

T I O G A C O U N T Y  
**SOIL & WATER**  
 C O N S E R V A T I O N D I S T R I C T

*Contours of Conservation Winter 2020 Newsletter*

<https://www.tiogacountyny.com/programs-agencies/soil-and-water/>

## Tioga County SWCD Celebrates 75 Years

By: Miranda Palmer

On November 27, 1944, the Tioga County Legislature, decided to make the preservation of the counties natural resources a priority. In doing so, the legislature authorized the creation of what is today known as the Tioga County Soil and Water Conservation District. The District's core mission is to assist individual landowners, groups and units of government with any natural resource concern that is brought before it. This may take the form of technical advice, technical assistance or finding a solution through another entity. As the District celebrates our 75th anniversary this year, District Manager Wendy Walsh reflected on the programs, projects and staff that have worked to strengthen the conservation ethic in our county and protect our natural resources. Over the years, the District has strived to develop programs that deliver benefits to our municipalities, landowners and agricultural operations in the county. Our primary focus has been on meeting local needs but also making sure the work we do will provide both regional and watershed wide improvements.

Across the United States, there are nearly 3,000 conservation districts. The core mission of each district is to conserve and promote healthy soils, water, forest and wildlife. Whether decades ago or here and now, protecting resources is a crucial cause. Over the last few years, the District has purchased two no-till drills to assist farmers with no-till planting, purchased a new hydroseeder to assist municipalities with the seeding of critical areas, and expanded office spaces for our growing staff.



Installation of a lined manure pit in the Town of Candor, 1966



Environmental Youth Corps, August 1978

## Continued: Tioga County SWCD Celebrates 75 Years

Ron Dougherty, current Tioga County Soil and Water Board Member explains, “Wendy Walsh and the current Soil and Water team deserve a great deal of credit for all they do in continuing this 75 year legacy of preserving Tioga Counties’ natural resources.”

Today the Tioga County Soil and Water Conservation District assists with:

- **Agricultural Conservation** - By working with local farms, the District focuses on the preservation of natural resources through the implementation of conservation practices. Some of these practices include the installation of riparian buffer areas, no-till planting, structural practices such as heavy-use protection areas and planting cover crops.
- **Urban Conservation** - A district favorite of many community members is our annual tree and shrub seedling sale, held in April of every year. The sale gives an opportunity for rural landowners to learn more about backyard conservation practices that can help promote healthy soil and water on their property and throughout the community.
- **Environmental Education** – Every year the District makes it an effort to put boots on the ground and participate in education and outreach events throughout the county. You’ll catch us at the Tioga County Fair, the Candor Daffodil fest, and even in schools throughout the county. We also love to partner with local community groups to hold pot up events and plant riparian areas!
- **Stream Conservation** – By walking and inventorying different watersheds throughout the county, our staff is able to take information gathered to monitor stream health and prioritize areas in need that are consistently affected by flooding, debris damage, and erosion. The District works with towns, municipalities, and private landowners to provide technical assistance to promote stream health throughout the county.

As programs and services continue to grow, the District looks forward to making natural resource conservation and preservation in the County a priority. To learn more about the District, visit us at [Tiogawcd.org](http://Tiogawcd.org), stopping by our main office located at 183 Corporate Drive Owego, or giving us call 607-687-3553. Be sure to follow us on Facebook @TiogaSWCD for updates and program opportunities! Here’s to another 75 years!



Hydroseeding in Kirby Park, September 2012



Riparian buffer planted at Hickories Park, 2018



## Upcoming Agricultural Funding Opportunities:

By: Danielle Singer

Here are a few of the upcoming agricultural funding opportunities. Please contact the District for more information if you are interested in any of them, we can assist your farm in meeting the eligibility requirements for these grants.

### Agricultural Non-Point Source Abatement and Control Program: Winter 2020

This is a state-wide grant geared toward improving water quality on farms. This is important because we need healthy water to survive and keeping excess nutrients and sediment out of our waterways and aquifers is crucial. Examples of projects are manure storages, concrete barnyards, stream stabilization, milk house waste systems, bunk silos and collection systems for the leachate, and rotational grazing systems with water and fence.



### Climate Resilient Farming: Winter 2020



This state-wide grant strives to reduce the operational effect to the environment on farms and to address the impacts to farms of extreme weather events related to changing climates. This grant offers manure storage covers and flares, water management on farms and soil health practices for pastures and crop fields. Farms experiencing negative impacts from extreme weather events can find solutions for their farm through their District and this grant helps implement those practices.

### Conservation Reserve Program: Start December 1st, Continuous Sign-up

This is a federal program through the USDA offices of NRCS and FSA. The program enrolls land in conservation easements for 10-15 years in various practices. Most common are riparian buffers along streams, wetlands and whole fields for grasslands. There are incentives for signing up for these programs and farms/landowners receive a yearly rental payment for the land enrolled. \*\*\*Riparian Buffers have an extra state incentive payment which is 20x the soil rental rate of the land, this is a great time to think about enrolling!



### Tioga County Cover Crops Program: Continuous Sign-up with Some Dead-lines



This is a yearly program that pays a cost-share rate to farms for implementing cover crops. Sign-ups can also be for multiple years for farms that have never tried cover cropping before, or on a yearly basis with a set max acreage for farms that already consistently plant. The cost-share rate will be higher on acreage that has never been cover cropped before than on acreage planted previously. We hope farms who try cover crops see the remarkable benefits to their soil health and thus to production & crop yields and then see the value in planting them on their own in the future.

## Tioga County SWCD Makes Education and Outreach a Priority in 2019

By: Miranda Palmer

During the spring and summer of 2019, the District participated in multiple education and outreach events, varying from community to academic events. Educating the people of our community is key because without education we cannot expect people to understand or care about the value of agriculture and natural resource conservation. It is key to help people understand that agriculture is not just farming, but also a precise task of correctly utilizing our natural resources in order to continue to be sustainable. The agriculture industry helps to feed and cloth our community, and contribute to the local economy.

If you were out and about this summer, you might have caught us at the Candor Daffodil Fest, the Tioga County Fair, or even Sundaes at the Farm. Community members were taught about the differences between point source and non-point source pollution. Outreach at these events focused on why it is essential we work to promote practices that keep our water clean such as livestock exclusion, riparian buffer plantings, cover crop planting, proper storm water practices, and stream bank stabilization. We also spoke about the nutrient cycle and the importance of Whole Farm Mass Nutrient Balance.

We also attended local school events such as reading at local schools for Ag Literacy week where we taught second graders the value of buying local fresh products from farmer markets, and how food moves from farm to table. Attending school career fairs where students were presented with potential careers in the natural resource conservation field and the opportunities that are available. And, as always the District organized the Southern Tier Regional Envirothon where 32 teams from Broome, Chemung, Tioga, Tompkins, and Schuyler County high schools were tested in a variety of subjects including aquatic ecology, forestry, soils and land use, wildlife, and a current issue. A highlight of this event comes from a team from Candor Central Schools – the Candor 400's - winning both the regional title and the county title, allowing them to advance to the state completion at Hobart William Smith College where they placed third in the entire state! On the horizon will be our participation at the 3rd annual Tioga Harvest Festival where we will engage with elementary students about what agriculture is and how we can promote good soil health.



**Southern Tier Regional Envirothon 1st—3rd Place Teams (Candor CSD—1st Place, TST BOCES New Visions—2nd Place, GST BOCES— 3rd Place)**



**District staff works to educate attendees at the 2019 Sundaes at the Farm held at Stronghaven Dairy Farm in Barton, NY**



## Conservation Stewardship Spotlight: Jim Simmons, Farmer & Agricultural Professional

By: Danielle Singer



Jim in his riparian buffer that will improve water quality in the stream and filter nutrients from the surrounding pastures.

Jim Simmons has been involved in farming all of his life. He grew up on a dairy farm in Owego, NY that he operated for 11 years and then ran beef cows for another 15 years on the land. Later, he sold the house and rented out the rest of the 180+ acres to a farmer who continues to milk cows there today. Jim and his wife moved to northern Tioga County in Berkshire, NY but they didn't leave farming behind. They rent out some of their new property for dairy heifers to pasture in the summer and Jim is still very involved in the farming community with his job at Ward & VanScoy Seed Company and his own work as a Certified Nutritionist for dairies.

As a Certified Nutritionist, Jim works with dairy farms to balance cow diets and cut down on nitrogen and phosphorus in the rations for better nutrient efficiency. As Jim is no stranger to the idea of excess nutrients on farms, the concept of needing to control nutrient run-off from farm fields makes sense and that along with his interest in wildlife led him to the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) through the Farm Service Agency (FSA). Over the years, he has enrolled some of his land in a practice which leaves grassy land out of production for wildlife habitat for the duration of the contract while the farm receives yearly payments for meeting the requirements.

In 2018, this contract ended and Jim decided to look into re-enrollment. This time he chose to enroll in a riparian buffer practice. For this practice, the CRP program provides most of the cost to plant trees and shrubs in the riparian zone of the stream corridor and also cost-shares some fence and waterline to exclude livestock from the stream and provide an alternate watering source. FSA and Tioga Soil and Water teamed up to use CRP and Upper Susquehanna Coalition (USC) Water Quality Funding to help Jim install 3,368 feet of fence, 2,182 feet of waterline and a gravel stream



The south end of the buffer zone with pasture adjacent.

crossing for 15 acres of pasture with 11.3 acres of forested riparian buffer planted along the stream. Soil and Water was able to provide USC funding to cover what CRP couldn't, as that program only covers waterline and fence along the stream to keep livestock out. Using both funding programs, we were able to build a functional pasture system for Jim while also addressing water quality by creating a buffer zone between the pastures and the stream. Jim provided cost-share match to the grants by building the fence and watering system himself, as well as, doing brush management to prepare the site for tree planting. As part of the grant contracts, Jim agreed to maintenance his buffer by mowing around the plants to prevent the taller vegetation from shading out and/or falling on top of the trees and shrubs while they are still little, killing them. In return he receives annual payments from CRP to help with the cost of doing this maintenance.

## Continued: Conservation Stewardship Spotlight: Jim Simmons, Farmer & Agricultural Professional

Jim says he likes watching his buffer grow and knows that it will have a great impact on the stream corridor and wildlife near his home. He enjoys checking on the different species of trees and shrubs growing and taking care of his buffer by mowing around the plants. He even used part of his payments to purchase a smaller brush-hog for his four-wheeler to make mowing around the plants easier. He is truly a great steward of his land. His management is a notable example of how conservation and farming can work hand in hand to make the most out of the productive land while improving water quality and wildlife habitat which benefits all.

### 2015-2019 WQIP Grant Summary

By: Kevin VanHine

The USC Wetland Team is working to wrap up their WQIP Southern Tier Natural Infrastructure Implementation grant through the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation. The first goal of this grant was to construct 36 acres of wetland. 87 wetland pools were constructed throughout 10 state forests representing a total of 48.69 acres of wetlands established. Wetland pools provide floodwater retention lessening the effects of flash floods, nutrient filtration decreasing algal blooms, groundwater recharge, specialized habitat for many rare or endangered plants, a breeding habitat for amphibians, and nesting grounds for migratory birds.

The second part of the WQIP grant was to remove 6,000 linear feet of spoil berm material within the flood plain. The USC Wetland Team removed a total of 6,431 feet throughout 7 sites with a volume of 12,898 cubic yards. Removing streamside berms restores flood plain area helping decrease the peak discharge of a stream ultimately reducing flood events. Several berm removal sites were planted with riparian forest buffers assisting in nutrient sequestration leading to a higher water quality and decreasing streambank erosion.

This grant funding will conclude at the end of 2020, and the USC Wetland Team looks forward to the opportunity to complete a couple additional berm removal sites located in Tioga County through this funding during this year's construction season.



Berm removal site in Delaware County NY



Vernal pools constructed in Michigan Hill State Forest



## NY Rising Community Watershed Assessments

By: Mike Jura

Tioga County SWCD continues to work with the Governor's Office of Storm Recovery to complete watershed assessments and plans for Apalachin, Huntington and Wappasening Creek Watersheds. These plans will provide for documentation of project needs in all three watersheds to secure funds for implementation. The purpose of this project is to establish a regional river initiative to build resilience and capacity in the communities. The project will link the local communities together with a consistent comprehensive watershed approach to understand and address flooding issues in the Upper Susquehanna River and its tributaries.

The initiative includes two main project components:

- Education and Outreach to municipal officials, county legislators and residents of the Communities
- Watershed Assessment and modeling to identify natural infrastructure practices for implementation

The Watershed Assessment and modeling phase has been completed and an overview of the findings including a list of recommended priorities was presented at three meetings for the Huntington Creek/Monkey Run Watershed, the Wappasening Creek (NY portion) watershed, and the NY portion of the Apalachin Creek watershed. These meetings along with additional stakeholder meetings are an opportunity to provide input on projects within the plans.

The purpose of the assessments was to inventory and evaluate a number of physical factors including: eroding stream banks, damaged segments of streams, bridges, culverts, and debris jams. The assessments were completed by consultants hired by the Tioga County SWCD and a report of the findings will be available to the public once the final drafts are ready. Within these reports, background information for each watershed is included, as well as a list of potential projects throughout the watershed that can be prioritized for implementation and then funding can be applied for. Essentially the reports provide a detailed list of projects that can help increase resiliency to flooding and flash flooding in the communities and reduce damages from these types of events.

As a part of the initial round of funding; one high priority project in each watershed was selected to bring to 30% design level to then evaluate for future funding to complete implementation. The projects were chosen based on a number of factors including risk, cost, and benefit to community and environment. Stakeholders were able to provide input on the project selection phase during the three public meetings mentioned above, and in multiple meetings and discussions that were conducted with local officials. The three projects that were selected are: Design a replacement culvert for Gaylord Road in the Town of Owego (Apalachin Creek), Design a replacement culvert or bridge for State Line Road in the Town of Nichols (Wappasening Creek), and stream bank/ stream bed stabilization in the Huntington Creek/Monkey Run Watershed to reduce sediment delivery and continued maintenance and flooding issues for the Railroad and the Owego School District downstream of the project site. Survey work for all three projects has been completed and the consultants are currently working up the 30% design level. Watch for future newsletters and our web and social media pages for updates on this initiative.

Tioga County Soil and Water Conservation District  
183 Corporate Drive  
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## WINTER 2020

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## Conservation Planting Program for 2020

The Tioga County Soil and Water Conservation District offers a wide variety of species for reforestation, Christmas trees, wildlife food, windbreaks, borders, erosion control and ground cover. We offer the species and sizes best suited for all types of conservation planting in this area. All stock is bare root and packed with a water gel to keep moist.

Generally more evergreens can be ordered if our stock runs out. Deciduous species, however, are not as likely to be available when our stock runs out, especially toward the deadline.

**The order deadline is April 1, 2020, but we will continue sales of available species through the order pick up dates of April 17th (8:30am - 5pm) and April 18th (8am - 10am).**

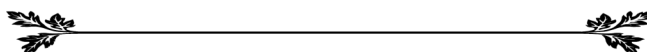
District staff is available to answer questions on species and site selection. Order blanks are available from the Soil and Water Conservation District office, **183 Corporate Drive, Owego, NY. Phone (607)687-3553. E-mail or sent by USPS.** Order blanks are also on the Conservation District page on the Tioga County website: <https://www.tiogacountyny.com/programs-agencies/soil-and-water/>. We also have ordering information available for the NYSDEC Nursery Program.

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### BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Chairman/Legislative Representative	Dale Weston
Farm Bureau Representative	Tom Zorn
Grange Representative	Mark Kwiatkowski
Director-at-Large/ District Treasurer	Ronald Dougherty
County Legislative Representative/Vice Chairman	Tracy Monell

Board of directors monthly meetings are held on **every 3rd Wednesday of the month at 9AM** at the Tioga County office building. The public is always invited to attend.



### DISTRICT STAFF

District Manager	Wendy Walsh
Administrative Assistant	Lisbeth Monell
Administrative Assistant	Miranda Palmer
Conservation District Technician	Mike Jura
Conservation District Technician	Alex Marks
AEM Specialist /PE	Brian Reaser
Water Quality/Nutrient Management Specialist	Danielle Singer
USC Ag Coordinator	Emily Dekar