



Niagara Nature News

An Environmental Publication by Niagara County
Soil & Water Conservation District
SUMMER 2017 - ENEWS

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Funding Approved from NYS Grown & Certified Grant

The Niagara County Soil and Water Conservation District received funding from the New York State Grown and Certified Agricultural Producer's Grant Program to assist four farms with the implementation of their farms' Agricultural Environmental Management (AEM) Plans. The grant will assist fruit, vegetable and other specialty crop growers in producing products in a manner that reduces their current risk to natural resources. Environmental stewardship and safe handling of foods is the goal of the New York State Grown and Certified Program. The implementation of AEM Plans on Specialty Crop Farms Grant is intended to provide financial assistance to farms to implement Conservation Practice Systems that support the New York State Grown and Certified Program.

The AEM plans for these four farms had identified several best management practices (BMPs) that were recommended to be implemented to protect water and soil resources in the Keg Creek and Twelvemile Creek Watersheds. Resource concerns that will be addressed by this grant include the lack of secondary containment on petroleum storage tanks, soil erosion on highly erodible land in a vineyard on the escarpment, soil erosion and nutrient loss on fields used to grow specialty crops, and the lack of a protected area to perform agricultural chemical mixing and loading operations.

Secondary containment will be provided for several petroleum storage tanks on two farms, 210 acres of cover crops will be planted in a vineyard and on fields used to grow vegetables for two consecutive years on three of the farms, and an Agrichemical Handling and Storage System will be implemented on one farm. The installation of the proposed BMPs will protect the prime farmland, groundwater and the surface waters in Niagara County.

If you have any questions regarding AEM farm planning, please contact Mike Clifford at 716-434-4949 ext. 4. This service is provided at no cost to the farmers.

Pollinator Habitat Project Installed at Bond Lake Park

A 4 acre meadow of warm season grasses and wildflower was installed at Bond Lake Park in June. The wildflower species will provide a continuous and diverse bloom during the growing season to help support native pollinators such as bees and butterflies.

In recent years, substantial declines in the abundance of diversity of insect pollinators has been documented. While much attention has focused on managed honey bee populations, various wild bee species have also suffered declines. A range of initiatives have been promoted in recent years to address the decline of bee populations. A single factor has not been identified to explain the decline of bees, but rather multiple issues are likely involved. These include the degradation and fragmentation of natural habitat and the loss of flower rich communities associated with traditional landscapes. This project will increase the quantity of pollinator habitat at the park.



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The team pictured front row l-r: Irene Johnson, Antonia Ryskalcyk. Back row l-r: Jacobe Behe, Justin Rebon and Nick Koch

Niagara Career & Tech Attends 2017 NYS Envirothon

Niagara Career and Technical Education Center represented Niagara County at the NYS Envirothon held May 24-25 at Hobart and William Smith College in Geneva. Forty-six counties competed to win the title and scholarships. NCTEC put up a good fight and advisor Paul Dewey complimented his students on a job well done.



Prior to the State event, eleven teams from Niagara and Orleans schools met at the Bond Lake Nature Center for this year's Niagara-Orleans Regional Envirothon competition. We want to thank this year's generous sponsors : GM Foundation, Apex Clean Energy Inc., M&T Bank, NY Forest Owners Association, Newroyal Orchards, The Printing Place and Orleans Poverty Hill Farm. Call the office to get your school involved in the 2018 Regional Envirothon!

Pictured Right: Bill Tiger of GM Lockport Components is speaking to the students about the plant's recycling program.

Field Days Fun!

This year over 200 students attended our Field Day events in June. We want to thank our dedicated station instructors who taught about honey bees and other pollinators, aquatic bugs, rabies safety, wildlife rehabilitation, tree identification, archaeology, scat tracks and furs, electric power, conservation laws, renewable energy, watersheds, geology of the Lockport Locks, and the Eighteenmile Creek remediation. This FREE event is available each year to all 5th and 6th graders in Niagara County. Call the office for more information.

FYI...

The District has a No-Till drill available for your next conservation seeding project.

\$50 delivery charge and \$15/acre rental fee

We provide drill delivery and cleaning. Customer provides own seed.



High Lake Levels Seen in 2017

Since April of this year, the Great Lakes have seen water levels that are far from average. According to the Army Corps of Engineers June 16, 2017 water level update Lake Ontario is 31 inches higher than the long term monthly average. The high water has had devastating effects on lake front properties including destabilization of banks and millions of dollars in residential damage. On May 29th, 2017 Governor Cuomo announced \$7 million that will be made available to homeowners, in addition to the \$15 million devoted to help municipalities and small businesses for physical damage or loss as a result of flooding. If you are experiencing flood related issues, you can contact the Lake Ontario Flood Assistance Hotline at 1-866-244-3839 on insurance related issues, assistance with flood mitigation, and for technical guidance regarding on site repairs. More details on the funding assistance and guidance can be found at:

<https://www.governor.ny.gov/news/governor-cuomo-announces-7-million-available-homeowners-impacted-flooding-lake-ontario-and-st>

Given the record water levels on Lake Ontario, Cornell University is conducting a high water impact survey. People can participate by providing information about the impacts of the high water levels on their waterfront properties.

The survey can be accessed at:

https://cornell.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_6RNKD5WAM0hz3U1

Are you interested in placing a pond on your property? Call us for a Pond Site Evaluation!

Be Sure to Visit Us Aug 2 -6 at the 2017 Niagara County Fair!

The Niagara County Soil & Water Conservation District is a local government subdivision under New York State law. The District was established as a public benefit by the County of Niagara in 1954. Your support of our programs aid in the District's conservation efforts to protect natural resources and water quality for our residents. In these wavering economic times, we thank you for your continued assistance in fulfilling our goals.

Fall 2017 Pond Stocking

Order Deadline: August 25, 2017

Pickup Date: Friday, Sept 15, 2017 at 10:00am SHARP

General Information: Stocking rates usually are 50-100 bass and 500-600 minnows per surface acre. If your pond is relatively new, be sure there is vegetation for reproductive habitat and aquatic life for a food chain. Recommended time to establish a pond before stocking is one year. You MUST obtain a stocking permit from the DEC prior to pickup. Applications are available in our office or on our website, www.niagaraswcd.com.

Pickup Information: Pickup will be at the SWCD office located at the northeast end of the Coop. Extension Administrative Building on the County Fairgrounds, Route 78, Lockport. At the time of pickup, you will need to bring a cooler or box to stabilize the aerated bags your fish come in for the trip home. Transferring the fish to your pond immediately is of utmost importance due to oxygen needs. The hatchery personnel will be available for only 1/2 hour for delivery so PLEASE BE PROMPT!

Fall 2017 Grass Carp Stocking

Order Deadline: September 1, 2017

Pickup Date: 4th week of September, date TBA

General Information: The average size of the carp will be between 10-12". Stock grass carp in ponds which have been properly protected so they are unable to escape into other NYS waters through inlets and outlets. You MUST obtain a stocking permit from the NYS DEC before ordering, as it specifies number of carp permissible. If you need a permit application, our office retains a supply of them or you can print a copy from our website, www.niagaraswcd.com.

Pickup Information: Pickup will be at the SWCD office located at the northeast end of the Coop. Extension Administrative Building on the County Fairgrounds, Route 78, Lockport. At the time of pickup, you will need to bring a container **WITH A LID** (an 18-gal plastic tote holds 4 carp) filled 1/2 full with pond water. These fish are highly perishable and must be transported as quickly as possible. For more information on Triploid Grass Carp and how they can benefit pond weed control, call (716) 434-4949 ext. 4

Payment Information: Submit payment by check or money order with the bottom portions of these forms, payable to **Niagara County SWCD**.
Keep the top portions as your delivery date reminders and container/water needs at pickup.

Fall 2017 Pond Stocking				Fall 2017 Grass Carp Stocking	
Type of Fish	Cost	# of Fish	\$ Amount		
Perch 2 - 4"	25/\$46			Name: _____	
Largemouth Bass 2 - 4"	25/\$54			Address: _____	
Channel Catfish 4 - 6"	12/\$32			Daytime Phone: _____	
Sunfish 2 - 4"	25/\$42			Number of Carp: _____	
Golden Shiners 2-3"	50/\$24			X \$22/fish _____	
Fathead Minnows 1"	100/\$20 1000/\$150			+ Delivery \$4.00	
Subtotal				Total Due: _____	
+ Delivery			\$4.00		
Total Due					
<i>(NYS sales tax already included)</i>				<i>(NYS sales tax not required)</i>	
Name: _____					
Address: _____					
City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____					
Daytime Phone: _____					
Mail with payment to: Niagara County SWCD				Mail payment WITH ALL 3 ORIGINAL	
4487 Lake Avenue, Lockport, New York 14094				COPIES of your DEC Permit to:	
				Niagara County SWCD	
				4487 Lake Avenue	
				Lockport, NY 14094	

FISH FACTS

Perch - The true perch of New York State include some of the best tasting and most popular freshwater fishes. As a family, they are widely distributed, adaptable to a wide range of habitats, and fun to catch on rod and reel. In addition, the less known members of the perch family, the darters, are probably the most colorful freshwater fish in North America. True perch are spiny-rayed fish which have one or more sharp spines on their fins. While they are quite variable in appearance, they all are slender in body shape, have two dorsal (back) fins, and one anal fin. True perch can be separated into two groups: larger perches and smaller perches.

Largemouth Bass - Found throughout NYS, they are considered one of the state's most important sport fish. These members of the Sunfish Family (Centrarchidae) prefer weedy, rocky areas to provide both protection and food supply. Usually weighing 3-5 lbs, they can get over 10lbs and 2 feet in length. They are carnivorous; which means they'll eat small fish, crayfish, frogs, snakes, and some small mammals and birds if given the opportunity.

Channel Catfish - Catfishes are characterized by scaleless skin and barbels, better known as whiskers, about their mouth. Channel catfish have a deeply forked tail and dark spots. The spotting, however, diminishes with age. Consequently, older channel cats are frequently mistaken as blue catfish. But the anal fin on blue cats has a flat outer edge and channels have a rounded edge. They can grow to be 4 ft long and weigh up to 58lbs.

Sunfish - Sunfish are small to medium-sized fish with a single anal fin (bottom rear) and a two-part dorsal fin (back). They are spiny-rayed, with one or more sharp spines found on their dorsal, pelvic (bottom front) and anal fins. These spines help protect them from being eaten by larger fish and can prick the fingers of any angler who is not careful when removing the hook.

Fathead Minnows - Fathead minnows are small in size, averaging 2 to 3 inches in length. They are sturdy, heavy bodied fish with small mouths and a lateral line that stops under the dorsal fin. They are generally dull in color, with dark bodies and a slight brass tint on the sides. They prefer ponds and slow moving water in streams. They can tolerate muddy water, and are occasionally found in roadside ditches. In addition, fathead minnows can tolerate water with salt in it.

Golden Shiners - The golden shiner can be found throughout most of the US. These fish can be found in large schools around submerged structures where they primarily feed on zooplankton. The golden shiner spawns several times throughout spring and summer. Spawning can be aided with the use of structures such as sunken evergreens or stacked pallets. The abundant reproduction of this fish makes it an excellent choice for stocking where predatory species are present. These fish are slightly larger than fathead minnows and are preferred by large predators.

Triploid Grass Carp - The grass carp (*Ctenopharyngodon idella*) is one of the largest members of the minnow family, commonly reaching weights in excess of 25 lbs. They can live up to 10 years. Native to Asia, this carp lacks the barbells and spiny dorsal and anal fin rays characteristic of its North American relatives, bearing a closer resemblance to a large creek chub. It is called "triploid" since it has been bred to retain an extra chromosome, rendering it sterile. Grass carp feed strictly by grazing on aquatic vegetation and are effectively used as aquatic plant control agents in over 50 countries.

Welcome, Summer Interns!



Joining our office this summer are two student interns assisting us with culvert assessments for our aquatic connectivity grant, and also will be helping to eradicate the Japanese knotweed overtaking the area. Both are attending the University at Buffalo.

Emily Sullivan is majoring in Environmental Geosciences. She is from Tonawanda and enjoys traveling, hiking and swimming.

Brandon Seider is majoring in Engineering. In his spare time he likes to golf and is a hockey fan. Brandon lives in Ransomville.

Tree Program Thanks

The District would like to thank the entire community for your never-ending support of this program. Together we are planting 30,773 seedlings for wildlife habitat and restoration! Thanks so much to those who helped prepare and distribute over 556 tree orders: Co-workers Jamie and Lori in the FSA office and Charlie from NRCS. Much appreciation goes to Cornell Cooperative Extension and the Niagara County Sheriff's Work Program. A special thanks for packaging supplies and boxes goes to TOPS- Lockport, Wrights Corners and Newfane locations, along with Walnut Street Liquor and The Wine and Liquor Outlet both in Lockport, and the Wegman's Niagara Falls Blvd location. Please remember to support these local businesses!

2016 SWCD Annual Report of Accomplishments

Tree Program - 30773 seedlings/556 customers
Ag Value Assessments - 124 totaling 5549 acres
Pond Stocking - 5510 fingerlings to 33 ponds
Grass Carp - 58 carp to 15 ponds
Pond Site Evaluations - 17
Wildlife Houses Sold - 33
Environmental Field Days - 558 students
Regional Envirothon - 17 teams
Other Educational Events - 9 /962 participants
Newsletters - 5150 mailed/emailed
Media Articles - 6
Resource Map Requests - 25
Permit Assistance - 2
Watershed Management Plans - 7
WQ/Land Use Technical Assistance - 13
Wildlife Habitat Improvements - 1
No-Till Drill Plantings - 2
Critical Area Seeding - 1
Invasive Species Projects - 3
Ag Best Management Practices:
 Drainage/Ditching - 175,000 LF
 Silage Leachate Systems - 3
 Barnyard Runoff Control - 2
 Access Control System - 1
Soil Health Projects - 2
Soil Conservation Systems - 6
AEMs completed:
 Tier 1 -6, Tier 2 -6, Tier 3a -6, Tier 4 -5, Tier 5a -6, Tier 5b - 8



Other "GREEN" Projects

In May 2017, two Global Rivers Environmental Education Network "GREEN" classes developed watershed improvement projects at Gulf Wilderness Park in the City of Lockport.

The Niagara Career and Tech Center class of Sanborn, NY completed riparian area planting, litter cleanup, and trail maintenance in Gulf Wilderness Park. The trail maintenance included directing surface water runoff into previously installed water culverts to prevent the trail from washing out. Signs were also created and installed to educate the public about what riparian areas are, and what can be done to improve them. Water quality testing was completed in Gulf Wilderness Park and compared to Wilson Tuscarora State Park (Wilson experienced high/flooding water conditions). The class also used the park for a forestry tree identification test.

The Lockport High School class completed riparian planting along Gulf Creek. They also placed mulch in rough/rocky areas of the trails. Afterward they went to Fisherman's Park to replace a dead ornamental tree near the park entrance. The class finished by stopping at the Olcott harbor for a litter cleanup, and assessing public and private damage from high water levels in Lake Ontario.

These projects are sponsored by our local Lockport General Motors Plant (GM Components Holdings, LLC), with planning and implementation support from Earth Force and Niagara County SWCD.



Left: GREEN students planting trees at Rollin T Grant Gulf Wilderness Park

CONSERVATION COMPLIANCE

Don't Lose Your Benefits!

Have you, will you or are you thinking about doing any of the following activities that have not been evaluated by NRCS on land you farm?

- Land clearing?
- Working new land?
- Excavation?
- Stump removal?
- Create a new drainage system?
- Constructing a building or structure?
- Improving an existing drainage system?
- Modifying an existing drainage system?
- Maintaining an existing drainage system?
- Land leveling?
- Dredging an area?
- Filling an area?
- Plant an agricultural commodity on land where an NRCS determination of Highly Erodible Land (HEL) or wetland has not been made?

If you answered yes and want to remain eligible for USDA program payments, you MUST file Form AD-1026 with FSA and answer yes to one or more of the following questions:

- 5 • 9 • 10A • 10B • 10C



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Feb. 2010



Niagara County Soil & Water Conservation District and Eighteenmile Creek Great Lakes Area of Concern are now on Facebook! Give us a "Like"



Mike Barnett
Owner

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