



# 2023 ANNUAL REPORT OF ACTIVITIES

## In this Issue:

	Page
Envirothon	1
New Staff	2
More District Changes	3
Bluebird Boxes	3
AEM Program/Projects	4-5
Dam Maintenance	6
Firewood BTUs	7
Tires	8
2023 Stream Work	8
Cover Crops	9
Urban NMP	10
Electronic Recycling	11
Upcoming Events	11

## District Mission:

"To protect and enhance the natural resources of **Chemung County** by developing partnerships and networks to implement innovative solutions to our Natural Resource Concerns"

## Chemung SWCD Board of Directors:

**Thomas Rhodes**, Chair

**Dave Boor**, Vice-Chair

**Jim Bush**, Treasurer

**Ernie Evans**, At-Large-Member - Practical Farmer

**David Stow**, Grange

**Lawana Morse**, Legislative Representative

**Michael Smith**, Legislative Representative

## NEW YORK STATE ENVIROTHON 2023

by Mark Richer

In 2023 Chemung County hosted 3 teams compete in the New York State Envirothon. The GST BOCES Conservation classes battled it out to see who would go to the state competition. The roster included three teams calling themselves the "The Vicious Voles," "The Wicked Weasels" and the "Mighty Minks." The Vicious Voles outscored the other two teams becoming the Chemung County Champion.

Soils, wildlife, aquatics, forestry and current issues make up the scope of the testing for the competition. The Vicious Voles went on to the State Envirothon where they place 33<sup>rd</sup> out of 42 competing counties.

The regional Envirothon is held each year at the end of April or early May at the Tioga County sportsmen center in Owego, NY, with five combined counties, Chemung, Schuyler, Tioga, Broome and Tompkins. The State Envirothon competition was held last May at Hobart & William Smith Colleges Geneva, New York. The National event took place last July, Hosted by Mount Allison University, Sackville, New Brunswick. The Envirothon is open to all high school students and the District would like to encourage more schools to get involved. For more information contact the District at (607) 739-2009 and visit the NYS Envirothon website at:

[www.nysenvirothon.com](http://www.nysenvirothon.com)

Photo by Mark Richer



Chemung's Champion Team: The Vicious Voles

# NEW STAFF AT THE DISTRICT



## **Diane Stage – Secretary/ Assistant Treasurer**

I joined Chemung County SWCD in the Spring of 2023. I am very glad I joined the staff here and happy to be of service to the people in the county I grew up in. I've met a lot of wonderful people since I started working with SWCD, and look forward to meeting many more.



## **Craig Johnson - District Technician**

I am originally from Steuben County. I graduated from Finger Lakes Community College with an Associate's degree in Natural Resource Conservation: Law Enforcement, and then from Paul Smiths College with a Bachelor's degree in Fisheries. I am an avid outdoorsman, and spend a majority of my free time fishing and hunting. It has been a life goal of mine to work in the conservation field.

I would like to work with the DEC and our local TU chapter (Trout Unlimited) to develop funded projects for the Catharine Creek watershed. This creek is best known for the annual rainbow trout migration from Seneca Lake. Though Chemung County does not contain the entire stream, it is home to the headwaters and other crucial feeder streams. The trout travel upstream to find suitable spawning habitat. The projects I would like to do involve stream stabilization and creating suitable habitat. My reasoning behind getting involved is because I have a passion for fisheries. This is a rather new system for me and I would like to get to know the watershed and provide the best management to preserve the valued resource.



## **Jim Diederich - District Manager**

I grew up in Caton, NY and graduated from Corning West High. After school I joined the United States Army where I served for 4 years as an infantryman. Next, I attended the University of Connecticut and earned my Bachelors in Natural Resource Management. At this time, I also joined the Air National Guard where I served as a structural journeyman.

After finishing college, I moved back into the region and worked for a year as the Erosion and Sediment Technician for Tioga County, PA and then for 3 years as a Soil Conservation Technician with the Natural Resources Conservation Service. I was promoted to the role of Civil Engineering Technician in Bradford County, PA and for the last 5 years I was involved

with the design and implementation on all USDA funded agricultural or streambank stabilization projects in Bradford, Sullivan, Wyoming and Tioga Counties in PA.

I retired from the Air Force as a Master Sergeant and served as the Superintendent of the 103d Civil Engineering Squadron. I look forward to working with the farmers, municipalities and landowners to put conservation on the ground in Chemung County.



# 2023 DISTRICT CHANGES

## WELCOME TO THE BOARD ERNIE

The Chemung County SWCD is excited to have Ernie Evans join our Board as the At Large Member-Practical Farmer. Welcome Ernie!



## BEST WISHES KAREN

The District would like to Wish a Happy Retirement to Karen Tillotson after 24 years of service to the organization. Karen was the smiling face that greeted the public for greater than two decades in her position of Secretary/Assistant Treasurer. She capped her career for two years as the District Manager before she decided to retire to somewhere warmer. These days she is enjoying spending her time hunting and fishing in the Appalachian Mountains of Virginia where she is closer to family. Best Wishes Karen and Happy Retirement!



## BLUEBIRD NEST BOXES

by Mark Richer

Each year the District builds about 300 Bluebird nest boxes to sell at a modest cost. This effort is to help promote nesting sites throughout the county for the New York State bird the Eastern Bluebird. The District builds these boxes with lumber made on the District's band saw mill. The logs for the lumber all come from somewhere within the county. This has been a great program for the District to promote our state bird and we usually sell out every year. The nest boxes are in stock at our office location and the cost is \$10.00 each.





# AEM PROGRAM & PROJECTS

by Jerry Verrigni

## Tanner Farms - Town of Chemung

We were able to construct a covered barnyard on the family run and owned dairy farm in Chemung County. The livestock heavy use area management system will allow the animals to be housed in a roofed area in non-grazing times of the year. This will help keep clean water from mixing in a denuded open barnyard situation. The nutrients will then be collected from the covered structure and used on the farms crop fields, reducing the need for purchased commercial fertilizer.

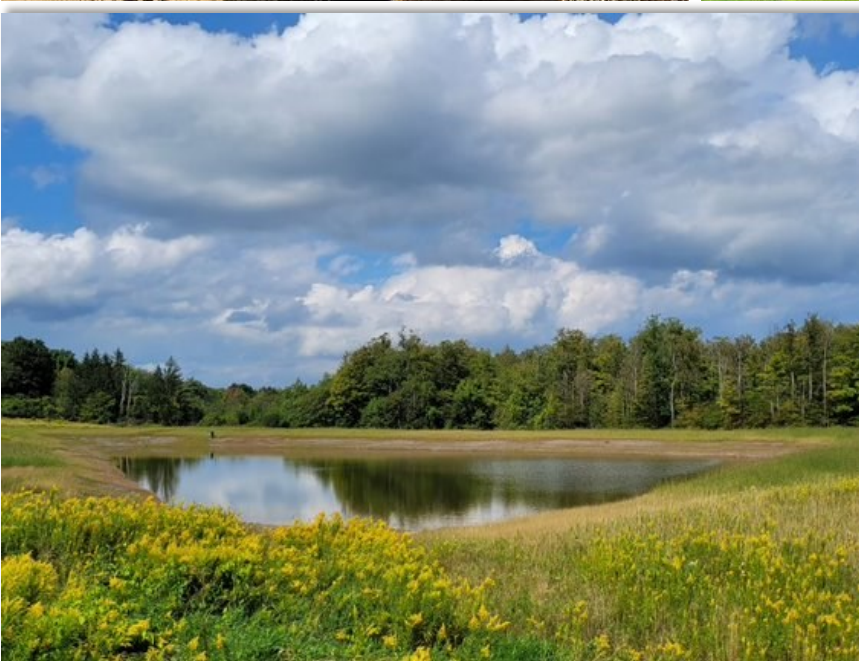
Photos by Jerry Verrigni





## Whiteman Farms - Town of Catlin

We were able to construct a retention pond in the Town of Catlin. Retention ponds are constructed in the upper sub reaches of flood prone watersheds to assist in reducing the peak curve of the high intensity short duration storms we now face. By storing this water in the upper part of the watershed and releasing it slowly over the course of days it allows runoff water in the lower flood prone parts of the watershed to leave prior to the added stormwater runoff from the upper reaches of the watershed being added. This work in combination with the upsizing of culverts, and other infrastructure, along with stabilizing infrastructure, and breaking up long slope lengths helps to reduce the impacts from the storm events we see often each year.



### AEM FUNDING

Contact **Jim Diederich** for AEM  
Program information at  
(607) 739-2009 or by email at  
[james@chemungswcd.com](mailto:james@chemungswcd.com)



# CHEMUNG COUNTY DAM MAINTENANCE

by Mark Richer

This past year the District continued with the maintenance of the county's 5 dams: Park Station Dam, Hoffman Dam, Marsh Dam, Jackson Creek Dam and Sullivanville Dam. Prior to mowing, we removed large amounts of woody debris from the Sullivanville and Jackson Creek Dams due to a high-water event that left trees and brush on the dam embankments. All 5 dams were mowed utilizing Steiner slope mowers and large brush hog mowers.

Jackson Creek Dam created some new maintenance challenges last year as there was some damage to the pedestal that holds the crank to open the maintenance drain gate. The District worked with the County Welder Paul Harnas from Department of Public Works and utilized the Town of Horseheads' portable welder to make repairs to the pedestal - ***A Special Thanks to those folks.*** The repair was successful and the gate is working properly. There was also an issue with beavers plugging the principal spillway and raising the water level of the dam. To totally clear the debris from the beaver, the dam had to be drained. The beaver is still creating problems and efforts are being made to remove it.

The drainage gate at Park Station Dam is aging and being evaluated for repairs and upgrading. Last December the County hired a dive team to locate the structure and evaluate what needs to be replaced or repaired. Updates will be reported in future articles.

It is important to remember that the county's dams are flood control structures first and foremost and recreational after that. We don't like to drain the dams, but it is sometimes necessary in order to perform the desired maintenance to ensure that they operate properly as we had to do with Jackson Creek Dam.

All the dams go through a yearly inspection in May to identify potential issues or concerns there may be so a plan for repairs can be made. The gates that allow the Dams to be drained are exercised and greased to make sure they continue to function properly. The inspection crew consists of personnel from Chemung County Buildings and Grounds, New York State DEC, Natural Resource Conservation Service, Chemung County Soil & Water Conservation District and the Chemung County Stormwater Coalition.



Photos by Mark Richer



# FIREWOOD BTU

by Mark Richer

With the huge increase in the cost of heating your home whether you use fuel oil, natural gas or even electricity, many people may be reverting to the old ways of heating their homes by burning wood. This is by no means new information, but maybe worth repeating in these tough economic times when people are considering wood heat as another heating source. The term *firewood BTU* is used to describe how much energy a type or species of firewood creates. The number one reason people burn wood is to create heat for their homes. It only makes sense to burn a firewood that generates high BTUs so you can get the most heat out of your wood stove. BTU stands for British Thermal Unit, which is the amount of energy required to heat one pound of liquid water by one degree Fahrenheit.

To get the most BTUs out of your firewood, the wood should be seasoned. Seasoned firewood is described as having a 20% moisture content. Firewood cut green should be seasoned for at least one year to make it dry enough burn and generate the most BTUs. Burning green or unseasoned wood decreases the BTUs generated. The energy created from the fire is used to evaporate the moisture resulting is wasted heat. Unseasoned or green firewood tends to smoke and smolder which may increase the amount of creosote in the stove chimney or pipes, increasing the risk of a chimney fire.

Firewood is usually bought and sold in some common measured amounts. Typically, firewood is cut into 16-inch lengths to fit in most wood stoves used inside the home. These 16-inch lengths are tightly stacked in three rows, 4 feet high and 8 feet long, totaling 128 cubic feet. This is commonly known as a cord. Other firewood amounts can be referred to by several different names. For example, a rick or face cord of firewood typically consists of a single row of 16-inch firewood stacked 4 feet high by 8 feet long which is essentially 1/3 of a full cord.

The following firewood BTU chart will show the amount of estimated BTUs produced from a variety of common species of trees used for firewood in the northeast. Species are listed from the most to the least and showing pounds per cord and the BTUs produced in millions per cord:



COMMON NAME	POUNDS PER CORD	MILLION BTUs per cord
Shagbark Hickory	4728	27.7
Hop Hornbeam	4226	27.3
Blue Beech (Ironwood)	3890	26.8
Black Locust	3890	26.8
Bitternut Hickory	3832	26.7
White Oak	3910	24.2
Chestnut Oak	3910	24.2
Sugar Maple	3757	24.0
Northern Red Oak	3757	24.0
White Ash	3689	23.6
American Beech	3566	23.0
Yellow Birch	3570	22.1
Black Walnut	3247	20.9
White Birch	3179	20.3
Black Walnut	3192	20.2
Red Maple	3120	20.1
Black Cherry	2880	19.9
Tamarack (Larch)	2900	19.5
American Sycamore	2808	19.5
Douglas Fir	2900	18.1
Boxelder	2797	17.9
Silver Maple	2805	17.4
Red Pine	2669	17.2
Tulip Poplar	2547	16.4
Catalpa	2360	16.4
Canadian Hemlock	2482	15.9
Aspen (Poplar)	2290	14.7
Butternut	2100	14.5
Spruce - White, Norway	2100	14.5
Willow	2100	14.5
Balsam Fir	2236	14.3
Eastern White Pine	2236	14.3
Concolor Fir	2104	14.1
Basswood	2108	13.8
Cottonwood	2108	13.5
White Cedar	1913	12.2



## TIRES!

The Chemung County SWCD hosted it's annual Tire Day in May 2023 and collected over 1,500 tires! These tires are transported with municipal partnerships for proper recycling and disposal.



## 2023 STREAMBANK WORK

The Chemung County SWCD in partnership with Chemung County, Chemung County Department of Public works and the 11 Towns completed 20 individual streambank stabilization projects in 2023. This ongoing partnership between the organizations allows the SWCD to efficiently streamline mitigation efforts.

Photos by Jim Diederich





# COVER CROPS IN PARTNERSHIP WITH THE UPPER SUSQUEHANNA COALITION

The District used Part B funds to purchase Cereal Rye Seed grown in Chemung County and was able to provide enough cover crop seed for farmers to plant 688 acres across the county.

Photos by Craig Johnson



*Cereal Rye Seed purchased from Chemung County Ag Producers for distribution to other farms*

*These photos were taken during the growing stage after the initial planting:*



*Seed planted on 9/20 on 50 acres*



*Seed planted between 8/15 and 9/15 on 400 acres of dairy farm*



# URBAN NUTRIENT MANAGEMENT

Many of our farmers practice nutrient management as a way to limit the nutrients applied to their fields to only what is needed. This is beneficial because it saves money- since crops receive what they need but there is no extra fertilizer left over to be washed off into our streams and rivers. Managing nutrients in non-farm settings is important too. Our partners at the Upper Susquehanna Coalition (USC) recently released some guidelines on how any landowner can protect water quality by managing the nutrients they use. The USC hopes to have 1000 acres-worth of landowners (individuals, businesses, schools and municipalities are just some landowners who maintain grassy areas and could partner on the project) pledge to manage their urban nutrients and help improve water quality by following the Top 10 Urban Nutrient Management Practices listed below:

## TOP 10 Urban Nutrient Management Practices

To Protect Water Quality, Use Fertilizer Sparingly and Potentially **Save \$**

Pledge to use these practices by scanning this code and completing the form:



- 

**1** Keep fertilizer and grass clippings off paved surfaces
- 

**2** Retain clippings and mulched leaves on the lawn—these are natural fertilizers and can help your lawn stay healthy
- 

**3** Avoid fertilizer applications when grass growth slows (below 50°F). NY prohibits application of any lawn fertilizer December 1 - April 1
- 

**4** Do not apply fertilizer within 20 feet of a water feature
- 

**5** Fertilizer applications should not be made during intense summer heat when fertilizer can burn the lawn
- 

**6** Fertilizer (of any kind) is not necessary if grass has desirable function, growth and quality
- 

**7** Set mower height at 3.5 inches or taller—grass at this height is healthier and more drought resistant
- 

**8** Avoid non-nitrogen fertilizer unless a soil test indicates a deficiency
- 

**9** Use slow-release N fertilizer, especially on sandy soils, to limit runoff
- 

**10** If more assistance is needed, work with a professional to develop an UNMP based on a soil test analysis

N = nitrogen • P = phosphorus  
N and P are harmful when washed into waterbodies



For more information, visit  
<https://www.u-s-c.org/urbannutrientmanagement>  
For questions or concerns, email: [urbannutrients@u-s-c.org](mailto:urbannutrients@u-s-c.org)



## ELECTRONIC RECYCLING EVENT

by Nikole Watts

The Electronic recycling event was created to assist Chemung County residents to dispose of old electronics at no out-of-pocket cost. For residence to participate they must call during the set times, register for a voucher, and then take their electronics directly to React Recycling for disposal. The process has changed a bit since the first event, but the participation of residence has remained the same. This event would not be possible without the financial support from the Chemung County Executive and the Chemung County Legislature, the amazing partnership with react recycling and the consistent participation from the Chemung County residence. We started out 2024 by hosting an event in January that took in 7,241 pounds of electronics. In total we have been able to host 19 events, collected 517,241 pounds of electronics which cost \$61,896.22. Thank you to everyone who makes this event a great success, we look forward to hosting more collection events in the future.



## UPCOMING CHEMUNG COUNTY AND SWCD EVENTS:

March 8	2024 Tree Orders Due
March 16	Chemung County Beef Quality Assurance Certification Training
April 26	2024 Spring Fish Stocking Program Order Due Date
April 26	Tree Order Pick Up
May 10	Chemung SWCD 2024 Fish Sale Delivery Date
May 18	Chemung County Spring Household Hazardous Waste Collection Event
May 21 & 22	2024 Environmental Field Days

Find out more on our webpage:  
[www.ChemungCountySWCD.net](http://www.ChemungCountySWCD.net)

## CHEMUNG SWCD STAFF

**Jim Diederich** -  
District Manager,  
james@chemungswcd.com

**Mark Richer** -  
District Technician,  
markr@chemungswcd.com

**Craig Johnson** -  
District Technician,  
craig@chemungswcd.com

**Diane Stage** -  
Secretary/Asst. Treasurer,  
diane@chemungswcd.com

**Todd Jansen** -  
Equipment Operator

Stay up to date with  
our Facebook page:  
**Chemung County Soil &  
Water Conservation  
District**



851 Chemung Street  
Horseheads, NY 14845  
607-739-2009 or 607-739-4392  
Office Hours 7:00am - 4:00pm  
[www.chemungcountyswcd.net](http://www.chemungcountyswcd.net)

**Or Current Resident**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AEpG85Jucss> - to view FLOWPA Projects

# FLOWPA



*Chemung County SWCD's Annual Report of 2023 Activities is made possible through Finger Lakes-Lake Ontario Watershed Protection Alliance (FL-LOWPA) Funding*

FINGER LAKES - LAKE ONTARIO WATERSHED PROTECTION ALLIANCE

SCAN ME



## HELP US UPDATE OUR MAILING LIST

We want to share our news with you,  
but need your help to keep our mailing  
list up to date. Please let us know if we  
have an incorrect contact name or  
address by calling us at:  
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completing this form:

<https://forms.gle/GR2vysMzg7uQVw2WA>

## THANK YOU!

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