems of New York. The system is designed to be replicable, based on the best available science, clearly explained and fully documented.

First, BBG completed assessment forms for each species. Then, working under the auspices of the LI Invasive Species Management Area (LIISMA), the 15 members of the "Scientific Review Committee" (SRC), including Soil District Technician Polly Weigand, reviewed, revised, and approved the invasiveness ranks determined by BBG. To date, 69 species have ranked High or Very High and all determination decisions have been unanimous.

The New York State Invasive Species Council (NYS ISC) in consultation with the Invasive Species Advisory Committee, adopted the plant ranking system for use statewide in 2009. NYS ISC also accepted species' invasiveness ranks determined by BBG and the LIISMA SRC, and will use the ranks to inform future commerce regulations in New York State. In addition, the SRC's work has informed invasive species legislation and "Do Not Sell" lists in Nassau and Suffolk Counties.

You'd think SRC members would be ready to quit after debating the fine points of plant species' ecological impacts, reproductive capacities, modes of spread, difficulty of control, etc. for two years. But no: BBG and the SRC will meet two or three times a year to consider new potentially invasive species and to revisit previously assessed species in light of new information. A subgroup of the SRC may also contribute to efforts to develop a protocol for identifying sterile cultivars of invasive species that might be safe to sell.

**AGRICULTURE AND ENERGY**

by Nicole Spinelli

The Suffolk County Soil & Water Conservation District (District) hosted a series of energy workshops for the agricultural community in Suffolk County in 2009, coordinated by Soil District Technician, Nicole Spinelli.

The purpose of these workshops was to educate the local farming community on energy issues, a topic that has been paid little previous attention. With fuel and electricity costs continually on the rise and global warming knocking at the door, it is imperative that farms explore ways to improve their efficiency and implement renewable energy. The District brought the experts together to educate local farmers on the issues.

The first workshop was hosted on March 17 and was titled "Biofuels & Oil Seed Crops." Presenters at this meeting discussed their experiences growing and using oil seed crops, such as canola and camelina. The yields of the different crops were discussed and where they grow best.

The second workshop, "Small Wind Energy," was held on October 19<sup>th</sup> at a local farm in Baiting Hollow which installed a 10 kW Bergey Excel wind turbine. This farmer installed his wind turbine approximately 25 years ago and has been more than happy with its performance over the years. This machine is capable of producing enough electricity for a home or a small farm depending upon the individual usage. During this workshop a local renewable energy company, Windsine Inc., reviewed the nuts and bolts of siting and installing a wind turbine on the farm. The various components of a wind energy system (the inverter, tower and turbine) were viewed and discussed. The Long Island Power Authority (LIPA) was also on-hand to explain their wind rebate program and net metering. Net metering is the ability to sell back the excess electricity that the wind turbine generates for a "credit" that is available for future consumption when the turbine is not producing enough electricity.

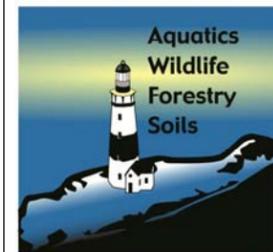
The final workshop was held in December and the topic was "On-Farm Energy Efficiency." During this workshop, Ensava Inc., a company which specializes in agricultural energy efficiency reviewed the various energy uses on farms and the methods/technologies available to improve efficiency. Areas in which a farm can conserve electricity are lighting, ventilation, refrigeration, and pumping. A simple way a farm can conserve electricity is to replace incandescent bulbs with compact fluorescent, cold cathode or LED lighting. A representative from LIPA was also present to speak on the commercial rebate program available for the purchase of energy efficient equipment. For example, a farm can get a rebate for lighting, pumps, variable frequency drives or refrigeration. To conclude the workshop a near-by farm was visited where a walk-through energy audit was conducted and Ensava pointed out ways the farm could improve their efficiency was highlighted.

These workshops served as a valuable source of information for farmers who are thinking about implementing a renewable energy or energy efficiency project on their farm. If you missed any of these workshops and would like more information feel free to contact the District office at 631-727-2315 x3.



Participants at the Small Wind Energy Workshop in Baiting Hollow.

**Long Island**



**Regional Envirothon**

**THE ENVIROTHON GOES GREEN**

by Sharon Frost

The Long Island Envirothon is an environmental studies competition for Nassau and Suffolk Counties high school students. This local component of the state and national competitions is held annually in late spring and is based on five subject areas; aquatics, forestry, soils, wildlife, and the current issue. Each station is managed by an expert in the field who develops and administers the exams. The five member teams rotate between the stations, working together to complete the exams. Each member of the winning teams, from Nassau and Suffolk, receives a \$500 scholarship, and paid registration and transportation to the state competition.

The first L.I. Envirothon was held in 1999 with four teams. Competing in 2009, a whopping 42 teams participated in the competition at Old Bethpage Restoration Village.

"We are approaching a participation level that will soon exceed the state event. This shows our commitment to coordinating a top quality environmental education program that is valued among Long Island teachers," said Sharon Frost L.I. Envirothon coordinator.

In 2009, the Long Island Envirothon committee pledged to organize a "green" event by reducing the amount of waste generated during the competition. Each of the 430 attendees: 250 students, 80 teachers and 100 volunteers, received a stainless steel water bottle. In addition, lunch was served with compostable plates and utensils made from corn. Leftover food was composted and paper, glass, and plastic were recycled. The end results were two mere bags of garbage for the landfill.

Sachem North High School took first place at the 2009 competition and went on to represent Suffolk County at the state level. Overcoming fierce competition, Sachem North was on the heels of five-time state winner, Tioga County, by scoring in the top three for the oral presentation and first in Aquatics. On August 4th the Suffolk County Legislators honored the Sachem North High School Envirothon team by presenting them with a Proclamation for their efforts on both the county and state levels.

"This was a proud moment for the Long Island Envirothon, the Suffolk County Soil and Water Conservation District, and the Sachem North School District. The students studied hard and displayed their knowledge of our natural resources", said Paul TeNyenhuis, Suffolk County Soil and Water Conservation District Manager.

The 2010 Long Island Envirothon will be held on April 28th at the Usdan Center for Creative and Performing Arts in Wheatley Heights.



From left to right Students Jessica McGlinchey and Jessica Thomas, Advisor Colleen Lohr, Envirothon coordinator Sharon Frost, Suffolk County Legislator Daniel Losquadro, Advisor Jaime Bhalla, Suffolk County Legislator Vivian Vilorio-Fisher, District Manager Paul TeNyenhuis, students Kaitlyn Bosch, Ruchi Shah, and Margaret Luebs.

**District services provided...**

**Agriculture**

- Engineering Practices
- Irrigation Design
- AEM
- Ag. Value Assessment
- Agronomic Practices
- Erosion Control
- Conservation Planning
- Pest Management Techniques
- Cost-share Programs
- Transition to Organic Farming Assistance
- Technical Assistance
- Practice, design & installation supervision
- Drainage Systems
- Agricultural Waste Systems

**Landowners**

- Bluff Erosion Recommendations
- Conservation Information
- Educational Materials
- Invasive Species
- Pond Assistance
- Soil Erosion & Drainage
- Soils Information
- Wetland Restoration Program
- Wildlife Management

**Education**

- Conservation Materials
- Program Guides

**Municipalities**

- Nonpoint Source Pollution Remediation
- Site Plan & Subdivision Reviews
- Grant Partnerships
- Watershed Management

**Environmental Consultants**

- Natural Resource Maps
- Aerial Photos



Bluff erosion site on the coast of Long Island Sound.