

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
- Long Island Agricultural Stewardship Working Group
- Long Island Ag. Forum Planning Committee
- Long Island Commission on Aquifer Protection
- Long Island Green Infrastructure Committee
- Long Island Invasive Species Management Area
- Long Island Native Plant Initiative
- Long Island Regional Envirothon
- Lower Hudson-Long Island Resource, Conservation & Development Council Inc.
- New York Association of Conservation Districts
- NYS Conservation District Employees Association
- New York State Envirothon
- NYS Invasive Species Advisory Committee
- North Shore Coastal Erosion Control Taskforce
- Peconic Estuary Technical Advisory Committee
- Suffolk County Ag. Stewardship Program
- Suffolk County Department of Health Services Peconic River Project
- Suffolk County Land & Water Invasive Species Advisory Board
- Suffolk County GIS Users Group
- Suffolk County Vector Control Long Range Planning Committee
- Swan River Advisory Committee
- South Shore Estuary Reserve
- Suffolk County Farmland Preservation Committee
- Suffolk County Water Quality Coordinating Committee

THE DISTRICT SAYS A BITTER SWEET GOOD-BYE TO JOE

by Sharon Frost



Joe Gergela at his retirement party held at Duck Walk Vineyard in Southold, New York.

After serving on the Suffolk County Soil and Water Conservation District Board for over twenty years, countless other Boards and committees on the local, state and federal levels and as LI Farm Bureau Executive Director for 26 years Joseph M. Gergela III retires. He was instrumental in leading the District through many transitions that assisted the local agricultural community with federal and state funding and using his influence at every turn.

"Joe always challenged us to work our hardest to support the farming

community in every way we could," said Paul TeNyenhuis Suffolk County Soil and Water Conservation District Manager.

Suffolk County Legislator Krupski from the 1st District and also a District Board member said, "Joe was a great advocate for agriculture and soil and water health. His experience and efforts brought long-term viability to the agricultural industry in Suffolk County."

Joe's undying dedication to the farming community over the years has pushed Suffolk farming to the number one most productive County in the state for many years.

Joe is one of a kind and will surely be missed.



Paul TeNyenhuis, District Manager.

LOOKING BACK ON 2014

Another very busy year behind us and a new one has just begun! As you can see from the list of committees that we participate in as displayed to the left, we have increased our participation in groups once again. In 2014 we were asked to be a part of a new task force created for the protection of the bluffs and beaches of the north shore of Long Island appropriately enough called the North Shore Coastal Erosion Control task force. One of the many duties here in the Suffolk County Soil

and Water Conservation District is to assess and make recommendations to stabilize beach and bluff erosion using the best known methods available. We do this in coordination with New York State Sea Grant, the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, the New York State Department of State, and the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service. Acting as a Team, we all contribute our Departments' respective knowledge to offer the homeowner or municipality the best options when confronted with the severe erosive forces of water and wind.

SUFFOLK COUNTY Soil & Water Conservation District

2014 YEAR IN REVIEW



Board of Directors

George Proios
Chairperson

Joe Gergela
Director
L.I. Farm Bureau

Phil Schmitt
Director
Farmer

Sarah Anker
Director
S.C. Legislator—District #6

Al Krupski
Director
S.C. Legislator - District #1

District Staff

Paul TeNyenhuis
District Manager

Elizabeth Condon
Principal Account Clerk

Polly Weigand
Sr. Soil District Technician

Sharon Frost
Soil District Technician

Ann Marie Calabro
Soil District Technician

USDA-NRCS Staff

Liz Camps
District Conservationist

Allan Connell
Conservation Specialist



At the anniversary celebration the District received many proclamations. From left to right: Sean Walters, Riverhead Supervisor; Legislator Sarah Anker, District #6; Phil Schmitt, District Board Member; Polly Weigand, SCSWCD; Paul TeNyenhuis, SCSWCD; Elizabeth Condon, SCSWCD; DuWayne Greggory, SC Legislator Presiding Officer; Ann Marie Calabro, SCSWCD; Legislator Al Krupski, District #1; Sharon Frost, SCSWCD; Joe Gergela, Long Island Farm Bureau; NYS Senator Kenneth LaValle; NYS Assemblyman Fred W. Thiele Jr., District #1; NYS Assemblyman Anthony Palumbo, District #2; August Ruckdeschel, SC Dept. of Economic Development of Planning; and Adam Santiago, Congressman Bishop's District Director.

THE DISTRICT RECEIVES SEVEN PROCLAMATIONS FOR ITS 50TH ANNIVERSITY

by Elizabeth Condon

The Suffolk County Soil and Water Soil Conservation District celebrated its 50th Anniversary with an open house event on September 18, 2014 from 2:00PM to 6:00PM in the Cornell Building in Riverhead. Dignitaries, Board members, farmers and the general public attended. The District staff displayed its efforts and accomplishments in assisting the farming community, landowners, and municipalities throughout the 50 years in partnership with their local, state, and federal partners: USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, LI Farm Bureau, Cornell Cooperative Extension of Suffolk County, NYS Soil & Water Conservation Committee, NYS DEC, NYS Dept. of Ag & Markets, NY Association of Conservation Districts, National Association of Conservation Districts, and NYS Soil & Water Conservation Districts Employees Association.

Guest speakers were invited to begin the opening ceremonies. Many municipalities were represented with awards and proclamations presented by the Suffolk County Legislature, the Towns of Riverhead and Brookhaven, NYS Assemblymen Fred Thiele and Anthony Palumbo, U. S. Congressman Tim Bishop, NYS Senator Kenneth LaValle and representatives from USDA Farm Service Agency and Natural Resources Conservation Service.

The history of Soil and Water Conservation Districts, and Suffolk County in particular, was highlighted. A plaque with past and present Suffolk Board of Directors and a poster of District staff dating back to 1964 were exhibited. Framed photo illustrations were hung on the walls of the conference room demonstrating installed ag practices, and examples of education and outreach programs, which included workshops, classes, conferences and events, such as the Envirothon. District Manager, Paul TeNyenhuis, presented Agricultural Environmental Management (AEM) awards to two farmers: Tom Wickham for the North Fork and John Halsey for the South Fork. Attendees were encouraged to observe a demonstration of the District's Ag Plastic Baler and a tour of the District's Rain Garden on the grounds. Refreshments of locally grown produce and baked goods, as well as handouts, were available to those attending. The anniversary was an opportunity to attract and familiarize the public with the many and varied services provided by the District, and to open communication channels among the District, municipalities, the farming community and the public. After advanced planning and hard work by the District staff, the media-covered event was celebrated with enthusiasm by all and considered a huge success!

Long Island Regional Envirothon
THE LONG ISLAND ENVIROTHON
 By Sharon Frost

The 2014 LI Envirothon was another successful event. We had 47 teams compete at the Usdan Center for the Creative and Performing Arts in Wheatley Heights, New York. Although the weather didn't cooperate we were fortunate to have Suffolk County Legislator Al Krupski address the students at the Awards Ceremony this year. In his inspirational speech, he told the students how he admired them for their dedication to Long Island's environment.

Wantagh and Sachem North High Schools took top honors for Nassau and Suffolk Counties, respectively. They went on to compete at the New York State Envirothon, which was held at SUNY Morrisville in May.

This local component of the state and national competitions held annually in late spring is based on five subject areas: aquatics, forestry, soils, wildlife, and the current issue, Sustainable Local Agriculture /Locally Grown.

Each member of the winning teams, from Nassau and Suffolk, received a \$500 scholarship. The LI Envirothon has awarded over \$60,000 in scholarship money in its tenure. In addition, each team received paid registration and transportation to the NYS Envirothon competition.

"We are very proud that our local elected officials acknowledge the importance of the program and the dedication, enthusiasm, and perseverance of the teachers and students who participate," said Sharon Frost, L.I. Envirothon Coordinator.

The 2015 LI Envirothon will be held on Tuesday, April 28th at the Old Bethpage Village Restoration, Old Bethpage, NY.

NYSDEC ENVIRONMENTAL EXCELLENCE AWARD
 by Sharon Frost

The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) recognized Suffolk County Soil and Water Conservation District for their Fuel Tank Replacement Program at the 11th Annual New York State Environmental Excellence Awards celebration.

"This year's awards recognize innovative programs, smart business decisions and unique collaborative initiatives that improve New York's environment and contribute to a stronger economy," said DEC Commissioner Joe Martens. "These organizations are models of excellence. They are having a positive impact on our economy and their voluntary, innovative and sustainable actions address the environmental challenges facing our communities, state, nation, and the world."

The DEC established the awards program in 2004 to recognize those who improve and protect New York's environment and contribute to a more healthy economy by advancing sustainable practices and forming creative partnerships. To date, DEC has recognized 60 award winners.

A statewide review committee, made up of 25 representatives from the public and private sectors, provided DEC advice in selecting the award winners from an array of competitive applications received in May 2014.

Suffolk County Soil and Water Conservation District's Fuel Tank Replacement Program is a model of excellence as it demonstrates an acceptable solution to aging agricultural fuel tanks atop Long Island's sole source aquifer. Through a unique partnership, farmers were able to install new tanks that met regulatory requirements at a reduced cost. The farmers participating in this proactive program are leaders in the agricultural industry and are setting a precedent for others to become good stewards of the environment.

In August 2011, the Suffolk County Department of Health Services (SCDHS) began implementing the "Agricultural Compliance Educational Program." It was created with the assistance of the Suffolk County Soil and Water Conservation District (District), Cornell Cooperative Extension, USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service, and the Long Island Farm Bureau. This five-year amnesty program was designed to assist farmers with fuel tank compliance issues.

The District began assisting with the program by applying to the *NYS Agricultural Nonpoint Source Abatement & Control Grant Program* to assist farmers with funding their fuel tank replacements. The District has obtained \$955,000 in federal and state funds to date, replacing 234 fuel tanks on 127 farms. The new fuel tanks meet the county, state, and federal requirements and have safeguarded over 82,000 gallons of on-farm fuel.



Sharon Frost accepting the NYSDEC Environmental Excellence Award from NYSDEC Commissioner Joseph Martens

SOIL HEALTH WORKSHOP
 by Polly Weigand



Maintaining soil health is vital on Long Island as its prime agricultural soils lend to high levels of agricultural production and valuation of this region. Unfortunately, the agronomic practices commonly applied to our sandy loams readily degrade soil health and its functional abilities to support production while buffering against erosion, leaching, disease, pests and weeds. Accordingly the District was very excited to be selected as one of the Counties across the State to receive funding from NYS Ag and Markets and USDA-NRCS allowing for the hosting of a Soil Health Workshop this August. This science-based workshop introduced soil principles and properties, identified the assets and liabilities of Long Island soils and the best management practices for soil health improvement. This progressive training was a critical educational opportunity as maintaining on-farm soil health is integral to ensuring productive, profitable, and sustainable agricultural operations while improving water, wildlife, and air quality.

A PEACHY DAY
 by Ann Marie Calabro

What a peachy day it was on September 5th, the sky was blue and the fields were green. Off in the distance you could see the trees beginning to turn the colors of autumn, a perfect day for a visit from Suffolk County Executive Steve Bellone and USDA NRCS State Conservationist Greg Kist. We gathered at the historic, AEM award winning Wickham's Fruit Farm where we all hopped on the wagon for a tractor ride. The farm tour was on behalf of the newly appointed Greg Kist to acquaint him with Suffolk County farming.

Tom Wickham graciously explained all the conservation practices he has implemented on his farm through the years while everyone enjoyed a peach they picked right off the trees as we cruised on by. Conservation practices implemented on Tom's farm include micro-irrigation, drip-irrigation, cover crop, high tunnels, agrichemical handling facility, fuel tank replacement, and engine replacement. These practices help to improve the qualities of plant, soil, and air, and reduce nutrient and pesticide transport and energy use.

Matt Pendleton of North Fork Nursery said, "I am impressed that the County Executive and the State Conservationist have come to recognize the diversity here and the obstacles we face." The farm tour was a bit of an eye opener to the creativity of our farmers and the variety of crops we produce here. We hope this opens a door to programs that suit the unique environment of Suffolk County farming.

Overall, the day was a great opportunity for all the partners to get together and have some input as to the challenges and needs of Long Island farm opera-



August Ruckdeschel, Suffolk County Dept. of Economic Development and Planning; Executive Director Joe Gergela, LI Farm Bureau; Suffolk County Executive Steve Bellone; Farmer Tom Wickham; NYS Conservationist Greg Kist, USDA NRCS; Becky Wiseman, SC CCE; Dale Moyer, SC CCE Matt Pendleton, North Fork Nursery Manager; Mabelle Simmons, USDA NRCS; and Liz Camps, USDA NRCS.

tions. In attendance were representatives from the SC SWCD, SC Executive's Office, SC Department of Economic Development and Planning, Long Island Farm Bureau, NRCS, Cornell Cooperative Extension, and some local cooperators. Following the farm tour we returned to the district office for a meet and greet where we discussed future considerations and the goals Mr. Kist has for Long Island. We would like to thank all those who attended and look forward to continued efforts to strengthen partnerships and advocacy for our producers.



County Executive Steve Bellone enjoys a fresh picked peach from Tom Wickham's orchard.

District services provided...

- Agriculture**
- Engineering Practices
 - Irrigation Design
 - Agricultural Environment Management
 - Ag. Value Assessment
 - Agronomic Practices
 - Erosion Control
 - Conservation Planning
 - Cost-Share Programs
 - Transition to Organic Farming
 - Technical Assistance
 - Practice, Design & Installation Supervision
 - Drainage Systems
 - Agricultural Waste Systems

- Landowners**
- Bluff Shoreline Erosion Recommendations
 - Conservation Information
 - Educational Materials
 - Invasive Species Management
 - Pond Assistance
 - Sediment & Erosion Control
 - Soils Information
 - Habitat and Restoration
 - 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



A bluff erosion site in Kings Park, N.Y.