

SUMMER NEWSLETTER

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Ontario County Soil & Water Conservation District Newsletter



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Building Resiliency

2023 has been an extremely wet year for Ontario County, with repeated heavy rains falling over localized areas in short periods of time. These storms dropped from 3.8" to 5.5" inches of rain in a few hours. Parts of Ontario County have received nearly 15" of rain in a one-month period between mid-June and July. Storm volumes like this are hard, even impossible, to control. Existing infrastructure was not designed to handle so much water in such a short period of time.

Storm classification is based on probability, not actual rainfall events and these flashy high-volume rain events are no longer a rare thing. A 10-year class storm is not a rare event. Since 2014 we have seen we have seen 10-year class storms with regularity, and sometimes, multiple 10+ year events in the same year.

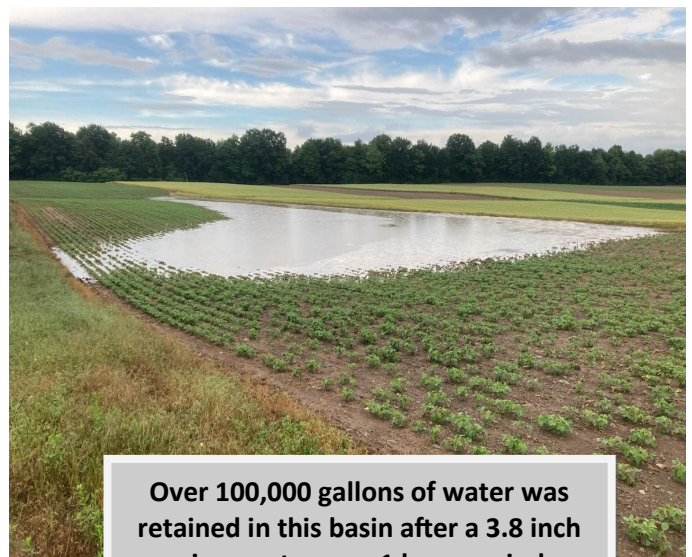
Ontario County Soil & Water Conservation District (SWCD) has spent over a decade working on building farm resiliency for these large rain events. Agricultural erosion control and water management practices are commonly designed for a 10-year storm event, a design standard we have followed for many decades, and it has worked.

However, more and more we are seeing that commonly used design standards are inadequate for our changing weather patterns.

What can we do?

We can overbuild our Best management Practice (BMP) structures. Increasing a BMP design from a 10-year storm design to a 25-year design is a feasible option, but can add up to 50% increase in total project cost, and will typically take more land out of production. Even then, we have had a few structures designed for a 25-year storm at full capacity this year.

This basin captured over 40 tons of soil in a single 4 inch rain event this summer.



Over 100,000 gallons of water was retained in this basin after a 3.8 inch rain event over a 1 hour period.

Building Resiliency Continued...

We can add more BMPs. By revisiting problematic sites and adding more BMPs, we can help break up the watershed into more manageable water volumes. We have had multiple instances in the last few years where we have added more water and sediment control basins (WASCOBs) to an existing system, or added a waterway below a WASCOB as an overflow conveyance. We design new systems with an eye for future enhancement and expansion if the system is insufficient.

We can change Best Management Practices (BMPs). We love to install basins, diversions, and terracing but a grassed waterway will almost always be the best practice to move large volumes of stormwater across cropland in a non-erosive manner. A 30' wide waterway at only 1' in depth can carry more



Spending time in the field during storm events allows us to better understand resource concerns.

water than ten 12" underground outlet drainage pipes. Grassed waterways were a hard sell 10 years ago, as they can take acres of land out of crop production, but we now have many local farms adopting them to avoid severe gully erosion damage from huge storm events.



Installing grassed waterways and areas of critical seeding will help reduce severe erosion in the field.

We can change how the cropland is managed. If a field in a floodplain or on a steep hill is always washing out in a large storm event, it may be time to convert it into long-term hay land. Recently, we seeded down some erosive flow paths into a critical area seeding; the farm can just lift tillage equipment when they pass over the sod strip.

We can plan our erosion control and water management structures to survive failure. A structure designed for a 10-year storm will at some point be overwhelmed. Designing a stable emergency overflow so that the entire structure is not damaged or leaving a short strip of sod on top of basin and diversion berms, or along the edges of grassed waterways can make the structures much more resilient to overtopping events.

We can stay on top of BMP maintenance. One 10+ year storm can fill a WASCOB up with sediment or a grassed waterway may develop an erosive cut in the centerline. Any BMP damage should be addressed as soon as possible



Working directly with landowners is critical to building resiliency in our landscape.

or these structures will be much more vulnerable to failure in future rain events. Ontario County SWCD has spent many days this year walking fields with farmers evaluating damage to BMPs and discussing maintenance solutions.

We can learn. There will always be damage after large storms. No one is immune to it. Communicating with landowners and field visits following major events is necessary in the recovery process. It is critical that we spend time evaluating the work we do and see where improvements can be made for the protection of our natural resources.

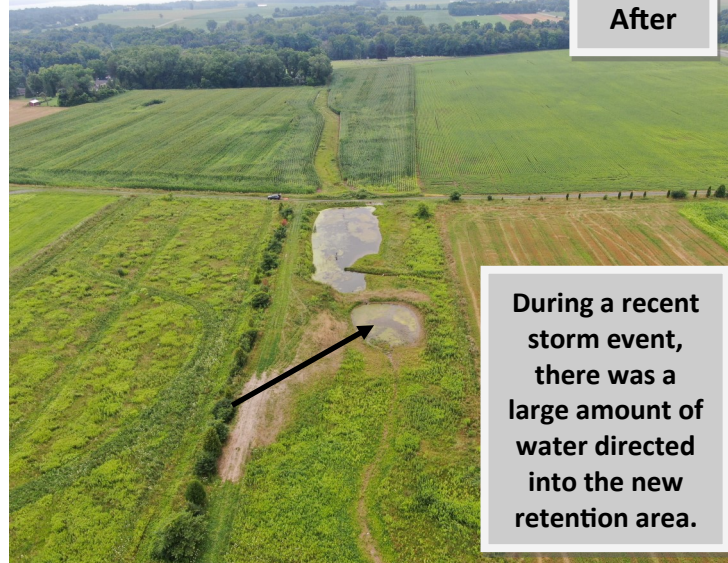
Conservation Kick

The Ontario County SWCD partnered with the Town of Geneva, a private landowner and the Great Lakes Commission through a program known as Conservation Kick to implement conservation practices on an agricultural parcel in the Town of Geneva. This project included the installation of several conservation practices to create a vegetated, wetland buffer area along the edge of the agricultural field.

During construction

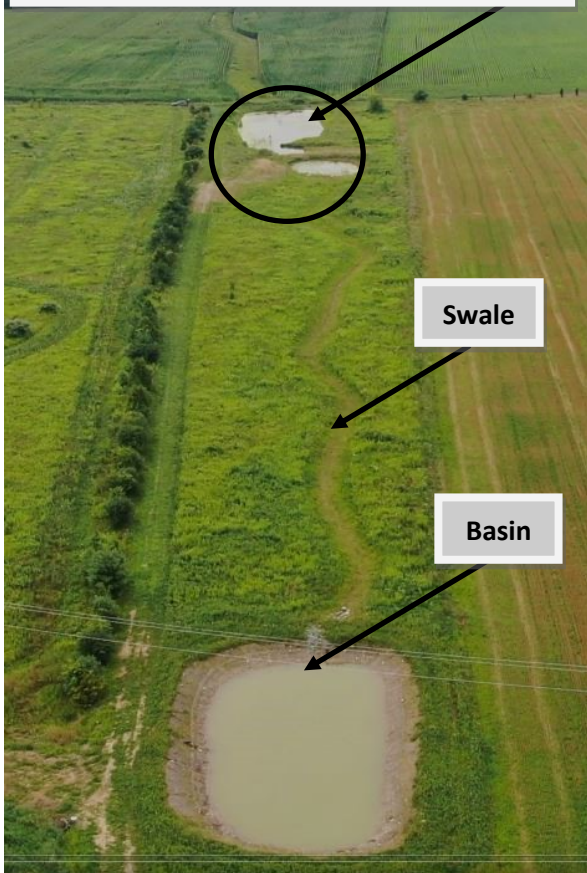


After



During a recent storm event, there was a large amount of water directed into the new retention area.

This new project is connected to a previous upland water retention project completed several years ago on this farm.



A diverse wetland meadow seed mix was used to establish vegetation at the site.



This system consists of three storage basins connected by a shallow grassed swale and includes a buffer area from the adjacent agricultural field. By utilizing numerous Best Management Practices (BMPs) in sequence, we can gain the maximum benefit for both water quantity and quality. In total, over a million gallons of water is stored, conveyed and treated through this system during major storm events. This project not only provides water treatment for 42 acres of agricultural land, it also serves as wonderful habitat for wildlife. Birds, insects, amphibians and so much more call this area home.

Erosion Control Project in the Town of Seneca

It may not look like much, but small structures such as this water and sediment control basin (WASCOB) play a big part to help manage stormwater and eliminate erosion. This recent project was made possible with funding through the Finger Lakes-Lake Ontario Watershed Protection Alliance (FLOWPA)



This WASCOB holds back stormwater and sediment, metering out the water in a controlled manner.

with the design being provided



by the Ontario County SWCD. In-field Best Management Practices (BMPs) allow farms to collect and retain water during large storm events and then slowly let it leave the site through underground outlets. This eliminates surface flows which can cause erosion. This structure will prevent the loss of 20 tons of soil per year from the field, improving water quality downstream of the project site.

Nutrient Testing Available

The Agricultural Environmental Management (AEM) program is now entering its 18th round of funding. The program offers both technical assistance support and implementation funding to the agricultural community, supporting environmental assessments, conservation planning and technical services.

AEM is voluntary, confidential and focuses on what individual farms need to meet their environmental and economic goals. One key offering is financial support for soil, plant and manure testing. Testing is an important management tool which allows



farms to gain more information about the health and fertility of their land. A variety of tests are available: basic soil nutrient testing

through DairyOne, manure and compost nutrient testing, and the Cornell Assessment of Soil Health (CASH) "Standard Soil Health Analysis Package". Newly added this year are options for soil heavy metals testing, pre-sidedress soil nitrate testing and corn stalk nitrate testing. Farms may choose sample methodology and which fields to sample from, however limits will be set based on interest and testing desired. The cost of the soil testing is **free**; farms are simply asked to collect their own samples. The Ontario County SWCD will transport samples for testing and return results to the farm to then be utilized when making fertilizer prescriptions. Any farm interested in participating in this program should reach out to the District.



Drainage Stabilization Benefiting Honeoye Lake

The Ontario County SWCD provided technical assistance to the Town of Richmond and funding through the Finger Lakes-Lake Ontario Watershed Protection Alliance (FLOWPA) for a road ditch stabilization project in the Town of Richmond along the East Lake Road of Honeoye Lake. This road ditch had become unstable and was leading to severe erosion resulting in sediment and nutrient loss from the site. The Town of Richmond Highway Department replaced the existing driveway culvert pipe and installed two grade control structures utilizing large rock to help provide stabilization. This stabilization will reduce erosion and sediment loss from the area therefore decreasing the amount of sediment and nutrients entering Honeoye Lake.



Hemlock Woolly Adelgid Treatment

2023 brought the continuation of our Hemlock Woolly Adelgid treatment program. Funding provided through the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) allowed us to treat almost 30 acres along Briggs Gully, a major tributary to Honeoye Lake. The Briggs Gully parcel provided a unique opportunity for treatment as it is bordered by New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) lands, as part of the Honeoye Inlet Wildlife Management Area, as well as the Wesley Hill Preserve owned by the Finger Lakes Land Trust. Each of these partners strategically treated trees on their respective parcels leading to an even larger regional effort to protect hemlock trees in this important watershed. Additional GLRI funding will also be used to support this localized treatment effort in upcoming months.



The Hemlock Woolly Adelgid can be seen best in the winter months and early spring by the white woolly masses as seen here on the underside of hemlock needles.

Hemlocks help protect our steep sloped areas, but it can make access to trees difficult. These critical areas require the use of ropes, a lot of courage and advanced repelling skills! Trees were treated with a basal bark application of two different chemicals, one that is fast acting and will provide immediate protection and one that is longer lasting to ensure that our hemlocks stay protected for up to 7 years. You may recall from previous newsletters that this area has also been a focus for the release of insects for biocontrol, which will provide the long-term control needed.



Hemlocks are an amazing tree species that can grow on steep slopes, helping to prevent erosion, making them such an important tree to preserve. The steep slopes make treatment a bit more challenging!

Short-Term Rentals and their Septic Systems

In recent years, the popularity and availability of short-term rentals has skyrocketed, opening the market for homeowners and business owners to rent their home/properties for extra income. The Finger Lakes region has been no exception, with many homes being bought for the sole purpose of renting to vacationers. While it is great for people to experience the beauty of the Finger Lakes that might not otherwise have the opportunity, many issues have come about which has forced towns to adopt local laws. Overcrowding of residences, noise complaints, and overloading septic systems have been the priority issues. In the Canandaigua Lake



Watershed, many septic systems have been observed in failure due to overuse of water, resulting in raw sewage on the ground's surface. To combat this, the Towns of South Bristol and Canandaigua have adopted a short term rental law that restricts occupancy to the design load of a septic system. Basically, if a system is designed for two bedrooms, accommodating four people total, the rental would not allow more than four people. The Town of South Bristol is requiring an inspection of the septic system every two years for their short-term rental permit, ensuring that the septic tank will be properly maintained and that the leach field is working adequately.

The Town of Geneva and the Town of South Bristol require a current septic inspection report by Ontario County SWCD as part of certain short-term rental applications. The inspection process starts by the applicant completing and returning a septic inspection request form. Once the completed request form is received by our office, the inspection will be scheduled. It is then the responsibility of the client to



coordinate with the septic pumper of their choice to arrive on site at the same time as the inspector. As always, it is expected that the basement or crawlspace be accessible during the inspection and that the septic tank and distribution box are uncovered prior to the inspection. If the septic tank is an enhanced treatment unit it is important the proper service provider is also on site during the inspection. Once the inspection is completed, a report will be generated and emailed to the client and the town's Code Enforcement Officer.

2023 Envirothon

The 2023 Western Finger Lakes Regional Envirothon was a success! We partnered with Seneca and Yates County Soil & Water Conservation Districts to put on this event for local high school students. We had 7 teams competing this year. The Envirothon is a competition for high school students designed to test students' understanding of natural resource issues and to cultivate students' desire to learn more about natural resources and environmental issues. Winning teams from each county are then eligible to participate in the NYS Envirothon. The five test topics are soils & land use, aquatic ecology, forestry, wildlife, and the 2023 current issue which was about adapting to a changing climate. A huge thank you to Finger Lakes Community College (FLCC) for hosting the event and for all of the hard work from their Muller Field Station (MFS) team members in helping to organize the event, assist in the t-shirt design, and plan/lead activities for after the competition. We also had amazing partner agencies help out with the tests including the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation and the Canandaigua Lake Watershed Association.



This photo shows a group of kids touring the trails at FLCC and learning about wildflower identification led by 2 team members from MFS.

Tire Recycling Events

The Ontario County SWCD helps administer the tire recycling program funded by Ontario County's Department of Sustainability and Solid Waste Management. We handle the registration for the recycling events and help on the day of, checking people in and making sure the proper tires are recycled.

On Saturday, July 22, 2023, the Town of South Bristol Highway Department hosted the tire recycling event. They also provided us with four South Bristol Highway Department employees to unload tires from vehicles/trailers



and load the tires into the roll off containers. They were an amazing help and we could not have done this event without them! We recycled around 750 tires and filled 3.5 containers.

If you missed this event and still have tires you would like to recycle, the next opportunity will be in the Town of Gorham on September 9, 2023 from 8am-11am. Registration for that event starts August 21 and ends September 6. Remember, we can only accept car or light truck tires that are whole, clean, and off rim; you also need to be an Ontario County resident.

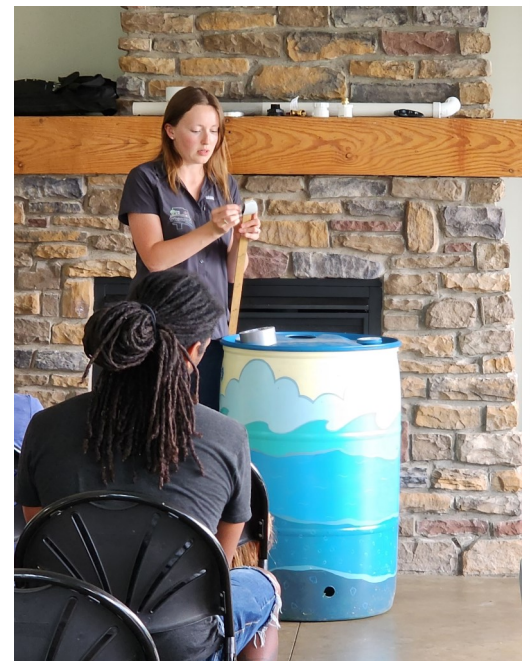
Recent Rain Barrel Workshop

The Ontario-Wayne Stormwater Coalition recently sponsored a Rain Barrel Workshop at Victor Municipal Park. We sold almost 40 rain barrels! It was an extremely successful workshop with a great group of participants. The Ontario County SWCD provides rain barrel workshops throughout the area. We prepare the barrels by washing them and drilling all of the holes for the inlet, overflow, and outlet. The workshop includes a presentation on healthy lawn care tips and managing stormwater and then we help you assemble your new rain barrel! It is a really fun event and our past participants have really enjoyed using their rain barrels for years to come. Installing a rain barrel is an



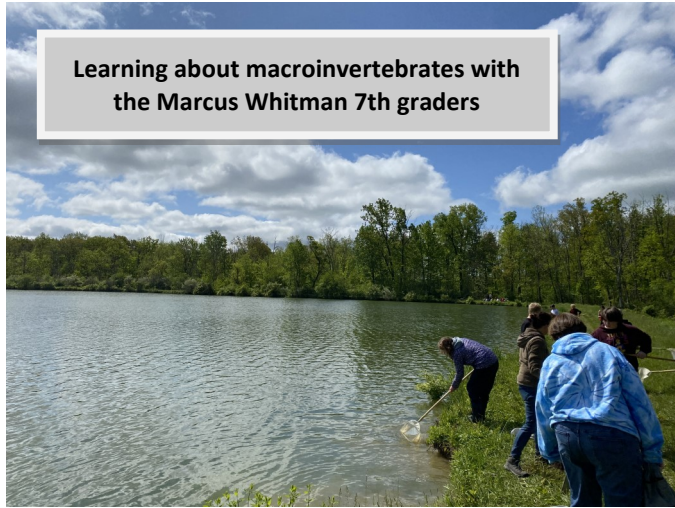
amazing way of conserving water as well as diverting stormwater from entering our storm drains, roadside ditches, and our local waterways. You also save money by reusing rain water and not turning on your hose. Thank you to the Town of Victor for helping to transport the barrels and for helping out at the workshop!

For more information on the Ontario-Wayne Stormwater Coalition and for tips on keeping our stormwater clean, go to www.owsc.org.



Outreach in the Community

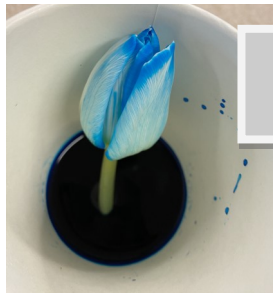
Ontario County SWCD has been busy out in the community! Below are some photos from just some of our recent outreach. We have been working with local schools and organizations on a variety of programs. If you have ideas or future events that you might want Ontario County SWCD at, please reach out!



Learning about macroinvertebrates with the Marcus Whitman 7th graders



Learning about trees and how to age them with the Marcus Whitman 5th graders



We worked with the Ontario County 4-H kids on plant science



At an event at the NY Kitchen to discuss agricultural careers in Ontario County, kids got to meet a calf that Ontario CCE brought!



A recent Rain Barrel Workshop at Naples Brewing Company with the Canandaigua Lake Watershed Association



Ginegaw Park Farmer's Market with an OWSC informational table



Onanda Field Days with the Canandaigua 3rd graders



Reading about strawberry plants at Bloomfield Library



An informational table at CLWA's annual meeting at Lincoln Hill Farms



Backyard Conservation Conversation



Wild Bird Species Highlight: American Goldfinch

Abundantly, even at our offices in the City of Canandaigua, the American Goldfinch (*Spinus tristis*) thrives. No matter what town in Ontario County you live, you are likely to spot the year-round, vibrantly bright goldfinch. So brilliant in the summer months in fact you might need your sunglasses. A very common feeder bird that devours sunflower seeds, sunflower hearts and thistle seed by the pound, the goldfinch is an excellent example of a very capable survivor. These very active acrobats are often confused with the canary, however they are not related.

Every bird feeder could become a home favorite to a goldfinch. If you offer black oil sunflower seeds and/or thistle seeds, you too could see the fluorescent yellow and black male goldfinch along with the sleek olive drab female. During the spring and summer months the male goldfinch has molted its dull green feathers for much more showy yellow ones. The female remains fabulously light yellow/green to be incognito and camouflaged while nesting and incubating the all-important eggs.

Basically, the goldfinch waits to nest until the common/bull thistle (*Cirsium vulgare*) has gone to seed. Even if your feeders are full of seeds and voracious goldfinches, their instincts allow them to begin the nesting process relatively late in the season. Once the young are raised and fledged, all goldfinches prepare for winter by molting their feathers again. The males become greenish again to avoid being an easy target for a hawk or other predator all winter. Take a day or two this summer to try to spot a goldfinch in your own backyard!





Residential Tire Recycling Event:

Saturday, September 9, 2023
8:00am – 11:00am
Town of Gorham Highway
3478 Lake to Lake Rd
Gorham, NY 14461



Advanced Registration Required

Space is limited. Registrations will be accepted on a first come, first serve basis.

The registration period is from August 21, 2023 to September 6, 2023.

This event is a free event for ALL residents of Ontario County.

- Maximum of 10 tires per household permitted
- MUST PRE-REGISTER and bring ID to Event
- Only car and light truck tires will be accepted
- All tires must be clean and free of debris
- The tires need to be whole; please do not cut out sidewalls
- No tires on rims will be accepted
- Tires will not be accepted from commercial facilities

Tires not meeting these requirements will not be accepted.

**Please contact Ontario County
Soil & Water Conservation District at
(585)396-1450 to register.**



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Conservation District Technician: **Tad Gerace**

Conservation District Educator: **Alaina Robarge**

Canandaigua Lake Watershed Inspector: **Tyler Ohle**

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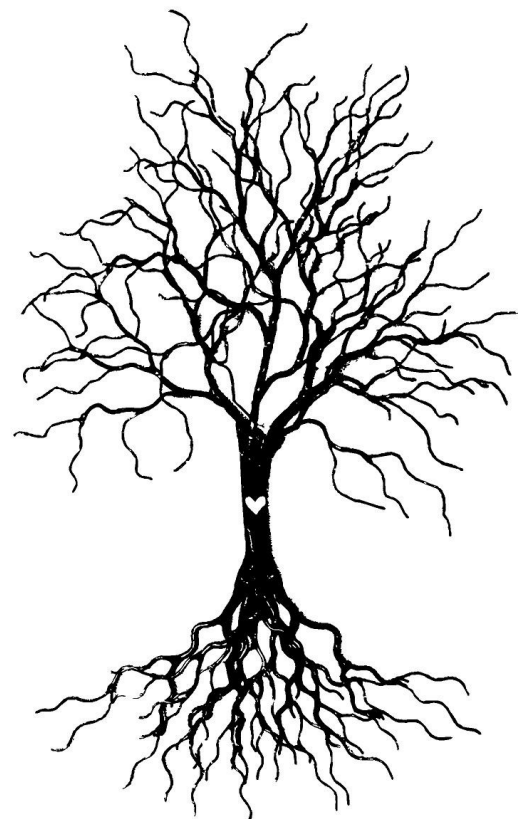
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