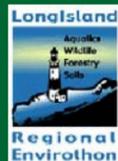


## COMMITTEES

- Beaver Dam Creek Tributary Restoration Task Force
- Cornell University's L.I. Horticultural Research & Extension Center—Advisory Council
- Earth Team Coordinator
- L.I. Agricultural Stewardship Working Group
- L.I. Ag Forum Planning Committee
- L.I. Regional Envirothon
- Long Island Weed Management Area Working Group
- Lower Hudson-L.I. Resource Conservation & Development Council
- 2007 Canon Envirothon Committee
- NYS Conservation District Employees Association
- NYS Envirothon
- L.I. Sound Study North Shore Embayment Watershed Planning Program
- L.I. Native Grass Initiative
- Peconic Estuary Technical Advisory Committee
- Suffolk County Dept. of Health Services Peconic River Project
- Suffolk County Vector Control Long Range Planning Committee
- Suffolk County Water Quality Protection & Restoration—Review Committee
- South Shore Estuary Reserve



The Rocky Point H.S. team was the Suffolk County winner of the 2005 L.I. Regional Envirothon.

The L.I. Envirothon, organized by District staff, is an environmental studies competition for high school students held annually at St. John's University Oakdale campus in April. It is the local component of the national competition. "We were proud to send the Rocky Point students to represent Suffolk in the state competition", said Sharon Frost, of the District. The 2006 competition will held on April 26, 2006.



Rocky Point H.S. students at the 2005 LI Envirothon

## AWARDS, AWARDS, AWARDS

The Suffolk County Soil and Water Conservation District (District) and the United State Department of Agriculture Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) staff were the recipients of several outstanding service awards presented by the NYS Conservation District Employees Association (NYSCDEA) and the USDA this year.

Paul TeNyenhuis, Senior Soil District Technician, received the Division Merit Award from the NYSCDEA recognizing his exceptional efforts in promoting the District and its activities.



From left to right: Tom McMahon, District, District Manager, Paul TeNyenhuis, District Senior Soil Technician, and Allan Connell, NRCS, District Conservationist.

Allan Connell, NRCS, received the Special Award given to non-District staff who have promoted and supported soil and water conservation through District programs and activities. Allan is an asset to the District and is well deserving of this award.

Tom McMahon, District Manager was the recipient of the William F. Crony Distinguished Service Award. This is the highest honor bestowed upon an employee for lifetime achievement in the promotion of soil and water conservation.

Office staff were also proud recipients of the United States Department of Agriculture – Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) annual statewide awards. This year's ceremony was exceptionally unique because Suffolk field office staff were honored with five awards.

George Proios, District Board Chairman, was recognized by the NRCS with a "Team Excellence Award" for his participation in organizing the 2005 Mid-Atlantic Association of RC&D Councils Annual Meeting this past September. His organizational skills were found invaluable by the Resource Conservation & Development (RC&D) as the committee planned this 3-day event for 125 people.

Polly Weigand, District Technician received the "Partner of the Year Award" for her exceptional efforts in assisting the NRCS in the implementation of Farm Bill programs. Her knowledge in conservation practices has benefited the agricultural community and has increased federal grant dollars brought into Suffolk County from highly competitive programs. She is also involved with invasive species programs and native grass initiatives.

Allan Connell, NRCS District Conservationist, received three awards. The first was "Team Excellence Award" for his part on the 2005 New York Conservation Security Program (CSP) Team. CSP administered under Allan's leadership has brought over \$500,000 to the County recognizing farmers for their everyday conservation practices. Allan received a second "Team Excellence Award" for his participation on the "Toolkit Support Team". Toolkit is new software used by NRCS to better execute federal grant programs. In addition, Allan received the "Individual Excellence Award" for the high quality of his accomplishments.

Brian Zimmerman, NRCS Soil Conservation Technician, was recognized for his part on the 2005 New York Conservation Security Program (CSP) Team by also receiving the "Team Excellence Award."



From left to right: Allan Connell, NRCS, District Conservationist, Polly Weigand, District Soil Technician, and Joe DeVecchio, NRCS State Conservationist.

# Suffolk County Soil & Water Conservation District



# YEAR IN REVIEW

## Board of Directors

George Proios  
Chairperson  
Member at Large

Brian X. Foley  
Director  
County Legislator

Daniel P. Losquadro  
Director  
County Legislator

Lloyd Corwin  
Director  
Farmer

Joe Gergela  
Director  
L.I. Farm Bureau

## District Staff

Thomas McMahon  
District Manager

Elizabeth Condon  
Sr. Account Clerk Typist

Paul TeNyenhuis  
Sr. Soil District Technician

Sharon Frost  
Soil District Technician

Nicole Spinelli  
Soil District Technician

Polly Weigand  
Soil District Technician

Dave Gaspar  
Stormwater Control  
Specialist

## USDA-NRCS

Allan Connell  
District Conservationist

Brian Zimmerman  
Soil Conservation  
Technician

## THE DISTRICT AND NYS DEC TEAM UP

The Suffolk County Soil and Water Conservation District (District) and the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYS DEC) joined forces this year resulting in an Environmental Benefit Project that will protect Long Island's groundwater. The program will assist farmers in funding the construction of Agrichemical Mixing Facilities. "This is the first partnership of its kind in New York State and has targeted millions, over the next few years, to be spent on the protection of our crucial Sole Source Aquifer," said George Proios Chairman of the District's Board of Directors.

An Agrichemical Mixing Facility is a structure designed to provide an area for mixing on-farm chemicals such as pesticides and herbicides. It protects the environment by containing these chemicals during the loading of field sprayers and washdown of the tractor and sprayer. Paul TeNyenhuis, Senior Soil District Technician, designed the mixing facility under close scrutiny of the United States Department of Agriculture - Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) Area Engineers. "I worked closely with the NRCS engineers on this design. It meets the stiff standards and specifications developed especially for New York State. This facility gives farmers a contained area to mix their pesticides and prevents any possible overflow from reaching the ground," said Paul.



This Agrichemical Mixing Facility was installed last year under the supervision of the District staff.

"Long Island farmers are fortunate to have the dedication of the District's staff in assisting them with projects such as this one. Future generations will be grateful for their hard work," said Joe Gergela, Executive Director of the Long Island Farm Bureau and Board Member of the District.

The cost of constructing each Agrichemical Mixing Facility is approximately \$25,000. However, less expensive portable units are available. The funding provided by this project will reimburse farmers 75% of the total cost and was collected by the DEC from violations imposed on local entities. The NYS DEC authorizes regional offices to collect fines, deposit them into Environmental Benefit Funds, and reinvest them locally.

"The partnership that has formed between the NYS DEC and the District to execute a project of this magnitude sets a precedent for all governmental agencies to work cooperatively towards a common goal of environmental preservation", said Legislator Foley, another Board member. Legislator Daniel Losquadro, also a District Board member added, "the protection of Long Island's groundwater is of vital importance to all of us in Suffolk County."

"I look forward to working with the District in implementing this important project. Our working relationship has developed from years of common goals benefiting Long Island's environment," said Vincent Palmer, NYS DEC.

"Many farmers have showed an interest in installing the Agricultural Mixing Facilities on their property in the past; however, the cost was too high. With the funding now available I am very optimistic about the success of this program. The implementation and administration will be well worth the potential environmental benefits," said Tom McMahon, District Manager.

Construction of these facilities are projected to begin as early as Spring 2006.

**NYACD DISTINGUISHED SERVICE AWARD**



George Proios was honored with the NYACD Distinguished Service Award in October at the 2005 New York Association of Conservation Districts' annual meeting in Alexandria Bay. George's dedication to the Soil & Water Conservation Districts is well-known throughout the state.

**INTERN CHRIS TERRY**



Chris traveled to Long Island to work for the USDA-NRCS as an intern straight from the West Coast. She is a graduate student at San Francisco State University majoring in environmental studies. Chris was helpful all around the office and took on many responsibilities. She has a background in computers that came in very handy as all conservation plans are now maintained electronically. She also assisted in land surveying, and the design of conservation practices such as diversions and irrigation systems. Chris came to work with a smile, a great attitude and new insights. Her stay was short (10 weeks) but we think of her often and wish her well.



The District welcomes Rebecca Wiseman to Cornell Cooperative Extension as a partner staff. Becky will be coordinating the Agricultural Environmental Stewardship Program. Becky, formerly the Associate Director of the Long Island Farm Bureau, comes to us with a wealth of knowledge in the local agriculture industry and passion for working with farmers. The program will benefit from Becky's leadership.

**SUFFOLK GETS \$736,000 IN FEDERAL GRANTS**

Thirty farms have been awarded over 736,000 dollars in federal grant money, thanks to the working partnership of the Suffolk County Soil & Water Conservation District (District) and United States Department of Agriculture – Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). The grant money has been awarded through four federally funded cost share programs: Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), Agricultural Management Assistance (AMA), Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program (WHIP) and the Conservation Security Program (CSP). The funding will be used to implement Best Management Practices (BMPs) on more than 2,077 acres of farmland within Suffolk County.

The purpose of both programs is to promote viable agriculture and good land stewardship as compatible goals for farmers. The specifications of the grant are consistent with the county's priorities that include the protection of our groundwater and surface water.

The process begins with the District and NRCS staff gathering information from farmers about their operation using the Agricultural Environmental Management (AEM) worksheets. AEM employs a series of questionnaires created by professionals in New York State. With this information the staff develops a conservation plan suited for the individual farm. These plans are instrumental in determining the BMPs that will best serve everyone.

"This is a significant accomplishment on the part of Suffolk District staff. It shows their adeptness in forming partnerships with other agencies, their knowledge of the federal grant process and wherewithal to apply this to eradicating the environmental issues we face in Suffolk County. It's a win win situation for all of us," said George Proios, District Board Chairman.

The farms that have received grants are located in the following townships:

- In Brookhaven, three farms totaling 50 acres will be receiving over \$26,600. This includes the *Hamlet Organic Garden*, a Community Supported Agriculture farm located in the Village of Brookhaven.

Community Supported Agriculture is a group of civic minded people who pledge financial support to a farm operation by purchasing a "member-share." By pledging in advance, it covers the anticipated costs of the farm operation for that season; in return, the member receives shares in the farm's bounty throughout the growing season. By direct sales to community members who have provided the farmer with working capital in advance, growers receive better prices for their crops, gain some financial security, and are relieved of the burden of marketing.



Community Supported Agriculture provides financial security for farmers.

- In East Hampton, one 80-acre nursery will receive a total of \$22,500 through the federally funded CSP. This program provides financial awards to farmers who have implemented conservation practices. Suffolk County farmers will receive \$591,000 from this program over the next 5 years.
- In Riverhead, nine farms totaling 429 acres will receive over \$250,000 in federal funds. BMPs chosen for implementation will help improve air and water quality and reduce soil erosion.
- In Smithtown one 21-acre orchard will receive \$23,000 through CSP. "This is an example of the respect the agricultural community has for the District and NRCS. Their ability to command the attention of Suffolk County's farmers is an asset for all of us," said Joe Gergela, Executive Director of the Long Island Farm Bureau.
- In Southold, eleven farms totaling 1360 acres, will receive over \$287,349 for implementing BMPs. The BMPs these farmers have chosen to implement will help protect the Peconic Bay Estuary.
- In Southampton, three farms will receive a total \$130,868. This astounding accomplishment includes one WHIP grant. WHIP is a voluntary program for farmers who want to develop and improve wildlife habitat. It provides technical assistance and up to 75% cost-share to establish and improve wildlife habitat. WHIP agreements generally last from 5 to 10 years.

"It would be impossible for the NRCS staff to administrator this level of grant activity without the help of the District staff. We are fortunate to have the opportunity to work together in implementing conservation practices on farms in Suffolk County," said Allan Connell, NRCS District Conservationist.



**AGRICULTURAL STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM**

The Agricultural Stewardship Program, based on Agricultural Environmental Management (AEM), was established through a unique partnership formed between the Suffolk County Soil & Water Conservation District (District), United States Department of Agriculture - Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) and Cornell Cooperation Extension (CCE) to assist Suffolk County in achieving it's goals of reducing nutrients and pesticides in the groundwater. In 2003, Suffolk County Legislature initiated this program when they appointed an Agricultural Task Force to make recommendations achieving their goals. A year later the Task Force presented a proposal that included forming the Agricultural Stewardship Program which uses components of the AEM program focusing on pesticide and nutrient management. The program is designed to attain the county's goals of protecting groundwater while preserving the viable agricultural industry. Funding for the program is provided through the *Water Quality Protection and Restoration Fund*.

The Agricultural Stewardship Program is a self evaluation program that educates farmers. "This voluntary incentive based program facilitates identifying and managing non-point source water quality issues. It begins by forming a partnership of governmental agencies and farmers working towards productive farms and healthy watersheds. I am confident in the local leadership provided by the District and in this unique program benefiting both farmers and county residents," said Joe Gergela, Executive Director of the L.I. Farm Bureau.

The Agricultural Stewardship Program streamlines the AEM worksheets to focus on nutrient and pesticide management. AEM is a five tier program; Tier 1, basic farm information is collected; Tier 2, farmers answer questions specific to their operation; Tier 3, a conservation plan is developed, tailored to meet the farms stewardship needs; Tier 4 involves the implementation of the plan; and Tier 5 evaluates the farm's management practices to ensure continued environmental stewardship and business viability.

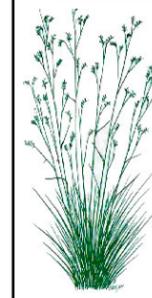
With the Suffolk County Legislature's approval, the District, NRCS and CCE began developing the program and it soon became apparent that a coordinator was needed. Rebecca Wiseman, formerly Associate Director of the Long Island Farm Bureau, was the perfect fit because of her familiarity with the local farmers. "This experience has given me the opportunity to apply my background knowledge of the agricultural industry and learn the importance of farm conservation and good land stewardship," said Becky.

The process begins by helping farmers to complete the AEM Pest and Nutrient Management Tier 2 Worksheets which have been customized to focus on Long Island's individual unique farming operations. The technical staff reviews the worksheets and develops a report based on the farmers' answers. In the report, reference is made to both good stewardship practices and recommendations for improvement. "The reports are designed to encourage the continuation of good stewardship practices already being implemented on agricultural operations while assisting farmers with realistic recommendations," said Dale Moyer, CCE Agriculture Program Director.

"Our next step is to offer the farmers the opportunity to have a complete conservation plan developed, which can lead to eligibility for federally funded cost-share programs," added Allan Connell, NRCS District Conservationist.

"The Agricultural Stewardship Program is consistent with both state and county objectives to support the agricultural industry in reduction of pesticide and nutrient input, therefore protecting our surface and groundwater from contamination," said Tom McMahon, District Manager.

**NATIVE GRASS INITIATIVE**



A new initiative has been undertaken by the District to help preserve the genetic heritage of Long Island's environment through the formation of The Long Island Native Grass Initiative (LINGI). This initiative spear headed by Polly Weigand, Soil District Technician, is a working group of governmental and non profit organizations and Plant industry professionals whose goal is to create a source of warm season grass seed native to Long Island (native genotyped) for use in habitat restoration and landscaping activities.

The concept of using true native genotyped plants within landscaping and restoration activities has gained notoriety within the scientific community in recent years, as wild lands continue to be encroached upon by development and invasive species. Currently, there are limited sources of native grasses, forbs, shrubs, and trees for use in grassland restoration or landscaping situations on Long Island. This has created continuous reliance on cultivars from other areas of the United States that may not be genetically adapted for the harsh droughty and sandy Long Island environment. The LINGI hopes to provide a new plant alternative within the nursery industry by creating our own source of Long Island native grass seed.

**District services provided...**

- Agriculture**
- Engineering Practices
  - Irrigation Design
  - Ag. Value Assessment
  - Agronomic Practices
  - Erosion Control
  - Conservation Planning
  - Pest Management Techniques
  - Cost-share Programs
  - Transition to Organic Farming Assistance



Surveying for the installation of a grassed waterway on a farm in Amagansett is a typical part of the design application.

- Technical Assistance
  - Installation Supervision
  - Drainage Systems
  - Agricultural Waste Systems
- Landowners**
- Bluff Erosion Recommendations
  - Conservation Information
  - Educational Materials
  - Wildlife Watering Facilities
  - Pond Assistance
  - Soil Erosion & Drainage
  - Soils Information
  - Wetland Restoration Program
  - Wildlife Management
- Education**
- Conservation Materials
  - Programs Guides
- Municipalities**
- Nonpoint Source Pollution Remediation
  - Site Plan & Subdivision Reviews
  - Grant Partnerships
  - Watershed Management



District staff designed & supervised the installation of vertical drains along this hoop house in Riverhead.