

# **71st Annual Meeting of the Orleans County Soil and Water Conservation District**

**Date: January 15, 2016**

**2015 Annual Report**



**Photo: Roberts Farms, Medina, NY**



### **71st Annual Meeting Agenda**

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12:00	Reception
12:15	Lunch
12:45	Soil and Water Conservation District Annual Report
	2015 AEM Conservation Farmer of the Year
	Natural Resources Conservation Report

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## 2015 Board of Directors

**At-Large Non-Farm  
Representative**  
*Edward Morgan*  
(Chairman)

**Legislative Representative**  
*William Eick*  
(Vice Chairman)

**Farm Bureau Representative**  
*James Neal*  
(Assistant Treasurer)

**Legislative Representative**  
*John DeFilipps*

**At-Large Farm Representative**  
*John Kast*

### District Staff

**District Manager**  
*Dennis Kirby*

**District Technician**  
*Katie Sommerfeldt*

**District Technician**  
*Megan McAnn*

**Secretary/Treasurer**  
*Judy Bennett*

### Natural Resources Conservation Service Staff

**District Conservationist**  
*Heath Eisele*

**Resource Conservationist**  
*Robert Bills*

**Soil Conservation Technician**  
*Mallory Barrow*

**Program Assistant**  
*Susan Reckahn*

## 2015 AEM Conservation Farmer of the Year: Roberts Farms

Todd's grandfather, Justin, started Roberts Farm in 1931. In 1960, his sons Lee and Orren, having both graduated from Cornell University, formed a partnership called Roberts Brothers Farms. After having graduated from Cornell University and the Ohio State University and then working as a grain merchandiser for Continental Grain, Todd returned to the farm in 1986. In 1993, Lee and Todd formed the current partnership, Roberts Farms. Lee retired in 2000 from management but remained active on the farm until his death in 2015. The farm continues as a partnership between Lee's wife Virginia, Todd, and Todd's wife, Deb. Roberts Farms produces corn, wheat, soybeans, peas and lima beans on 2,000 acres located in Orleans and Niagara Counties. Three full time employees, Jeff Stear Jr., Ernie Wodrich, and Joe Kyle assist with crops, mechanics, trucking, and the grain drying facility.

Roberts Farms has a long tradition of working with Orleans County Soil & Water Conservation District, NRCS, Farm Service Agency, Cornell Cooperative Extension and area crop consultants to continue their stewardship of the land. Believing that long term

sustainability is best ensured by profitability, Roberts Farms uses conservation farming practices to: 1.) minimize soil erosion with installation of drainage tile, planting of cover crops, and cross-slope planting; 2.) optimize soil health with scheduled soil testing and stalk nitrate testing as part of their nutrient management plan as well as using minimum-tillage practices along with soil residue management; and 3.) reducing chemical usage with Integrated Pest Management practices such as field scouting and targeted application of pesticides.

The farm has participated in the NRCS Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) and recently signed up with the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program for the installation of an extensive Grassed Waterway project. This waterway will have the benefit of moving stormwater and field drainage through the farm and into the Wildlife Refuge without taking soil or nutrients with it. These practices, along with others planned for the future, demonstrate the Roberts' excellent stewardship of the land and desire to protect our natural resources.

## SWCD in 2015

2015 saw a couple of personnel changes for Soil & Water. Megan McAnn was added to the staff and will be specializing in working with the AEM planning process that is used for all of our ag conservation projects. She has also been busy helping Katie and learning about the drainage work we do in the County.

John Kast was added as a member of the Board of Directors to replace the retiring Mike Paduchak. James Neal and Bill Eick will celebrate 10 years as members of the Board at the end of 2015.

Katie has been busy, as usual, surveying and designing drainage projects for farmers and highway departments. She has completed 222,000 feet of tile drainage systems (42 miles) as well as over 10,000 feet of ditch improvement surveys for highway departments. In addition she has been involved in designing 13 culvert replacement projects. As part of those projects she was instrumental in helping file for 7 drainage permits from DEC or the Army Corps of Engineers. Other Ag related projects designed and installed were 2 stream crossings, a grassed waterway and the completion of the Knowlesville flooding abatement project.

We continued working with our two grants to encourage the use of cover crops on farmland throughout the County. Over 1750 acres of cover crops were planted through these programs, which will help build the health of the soil on these farms as well as improve production and help to capture unused nutrients for the next crop.

We were awarded a special grant from the NYS Dept. of Ag. & Markets to work in conjunction with the Genesee County Soil & Water Conservation District to help create a Farmer-led and run organization to promote practices for the improvement of the health of our farm soils in the area. A Steering Committee has been created and work is underway to build this organization.

Our tractor mounted boom mower was shared by the 10 Towns, County and Oak Orchard Small Watershed Protection District to mow and clean both sides of drainage ditches throughout the County. This keeps the drainage ditches clear and water flowing, avoiding any back-up of water and localized flooding. The slashbuster was used to clear and open up over 5,250 feet of stream blockages and is scheduled to be kept busy again this coming winter.

Agricultural Environmental Management (AEM) is our planning process used to encourage use of Best Management Practices (BMP's). 2015 saw 15 more farmers participate in planning new conservation practices for their operations.

As usual, we handled many calls for Ag Value Assessment worksheets, had successful tree sale and fish sale events, as well as shoreline cleanup and tire collection projects.



## WATER QUALITY

### Orleans County Water Quality Coordinating Committee (OCWQCC)

The WQCC is made up of private citizens and public agencies interested in the health of Orleans County aquatic ecosystems. The SWCD is the lead agency for the WQCC and administers and coordinates grant activities (featured below) with the committee's guidance.

- ◆ 15th Annual Shoreline Cleanup  
23 volunteers collected 489 pounds of garbage from shoreline reaches.
- ◆ 10th Annual Tire Cleanup  
Close to 400 used tires were collected from within the county.
- ◆ Agricultural Nonpoint Source Pollution Abatement and Control Grants
  - Assisted farmers with designs for the installation of BMP's through Rounds 18, 19, and 20 from the state Ag non-point Source Grants Program
- ◆ Agricultural Environmental Management (AEM)
  - Continued working on Year 11 of the AEM Base Funding
- ◆ FL-LOWPA
  - Provides funding for Technical Assistance
  - Provides funding for installation of Agricultural BMP's
  - Provides funding for Educational Materials



Collapsing Stream Crossing before replacement



Stream Crossing after replacement

## EDUCATION

### Orleans County 4-H Fair

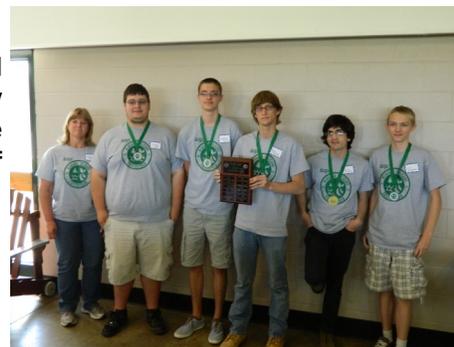
- ◆ Hosted a booth educating the public about the SWCD and NRCS. Challenged fair goers basic forestry understanding by having local tree leaf identification. Had a drawing for free tree seedlings and for a bird feeder. Gave public awareness of district programs and services.

### Envirothon

- ◆ The Orleans County winner of the Niagara-Orleans Regional Envirothon was Lyndonville High School. Team leader: Kathy Wronski; Team members: Jeremy Foss, Ken Kalsen, Ryan Coleman, Haaris Huzair, and Leif Isaacson

### Conservation Field Days

- ◆ Students participated in a demonstration showing what a watershed is, describing point and non-point pollution and how the terrain and management creates pollution events.



Envirothon Winners — Lyndonville

### Tree and Shrub Seedling Program

Distributed close to 7,000 seedlings and transplants to 94 landowners to use for conservation practices

- ◆ 5 Deciduous varieties
- ◆ 4 Evergreen varieties
- ◆ 5 Evergreen transplant varieties
- ◆ 4 Conservation Packs
- ◆ 3 species of deciduous shrubs



### Fish Program

- ◆ Over 3,500 yearling Bass, Bluegill, Minnows and Catfish were distributed to 9 farm fishpond owners
- ◆ Distributed 43 Grass Carp to 10 pond owners to aid in the control of nuisance weeds.
- ◆ Each pond owner was assisted with the necessary NYS DEC Grass Carp or pond stocking permit application



### Water Management Program

- ◆ Assisted several towns in reconstructing drainage ditches
- ◆ Provided the Boom Mower to 10 Towns in the County for use on road sides and Ditches
- ◆ Provided the Hydroseeder and Bale mulcher for several drainage related projects across the County
- ◆ Provided financial assistance and technical support for drainage projects for local agriculture operations



## TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

- ◆ **Tile**  
Assisted fifteen landowners/operators in designing and installing 245,065 feet of subsurface tile (OVER 46 MILES)
- ◆ **Surface Ditching**  
Surveyed and designed 11,460' of surface drainage ditches
- ◆ **Soils, Maps, Aerial Photographs**  
Provided over 62 customers with map information for soils, New York State and Federal regulated wetlands, flood zones, historic tile systems, agricultural districts, and historical aerial photographs
- ◆ **Ponds**  
Provided several pond owners information regarding soils, spoil berms, pond side-slopes, shape and depth recommendations for new and expanded ponds
- ◆ **Nuisance Weed Control**  
Provided recommendations to pond owners regarding control and prevention of invasive plants
- ◆ **Agricultural Value Assessments**  
Completed 99 soil group worksheets for eligible agricultural landowners to receive a tax reduction
- ◆ **Permit Assistance**  
Provided Permit assistance required for 7 water quality projects





UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF  
**AGRICULTURE**

*The Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) provides leadership in a partnership effort to help private landowners conserve, maintain, and improve our natural resources and environment.*

## NRCS Activities in Orleans County

In 2015 Orleans County Farmers were awarded 7 new EQIP Contracts for \$214,216 and 2 new Conservation Stewardship Program (CStP) contracts at \$35,336/year

2015 completed practices (AMA, EQIP, WHIP) totaled \$260,837.71 (78 contract items), with additional CStP payments of \$81,693 disbursed.

Projects to complete in 2016 will account for \$448,000 in payments

Conservation practices completed under contracts:

- Ag Chemical Mixing Facilities
- CNMP
- Conservation Cover
- Cover Crop
- Critical Area Planting
- Early Successional Habitat Development & Management
- Filter strip
- Forest Stand Improvement
- Forest Trails & Landings
- Integrated Pest Management
- Irrigation Water Management
- Nutrient Management
- Prescribed Grazing
- Pumping Plant
- Residue Management & Tillage Management
- Seasonal High Tunnel
- Strip Cropping
- Upland Wildlife Habitat Management



Ag Chemical Mixing Facility



Aerial seeding of rye cover crop



Drip Irrigation



Crop Residue Management

Helping People Help the Land

NRCS is an Equal Opportunity Employer and Provider



# Ag Environmental Management

Farmers Partnering to Protect Our Environment

## 2015 AEM Accomplishments in Orleans County

Tier I	23
Tier II	19
Tier III-A	8
Tier IV	10
Tier V-B	6

### The AEM program has five different Tiers:

Tier I - Inventory current activities, future plans and potential environmental concerns.

Tier II - Document current land stewardship: assess and prioritize areas of concern.

Tier III - Develop conservation plans addressing concerns and opportunities to reach farm goals.

Tier IV - Implement plans utilizing available financial, educational and technical assistance.

Tier V - Evaluate to ensure the protection of the environment and farm viability.

*We would like to thank you for your support in 2015 and pledge to continue to provide you with the high quality of service you deserve.*

*Dennis, Judy, Katie, Megan*



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Soil and Water  
Conservation District

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***“Providing Today, Protecting Tomorrow”***