



SUFFOLK COUNTY Soil & Water Conservation District

—2019— Year In Review

Board of Directors

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Principal Account Clerk

Ann Marie Calabro
Agronomist

Sharon Frost
Soil District Technician

Kaitlin R. Shahinian
Soil District Technician

Edward Compagnone
Soil District Technician

USDA-NRCS Staff

Liz Camps
District
Conservationist

Allan Connell
Conservation
Specialist



Pastureland recently seeded using the Truax No-Till Drill.



The Truax No-Till Drill, ready to be used out in the fields!

Soil Health Equipment Loan Program (H.E.L.P.)

By Kaitlin Shahinian

The Soil Health Equipment Loan Program (H.E.L.P.) provides opportunities for Suffolk County agricultural producers to improve their farm's soil productivity, structure, organic matter, infiltration and overall health of the soil on their farm. The goal of the program is to have producers utilize specialized equipment that provide a basis for healthier soil, resulting in minimized soil disturbances and increased annual yield. The intent of this program is to provide the best tools possible to address the soil conservation needs of Suffolk County producers. To meet these goals, SWCD partnered with Cornell Cooperative Extension's Agricultural Stewardship Program, as well as Cornell University's Long Island Horticultural Research and Extension Center. This program is an aspect of the SWCD's Soil Health Initiative. Six pieces of farm equipment, typically utilized for conservation stewardship efforts, are available for loan at no cost. This includes:

- Truax No-Till Drill,
- New Holland Box Spreader,
- Unverferth Zonebuilder (2-Shank),
- Unverferth Zonebuilder (4-Shank); and
- (2x) ABI Spreaders

With the pilot year almost complete, we are seeking feedback from producers on ways to improve the program. Soil H.E.L.P. will continue to assist the agricultural community in conserving and improving the health of county soils as well as protect the soil from erosion and other physical limiting factors.

For more information, please contact the District Office at: (631) 852-3285

The Comprehensive Soil Health Testing Program

By Kaitlin Shahinian

Again in 2019, the District has partnered with Cornell Cooperative Extension's Dr. Deb Aller and the Agricultural Stewardship Program to provide the Comprehensive Soil Health Testing Program to Suffolk County farmers interested monitoring and managing the soil health on their farm. The testing goes beyond the basic nutrient testing of a standard soil test by using the Cornell University Assessment of Soil Health (C.A.S.H.) Test. Our goal is to provide this service to the public at no cost as to not discourage individuals from participating due to the cost of sampling.



The program officially began its pilot year in 2018. Sampling was conducted on 12 farms, ranging a variety of commodities. This past year, the District coordinated again with CCE's Ag Stewardship to gather 74 samples on an additional 28 farms. Between 2018 and 2019, a total of 100 soil health samples were collected from a wide variety of farms throughout the County. Samples were taken as far west as Amityville, to farms based in Orient Point, Shelter Island, and Sagaponack.

For more information, please contact the District Office at: (631) 852-3285

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 Suffolk County.

2019 Farm Tire Recycling Project

By Sharon Frost

In September 2017, NYS Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) released the final regulations for Part 360 – Solid Waste Management. It includes limits on storage of waste tires on farms. They site increased health concerns about the Zika Virus, West Nile, and other diseases transmitted by mosquitoes. The new law took effect on May 2nd, 2018.

In August 2019, five new mosquito samples from Manorville tested positive for eastern equine encephalitis. This rare, but deadly illness poses a health concern for both humans and horses. The farm tire recycling program held this past summer by the Suffolk County Soil and Water Conservation District was organized similar to the NYS DEC Pesticide Collection or SWEEP. Postcards were mailed to all farms in Suffolk County in April to gauge interest. On May 9th, at the District Board Meeting, \$14,400.00 was approved for the Farm Tire Recycling Program for the initial cost. Additionally, at the July 18th, 2019 Board Meeting, the program received an extra \$11,568.00 for three more trailers, totaling: \$25,968.00 in program funds for 2019.



Farm tires being dropped off by farmers at the Southold Transfer Station and being collected by Casing Inc.



Farm tires being loaded up to be transferred.

Forty-eight farmers registered and gave a tire count. Approximately 800 small tires were picked up on various farms. An additional 60.5 tons of truck and tractor tires were either dropped off at the Southold Transfer Station, or picked up on farms. We worked with Casing Inc. in Bay Shore again this year. Casing's staff were on-site for every collection and were a great help loading the tires onto the trailers. The 2019 Farm Tire Recycling Program was very successful and we hope to continue this effort in 2020.

For more information, please contact the District office at: [\(631\) 852-3285](tel:(631)852-3285)

Soil Health in Pastures and Pasture Management Workshop

By Ann Marie Calabro

In September 2019, the Suffolk County Soil and Water Conservation District, Cornell Cooperative Extension and American Farmland Trust lead a field day on 'Soil Health in Pastures and Pasture Management'. The field day, hosted by Acabonac Farms in Middle Island, was designed to increase farmers knowledge of different management strategies, nutrient cycling, soil fertility, soil health practices, forage needs and quality, and get an up-close look at Acabonac Farms unique grazing operation.



Acabonac Farm's curious Beef Cattle in Pasture.

American Farmland Trust presented on local farmer case studies focused on the economic feasibility of increasing adoption of soil health building practices.

Additionally, with support from Peconic Land Trust, we provided a demo of the Truax No-Till Drill that is available for farmers to use through the Soil HELP program. Information was provided on conservation planning, funding availability, on-going programs, farm equipment for soil conservation, as well as current and future soil health efforts in Suffolk County.

Agriculture in the Classroom Grant Program

By Kaitlin Shahinian

2019 marked the third year the Agriculture in the Classroom Grant Program has been promoting agricultural education and providing funding for the development, sustainability, and expansion of agricultural education programs in Suffolk County schools. Since the program began in 2017, 12 schools in Suffolk County have been awarded funding for their agricultural education projects. The goal of this grant is to increase awareness of local agricultural production in Suffolk County and to strengthen the connection students have with healthy, fresh, local foods.



Students from Westhampton Beach Elementary School digging up potatoes from their raised garden beds.

In 2019, five schools were awarded funds for their agriculture education projects. These projects include the creation of multiple raised garden beds, expansions of greenhouses, and materials needed for student-built hydroponic systems.

The awardees for this past year are:

- Brentwood Union Free School District
- Dawnwood Middle School
- EJ Bosti Elementary School
- Oxhead Road Elementary School
- Westhampton Beach Elementary School



Hydroponic System made by Technology students from Brentwood High School.

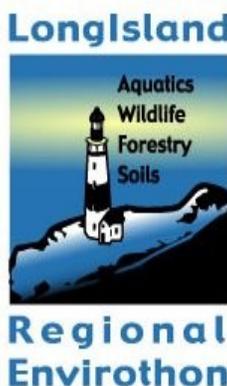
For more information, please visit our website at: www.suffolkSWCD.org

The Long Island Envirothon By Sharon Frost

The 2019 LI Envirothon was another successful event. The current issue topic for this past year was *Agriculture and the Environment: Knowledge and technology to feed the world*. 47 teams from across LI competed at the Old Bethpage Village Restoration in Nassau County. Although the weather didn't cooperate as much as we would have liked, we were fortunate to have Al Krupski, Suffolk County Legislator and farmer, speak at this year's Welcoming Ceremony. In his inspirational speech, he told the students how he admired their dedication to Long Island's environment. We also had Rob Carpenter, Executive Director of the Long Farm Bureau, speak to the students at the Awards Ceremony. His impressive speech inspired and motivated the students to protect, restore and preserve the natural environment. Teams from Great Neck South and Sachem North High Schools took top honors for Nassau and Suffolk Counties, respectively. The winning teams went on to compete at the New York State Envirothon, which was held at Hobart William Smith Colleges, Geneva, New York.

This local component of the state and national Envirothon competitions is held annually in late spring and is based on five subject areas: aquatics, forestry, soils, wildlife, and a current issue. Each member of the winning teams, from Nassau and Suffolk, received a \$500 scholarship. The Envirothon has awarded over \$92,000 in scholarship money in its tenure. In addition to scholarships, winning teams also receive paid registration and transportation to the NYS Envirothon competition. We are very proud that our local elected officials acknowledge the importance of the program as well as the dedication, enthusiasm, and perseverance of the teachers and students who participate.

The 2020 LI Envirothon will be held on Wednesday, April 29th at the Suffolk County Farm in Yaphank, New York. For more information, please visit our website at www.LIEnvirothon.org



COMMITTEES

- Cornell University's Long Island Horticultural Research Extension Center - Advisory Council
- Environmental Education Foundation of Soil & Water Districts
- Long Island Agricultural Stewardship Working Group
- Long Island Ag. Forum Planning Committee
- Long Island Commission on Aquifer Protection
- Long Island Regional Envirothon
- New York Association of Conservation Districts
- NYS Conservation District Employees Association
- New York State Envirothon
- 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
- South Shore Estuary Reserve
- Suffolk County Farmland Preservation Committee
- Suffolk County Water Quality Coordinating Committee

Rain Gardens: Linking Water, Wildlife, and Wisdom By Kaitlin Shahinian

The District has implemented several rain garden projects, as a means of addressing a multitude of water quality issues present on Long Island. This past year, the District supported the Long Island Explorium in their efforts to create a large rain garden project in Port Jefferson. Using the topics of Water, Wildlife, and Wisdom, these native plant rain gardens will be used as an demonstrative, educational tool for the public to learn about watershed health. These rain gardens will also be functional in improving water quality by reducing nutrient loading, stormwater runoff, and nonpoint source loading into the Long Island Sound. These projects are aimed to educate the public on the social and environmental factors that impact the health and stability of a watershed, as well as the importance of maintaining the water quality of a watershed.

-2019 INTERN-

An Inventory of Invasive Species in Artist Lake

By Corey Humphrey



In an effort to eradicate invasive species in Suffolk County, the SWCD enlisted the help of our intern, Patrick Salaway, from Blue Point, New York to inventory and evaluate Artist Lake in Middle Island for several months. He conducted weekly site visits in spring of 2019 to collect water quality data and identify invasive species in the lake that includes: Mugwort, Oriental Bittersweet, and Tree of Heaven. Patrick authored a detailed report on his findings to provide a foundation for future management efforts at the site. We wish Patrick luck as he is in his senior year at SUNY New Paltz, where he majors in Biology.

A Send off For Allan Connell

By Liz Camps



The time has come to wish an excellent farewell to a long-time conservationist, Allan Connell. Allan has been an integral part of NRCS for over 40 years, and after his retirement in 2011, he came back to help us with planning and design for another eight years. He has enjoyed every second of his retirement, but now he is finally saying goodbye for good. Allan is looking forward to more traveling around the world with his wife, spending more time with his children and grandchildren, and just having fun.

Allan, you have done so much for the agriculture community. We all wish you the best in the next phase of your life and hope you have many more adventures with your family.

Bon voyage.



The District welcomes a new Soil District Technician!



Ed Compagnone is a recent addition to SWCD, and a long time environmental steward. Ed graduated from Binghamton University in 2015 with a degree in Environmental Science with a concentration in natural resource management. He has worked the ground up in the solar energy industry, from installation to behind the scenes of a Solarize New York campaign. Ed has developed a soft spot for vertical agriculture systems after working as a mycologist with a small startup farm. In his free time he enjoys listening to live music and trail running. He looks forward to bringing his previous experience with energy conservation practices and agriculture to coincide with the goals of Suffolk County's Soil and Water Conservation District.

LOOKING BACK ON 2019

Corey Humphrey, C.P.E.S.C. — District Manager



"I can't believe it is December already!" Somehow the end of the year always seems to have a way of creeping up on us. The hustle and bustle of the holiday season can be overwhelming, but it is critical to carve out time to reflect and celebrate on all that 2019 has brought us. This year was quite eventful and kept the Suffolk County Soil and Water Conservation District very busy implementing our stellar projects and programs that preserve Suffolk County's natural resources. These efforts include our Soil Health Initiative (Comprehensive Soil Testing, Soil Health Equipment Loan Program, and Pasture Workshop), Farm Tire Recycling, 2019 Agriculture in the Classroom education grants, Stormwater remediation projects and agricultural conservation planning efforts.

Andrew Carnegie famously said "Teamwork is the ability to work together toward a common vision. The ability to direct individual accomplishments toward organizational objectives. It is the fuel that allows common people to attain uncommon results." The same is true for the dedicated staff of the Suffolk SWCD who work tirelessly to provide critical services and opportunities to the residents of our County. I want to thank Agronomist Ann Marie Calabro, Soil District Technicians Sharon Frost, Kaitlin Shahinian, Edward Compagnone and Principal Account Clerk Susan Odell-Pepe for their dedication throughout the year. Our success in protecting Suffolk County's natural resources is directly correlated to their hard work, cooperation and unparalleled professionalism. I am very proud of all the work we have done to date and excited to continue this momentum in 2020.

From my family to yours, I wish everyone a happy and healthy new year.