

Communicating Your Value



Why Fund Districts?

Communicating Your Value

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People, Partnerships, and Communities

The purpose of the People, Partnerships, and Communities series is to assist The Conservation Partnership to build capacity by transferring information about social science related topics

USDA Natural
Resources
Conservation
Service

Social
Sciences
Team

How to Develop a Marketing Plan

Marketing is an important function of any business, organization, or agency. Knowledge of marketing helps your team determine the content of messages, the channels for sending messages, and the types of messages to reach the desired audience. The Conservation Partnership has a variety of important messages and services to deliver to an assortment of customers. Understanding marketing and how to develop and implement a marketing plan is one of the best ways to achieve objectives, priorities, and conservation goals.

What Is Marketing?

In some circles “marketing” still has negative connotations. It is sometimes linked with overbearing salespeople and unethical advertising, or viewed solely as a private sector activity. However, marketing can be a useful process for exchanging products, services, and ideas efficiently in any sector, public as well as private. Marketing is a business tool based, to some degree, on art and, to some degree, on science.

A working definition of marketing for the public sector is, “the process of determining what people want and/or need and delivering it to them.”¹ In government, marketing is useful because of the ongoing and widespread exchange of ideas and services, as well as partnership development. Because the government is in the business of serving the needs of citizens, the people are the government’s primary customer. The needs and desires of our customers provide the basis for the marketing plan. Simply put, marketing is customer-driven, outward-focused, and changes as our customers change or their needs change.

Why Market?

In addition to meeting customer needs, marketing is important for other reasons. Marketing can promote a valuable product, service or idea, build awareness about an issue or program, or even create or repair an organization’s image. We live in an unpredictable and changing world, where forming alliances among groups that share conservation-related interests is important. Competition, accountability demands, and even survival are reasons to market conservation products, services, and results. The steps necessary for your team to reach potential customers, who would otherwise be unaware of what the Agency or district offers, are made clear through the development and implementation of a marketing plan. Here is how to get started.

¹Pandolfi, Francis. (Dec. 1999). “To Market To Market.” *Government Executive*, p. 72.

Create a Marketing Team

Marketing is a team effort that utilizes a variety of people's ideas, abilities, experiences, and research. Before you begin the marketing process, think about which individuals should serve on the marketing team. You should consider people with marketing and/or public affairs experience, cutting-edge information technology skills as they relate to marketing in the Internet, and/or those with significant knowledge of the customer base. The marketing team might include an individual who is knowledgeable about the products and services that will likely be marketed. A "visionary" type person who sees the "big picture" and has the ability to think "outside the box" could also be a good marketing team member. Team members don't all have to come from your agency or district. A team with different expertise and experiences who work together will produce a more comprehensive marketing plan.

Development of a Marketing Plan

In the process of developing a marketing plan, your team selects the target audience or primary customer base; systematically determines their needs; develops key messages, strategies and tactics to communicate those messages to the target audience; and provides a timeline for implementation. The process will require the team to think strategically about some of the challenges you might encounter and how to plan accordingly. It is important to remember that these steps can occur concurrently and do not necessarily operate in a linear process. Although there are a number of ways to develop and implement a marketing plan, we suggest a 7-step process.

These steps are:

1. Identify critical issues/needs
2. Develop alliances and determine your role
3. Identify your customers
4. Identify customer needs
5. Develop a strategy and goals
6. Develop and implement the marketing plan
7. Evaluate plan effectiveness

Step 1 - Identify Critical Issues/Needs

A conservation issue is any topic related to natural resources that impacts customers or land use.

Examples of critical, ongoing, or emerging conservation issues in your community might include improving water quality in a watershed, increasing outreach activities, animal waste management, or providing educational information to technical service providers.

Every agency and district has finite resources. For some, there might be a lack of funding, while others may lack human resources, technical expertise, or time. Due to limited resources, priorities or critical issues must first be determined in order to set appropriate marketing priorities. Once the team has identified issues consistent with the agency or organizational priorities and have identified the necessary resources, proceed to the next step.

Step 2 – Develop Alliances and Determine Your Role

Working with other groups who have an interest in conservation programs or services is one way to consolidate your marketing efforts. Building alliances enables your team to share ideas and resources between groups, accomplish common goals, and benefit the groups involved. The Conservation Partnership should consider alliances composed of agricultural, conservation, environmental, community service, or other special interest groups. The media, educational, and professional organizations are other sectors with interests in conservation issues. Tips for developing an effective alliance include²:

1. Contact community opinion leaders and get them involved.
2. Determine their views about your issues.
3. Talk to community groups that have political influence. Learn their "hot buttons" and positions on key issues.
4. Create a list of key contacts. This list may include organization leaders, media, staff from local or state agencies, or non-profits.

² National Association of Conservation Districts. (1994). "Marketing for Conservation Success."

<www.ssi.nrcs.usda.gov/publications/3_Marketing/M001_GuideBooksMarketingConservationSuccess.doc>.

After an alliance is established, determine your team's role and the role of other groups in the effort. Identify the different groups, what they can provide, and how the alliance benefits them. This clarifies the specific role each group can play in the alliance. For example, a community service organization might contribute money or volunteers to a conservation initiative. They might also agree, along with other alliance members, to publicize information about the alliance and its membership in their newsletters.



Analyzing the Marketing Environment

In developing a marketing plan, you must also consider forces outside the agency or district that can shape marketing decisions. Legislation, budgets, and new competitors are examples of outside factors that are beyond the control of the group implementing the marketing plan. Political and legal trends, technological developments, and availability of natural resources can also impact the marketing process. Through a marketing analysis, you need to assess the effect that these factors might have on your marketing activities. How do these factors impact the use of the products and services you offer, how you distribute them, and what do they cost in terms of time and materials? What are the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats to your program or services in your area, RC&D, field office, or watershed team?

Some teams also find it helpful to conduct a review of their organization before developing a marketing plan, whether they are part of a watershed group or a conservation district. It is always important to understand the internal limitations the team might encounter as you proceed in marketing a new idea or service. In this rapidly changing world, your marketing plan should be fluid rather than static. It is important to modify existing strategies and develop new strategies to deal with changes.

Step 3 - Identify Your Customers

In order for your marketing plan to be most effective, the agency or district must know *who* your customers are. In marketing, there is no such thing as the “general public.” Targeted customers must be identified so that your agency or district can more efficiently direct your marketing plan. Use the following information to help define your audience:

- Demographics (age, gender, income, etc.)
- Type of agricultural producer, if applicable (livestock, crop, specialty crop, part-time farmer, renter).
- Psychographics (social class, lifestyle, personality).
- Geographic location (nation, region, state, city). Where do your customers live? You may want to define the geographic areas by watershed, county, city, state, or a region such as the Great Lakes.
- Behavior (adoption rate, user status). How likely is the customer to adopt the service? Do they currently use your service and at what rate? Who in the community has influence on them? Peer pressure impacts how most people behave.

Your customers might be “gatekeepers” such as elected officials. As noted in step 2, agri-business; conservation, environmental and agricultural organizations; professional associations; the media; colleges and universities; and community service organizations are some of the categories of customers and partners.

Step 4 - Identify Customer Needs A

golden rule is to gather information about the customer's needs. Do not develop programs and services based upon your own, the team's, or anyone else's assumptions about the target audience. Beyond the natural resource issues or needs identified in Step 1, what are the specific needs and priorities of your diverse set of customers? They might, for example, need to be better informed about Farm Bill programs or new program updates, technical assistance, financial support, or training.

A marketing environment analysis, surveys, advisory groups, demographic analysis, interviews with local leaders and officials, and focus groups are helpful ways of determining the actual needs of your customers. For example, conducting a focus group is a particularly useful tool for gathering information and clarifying the needs and priorities of an audience. Focus groups are small group meetings of 8-10 participants that enable your team to identify opinions, impressions, and perceptions in a relatively short amount of time.³ They can be effective at the beginning of a process to identify needs. For more information on focus groups and other information gathering techniques, visit the Social Sciences Team Web site for a variety of fact sheets on the topics. The more information your team can collect on the characteristics of your customers, the more customized the information, services and assistance your team can provide.



³ NRCS Social Sciences Institute, 1997. "Focus Groups." *People, Partnerships, and Communities*, vol. 1.

Step 5 - Develop a Strategy and Goals

After the team has identified your target audiences and determined their needs, you are ready to develop marketing strategies and establish marketing goals. Strategies are assortments of tactics and approaches that enable you to attain your team's objectives. The following are different types of strategies:

- Market penetration strategy — present program in existing markets to develop greater customer support. For example: encouraging more customers to sign up for the CRP program by sending a direct mail/e-mail notice is a market penetration strategy.
- Market development strategy – present program to new markets/customers. Notifying local garden clubs about plant fact sheets and the usefulness of this information in native plant gardening could be a market development strategy.
- Reformulation strategy — improve programs for existing customers. For example, providing existing customers with a handout about how to contact technical service providers in their area is a reformulation strategy.
- Market extension strategy – modify an activity to reach new markets/customers. For example, making changes in your field day program to attract a broader audience. Using e-mail to send invitations to new or potential customers and community leaders could also be a market extension strategy.
- Replacement and extension strategies — replace a program with an improved version of the same program or increase the range of services offered. For example, replace a RC&D annual meeting program that is attended only by council members with a new one. Invite partners, customers and potential customers, and local officials to attend the event. Provide an opportunity before, during, or after the meeting for council members to meet the guest speaker.

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- **Diversification strategies** – present a new program to new customers. Providing new information relating to a Farm Bill program to local Native American tribes and bands or to limited resource farmers if they previously weren't customers could be a diversification strategy.



Building or Improving Your Organization's Brand Identity

The development of 'brand identity' is an important component of any marketing plan. In many ways, brand identity is a simple game of word association. For example, when one mentions the automobile manufacturer BMW, the words "elegance," "style," and "safety" may follow. A customer's perception of an organization is what constitutes that organization's 'brand identity.' In the same way that an agency or organization can have a positive image, it can also have a negative image—or none at all. Below are three steps you can take to build or improve your organization's brand identity, whether you are a district office or an RC&D council.

1) Develop a Niche

Understand your strengths and weaknesses. Where does the agency or organization excel? Determine what makes your group unique. Analyze your competition and their strengths and vulnerabilities. Use this information to develop a brand identity that will set your agency or organization apart from the competition, generate recognition, or improve your reputation among a specific customer base.

2) Communicate Identity

Once you have determined your niche, develop specific communication strategies to "communicate your unique identity so the right people know you, value you, and most of all, support you."⁴ An example of communicating identity would be to publish your success stories through news releases, newsletters, or your Web site, when applicable.

3) Consistency

Consistency is critical in building brand identity. Anything associated with your organization or agency communicates to your customers—from promotional materials like newsletters, brochures, or press releases; signs; Web site; or even the way phones are answered. Inconsistencies lead to confusion about who you are and what your organization or agency offers. Creating a style guide for your organization that defines specific letterhead, logo, or font usages, organizational color schemes, page layout guidelines, key messages, etc., is a good way to ensure consistency. The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) home page has guidelines for NRCS logo usage at www.nrcs.usda.gov/about/logo/.

⁴ Engelberg, Moshe, 2002. "Building Brand Identity." *Government Executive*. p. 82.

Step 6 - Develop and Implement the Marketing Plan

Once the team has compiled its research and chosen its strategy, it may begin developing its overall marketing plan. This consists of developing action programs. Action program guidelines provide a written description of:

- 1) Each target market, program, and key message(s)
- 2) Customer needs in each target audience that will be satisfied by the activities or programs
- 3) Objectives for each target audience and for each program
- 4) Establish benchmarks, or points of reference, from which measurements may be made.
- 5) The marketing plan (messages, products, for each target audience)
- 6) Performance standards based on such broad criteria as effectiveness, efficiency, and equity.
- 7) Key elements of success such as a increasing the number of partners in a watershed initiative.
- 8) Promotional materials needed (brochures, newspaper articles and other materials)
- 9) Third party endorsements (a customer that is willing to be quoted saying something positive about a program or how a program helped him/her.)

After the action program is developed, a timeline that identifies specific steps or objectives and provides target dates to accomplish objectives and goals should be written. This will serve as your team's implementation guide throughout the process.

E-mail Marketing



Marketers in every industry are embracing the use of e-mail in attaining their marketing goals. E-mail marketing enables efficient communication with a larger number of customers at a lower cost both monetarily and in time. The recent surge in e-mail marketing has made crafting useful e-mail messages that attract customer attention more difficult because of the prevalence of SPAM, unwanted e-mail. It is forecasted that SPAM will soon overtake HAM, desired e-mails. The following are items to be considered when communicating and marketing to customers through e-mail.

Subject Lines:

These need to be compelling and grab attention. Start with a provocative statement or questions. Always review previous subject lines you have sent to avoid repetition. Additionally, consider sending different subject lines to different groups or segments of customers.

Message Content:

Use multiple and different calls to action throughout the e-mail. Provide contact information that is easy to use. E-mail enables immediate customer response to your message.

From Line:

The origination of all messages from your organization should be directly connected to your organizational brand identity. When a customer receives an e-mail, they should recognize instantly the organization's name or contact person and associate it with a product or service. Once a source is selected, it should be used consistently for quick recognition by your audience.

The Closing:

End with a strong benefit to the customer. Too many e-mails simply summarize instead of providing a strong reason or deadline for taking action.

Internet Marketing

Here are a few tips to consider before marketing your organization on the Internet. Be aware that your state or national organization/agency may place restrictions on content, layout, and color schemes to establish consistency. Build the Web site from the assumption that the average viewer has an older computer and a slow internet connection. The longer it takes for the viewer to load your webpage, the more likely they are to lose interest and cancel the page load completely. What does this mean?

Keep it simple. Pages with lots of color, text, and especially images typically take longer to load. Choose a few significant graphics or images instead.

Make it easy on the eyes. Use a color scheme that is aesthetically pleasing. Nothing is harder on the eyes than red text on a black background. If you have questions about color schemes, contact your public affairs specialist or visual information specialist for recommendations.

Organize the information. Use the home page to break down your information into logically organized categories. Always assume the viewer knows nothing about your organization when creating those categories.

Consider Accessibility Issues. Web sites should be accessible for those with disabilities and satisfy Section 508 Federal requirements. For more information on accessibility guidelines, consult The Access Board's Web site at <http://www.access-board.gov/>.

Update regularly. A neglected Web site will only promote disinterest. Update with news, interesting tidbits, and new features.

List contact information. Provide a way customers can contact you regarding any questions or concerns they may have.

Utilize customer feedback. Provide a "user feedback" section on your Web site where your viewers can comment.

Step 7 - Evaluate Plan Effectiveness

After your marketing plan has been implemented, it is important to compare changes between your team's benchmarks and actual results. With this type of comparison, the team can evaluate successes and identify areas in need of improvement. Examples of evaluation questions to answer might include:

- What strategies or activities were successful and which ones were not?
- What was learned from customer feedback?
- Based on the feedback, how might the team improve the marketing plan?
- Did the team fulfill objectives and goals or meet the identified need?
- Have other needs emerged?

For example, if your team's objective was to target and reach a specific number of customers with invitations to attend a district's field day, it is important to assess afterward who came and how they heard about the meeting. Consider a sign-in sheet that enables you to gather contact information on attendees and also determine how they heard about the meeting. Did they receive an invitation, read about the field day in the newspaper, or hear about it from another person? This will give your team specific feedback on the channels that were successful in reaching your customers.

This step may require your team to re-evaluate any or all of the previous steps. Adjustments are usually necessary. Be honest. Rarely does a marketing plan make it to this step without identifying areas with room for improvement.

In today's world of tight budgets, diverse customers, new and powerful technologies, and increases in competing messages, we must be more creative in the ways we communicate. A marketing plan is an important tool for The Conservation Partnership to utilize. It enhances the transfer of technology, information, and services to constituents and can also facilitate the development of alliances among community groups. Marketing enables us to understand and more effectively meet our customers' needs.

Where can I find more Information?

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People, Partnerships and Communities Fact Sheet Series.

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MARKETING DISTRICTS & PUBLIC RELATIONS

Marketing is an element of any successful business, organization, agency or group. It is no different for districts. Marketing is critical to gaining visibility and credibility. SWCDs cannot grow, flourish without marketing. Once you understand how to market effectively, you'll enhance your chances for name recognition, be viewed as an expert source for information and/or direct assistance in the field of conservation.

For many of us, marketing is a real mystery. We don't know exactly how it works. We're not sure what will be most effective for us and we may have no idea where to start. The good news is that the process of developing and implementing a marketing plan for your SWCD is not nearly as difficult as it may seem. The core of marketing is very simple: It's about communicating the value of what you offer to those who can benefit the most.

You can greatly improve the impact of marketing by using multiple marketing channels. Prospects will likely become supporters and participants if they, for example: read about our services in the newspaper, attend a seminar, take home a brochure, and visit the county SWCD web site. The further you can "stretch your marketing dollars" to reach your target market in multiple channels, the higher the impact of your marketing message.

Let's take a look at some basic Marketing Principles you should consider:

- Marketing is repetitious. To create impact, build rapport and establish relationships with your prospects, repetitious marketing works best. Your audience may need to hear your name or message 5-7 times before you can anticipate a response.
- Marketing must be performed continuously, not infrequently. Avoid marketing in spurts.
- Marketing creates impact gradually – not immediately.
- Marketing sells solutions. People are more interested in what SWCDs can do for them to help solve a problem.
- Marketing involves targeting specific individuals or groups of people.

Let's now take a look at various Marketing Strategies you could utilize. It is not critical that you incorporate all these into your marketing plan. As a board, discuss these options and decide where you want to put your efforts. You may also need to change your approach after a few years if your efforts do not seem to produce the necessary results.

Physical Office

- Outdoor signage and indoor directional signs (if needed).
- Welcoming entrance.
- Staff easily seen from the entrance to greet visitors
- Guest waiting area.
- Brochures and pamphlets displayed for easy access
- Accessible walkways (at least 32" wide) for physically challenged individuals.
- Answering machine for when the office is closed or staff is not available.

Office Operations

- Consistent way of answering the telephone
- Consistent local SWCD letterheads for letters, FAX cover sheets, envelopes, etc.
- Business cards for staff
- Informational brochures and pamphlets
- Telephone system – voice mail, directional tree, etc.
- Name tags for staff
- Shirts with local SWCD name and/or logo
- Effective use of e-mail among staff and supervisors

Networking and Event Participation

- High quality booth or display at 4-H Fair, Flower Show, field days, trade shows, Ag. Days, lake association gatherings, Chamber of Commerce events, annual meetings (Farm Bureau, Cooperative Extension, Co-op, seed and fertilizer dealers, Ducks Unlimited, Pheasants Forever, Farm Credit Services, etc.)
- Attend and/or serve on various community committees – Chamber of Commerce Natural Resources Committee, Extension Service Agriculture Committee, lake association boards, river watch, tree planting, community clean-up, drainage board, etc.
- Offer to give presentations for service clubs and organizations
- Sponsor or co-sponsor events, seminars and training programs on appropriate SWCD topics

Direct Mail

- Newsletters, special promotion letters, flyers, etc.
- Obtain information (name, address, phone number, and e-mail address) from every person who attends any of your programs. Keep an excel spreadsheet on your computer with specific columns for each event so you can track participation. You can e-mail/mail information to these individuals on the spreadsheet.
- Utilizing a mail service, SWCDs can send out information to a specific group of individuals based on location, homeowner vs. tenant, recent home purchaser, etc.
- If your clients are agreeable, consider using e-mail rather than regular mail. This will greatly reduce postage costs.

Web Site

- An effective site can help build awareness and credibility for your SWCD
- Keep it updated and change the information periodically
- Develop an easy to remember URL or Domain Name
- Remember, older computers may not download detailed pictures
- Include the office phone number, address, FAX number, and an e-mail address on your home page.
- Include links of other related agencies and organizations and ask others to include your SWCD link on their site. Examples include: surveyor, NRCS, Cooperative Extension, builders associations, FSA, Farm Credit Services, local Ducks Unlimited and Pheasants Forever, etc.
- Keep it simple to use with easy access back to the home page

- Use your site to promote District programs and activities.

Media

- Developing a working relationship with key contacts is critical
- Television and Radio
 - Public service announcements
 - When interviewed, provide background information and a possible list of questions to the reporter that he/she can ask you
 - Consider giving reporters some free items (trees, meal tickets, etc.) to give away to listeners when they mention your event
 - When interviewed, it is critical to give accurate information and advice, which will help you become known as an expert
- Phone Book
 - Determine the best location(s) to list your district
 - Work with county officials to try to get multiple listings
- Newspaper and Magazine
 - An article and press release with a photograph gains more attention than a paid advertisement. Information printed under the photograph is the most often read part of the article or press release
 - Send information to a specific person (not just to the editor, for example)
 - Try to include something periodically (bi-weekly, monthly, etc.)
 - Submit articles for other business and organization newsletters
 - Give accurate information and advice, which will help you become known as an expert
- Road Signs and Billboards
 - Review all county signage policies
 - Big letters and numbers are critical, especially if vehicles travel the route at a high rate of speed.
 - Keep the information as simple as possible to convey the message

Give Away Advertising

- Everyone likes to receive free items, so if you plan to purchase these for distribution, make sure you include the SWCD name, office phone number, and/or web site address, if appropriate
- Examples of items are: pencils, pens, refrigerator magnets, flyers, buttons, stickers, hats, shirts, mugs, date books, fly swatters, rulers, yard sticks, etc.

Every year it is important that the SWCD board reviews the marketing efforts for the past twelve months to see what worked and what may need to be changed. As mentioned earlier, it takes time to develop name-recognition and to see positive results. It will not happen overnight, so be patient. Marketing is critical to all corporations, agencies, and organizations, make certain it is part of your yearly strategic planning.



Developing an AEM Communications Strategy

A well-planned and comprehensive Communications Strategy is important for the success of the AEM program at all levels: statewide, county, watershed, and farm. Statewide communications efforts supports local communications efforts, and also targets key statewide audiences such as legislators, environmental and agricultural organizations, and others whose support is crucial to AEM's continued success.

Local communications efforts promote the work of AEM working groups to farmers and helps convey messages to the community. This can increase local support for AEM and agriculture, and make the job of implementing AEM more effective. Well-planned communications efforts can also help AEM working groups:

- become more visible in the community
- build credibility with decision-makers and others who deal with land use by providing information and expertise
- heighten community awareness of the multiple benefits of agriculture and how AEM helps farmers protect the environment and remain economically viable

Communication activities are an important component in every step of your AEM Strategic Plan

At the individual farm level, well-planned and carried out communications efforts can improve the farm's image in the community, which could help relationships with neighbors and prevent complaints to public environmental agencies, or even lawsuits.

Definitions:

Outreach and information, education, and public participation are all necessary parts of effective AEM communications planning. Developing a strategy to implement the full range of outreach and information, education and public participation components will help assure a successful AEM communications program.

- **Outreach and Information:** Outreach is the general dissemination of knowledge, facts and concepts using all media, and is targeted to inform specific audiences for a specific purpose. Information is usually delivered passively to an unseen audience whose response cannot be predicted. Those who supply information assume that the informed recipients will make the "right" decisions and act accordingly. Information is essential, but it seldom acts as a motivator by itself. Outreach and information are important in all phases of AEM, but are especially important at the beginning of a new effort.
- **Education:** Education consists of interpretive activities designed to raise a specific audience's level of understanding of facts and concepts. It involves active, structured learning, measurable results and personal contact, using all media. The focus is on well-defined audiences to increase awareness, understanding, motivation, action and behavioral change. Education strives to equip targeted audiences to make informed decisions by increasing skills in critical thinking and problem solving. Education is vital throughout AEM, since we are often expecting farmers to adopt and carry out new environmentally-sound farming practices.
- **Public Participation** - The purpose of public participation is to solicit meaningful input from all stakeholders and achieve substantial consensus on a course of action. Success is more likely to occur when all stakeholders feel that their concerns have been considered and is a primary way to solve or prevent problems. Public participation is especially important in AEM because the AEM process involves different agencies and groups who may have widely divergent viewpoints: for example, farmers and environmentalists. The give-and-take involved in most public participation activities also helps different audiences understand each other's viewpoints and perspectives. For example, the non-farm public may learn about the environmental stewardship of neighboring farms, while farmers learn of neighbor concerns.

The Communication Planning Process

An effective communications strategy requires planning. Given limited resources, it is important to set priorities among your messages, activities and audiences, as well as to identify the results you expect from your communications program and activities. The example planning grid and template located at the end of the AEM Strategy section is one example of how you can organize your communications activities by goal. This example can be customized to best suit your needs, such as including a “Budget” and “Actual Results” columns. The key steps in developing a Communications Strategy can be summarized as follows:

- Establish goals and objectives
- Set up an evaluation process
- Identify and priority audiences; understand their viewpoints and concerns
- Tailor messages to each target audience’s interests and needs
- Simplify and focus messages
- Decide how to best deliver the message to each priority audience
- Conduct Communications activities
- Evaluate progress
- Modify efforts as needed

The key to crafting an effective message is knowing your target audience and asking yourself, “What’s in it for them?”

Establishing Goals

Your overall goals express the long-term (3-5 year) result of a communications effort. Your goals should be specific, feasible, and focus limited resources on the most important activities and audiences. Identifying the forces that are driving the need for an outreach program will help focus goals on exactly what is needed to get the job done. Some examples of AEM outreach goals are:

- Increase AEM participation in the watershed to improve water quality and document measurable progress/success to garner ongoing support.
- Local officials and the public will support agricultural land use through greater understanding of the substantial economic contribution of agriculture to the local economy, importance of locally-produced food, and the environmental benefits farms provide.
- Decision-makers and the non-farm public will understand how publicly-funded conservation and pollution-control programs for farmers benefit them directly and indirectly.
- Decision-makers and the non-farm public will understand that effective pollution prevention and environmental protection requires action from all segments of the community, and that the agricultural community is doing their part.

Communications planning is also important for individual farms, especially those that have communication activities as part of their Tier 3 plan. Example goals for individual farms may include:

- Neighbors know the farm is actively participating in AEM, and what AEM is.
- Neighbors understand the many benefits the farm provides to them, such as wildlife habitat, open space, and recreational access for hiking and hunting.
- Neighbors know what the farm is doing to protect water quality in its daily operations.

Establishing Objectives to Meet Goals

The objectives developed to achieve a goal should be specific, measurable, action-oriented and time-focused. Keep the desired outcomes in mind when forming objectives. Do you want to create awareness, provide information or encourage action among the target audience? It is very important to include a time element for specific tasks in order to evaluate your efforts. For example a general watershed project goal, outreach objective and task could be:

- **Goal:** Get the public more involved in watershed protection efforts

Objective: Create a grassroots watershed association

Task: Within 6 months, identify five groups willing to be active members of the association

As you progress, your objectives and activities may change. For example, at first it may be necessary to generate basic awareness of watershed issues, and as this effort progresses you may shift your objective to educating the target audience on the cause of the problem and changing behavior as part of the potential solution. Remember, awareness is the first step toward action.

Setting Up an Evaluation Process

Determining the effectiveness of your communications efforts should be built into the evaluation strategy of your County AEM Strategic Plan to ensure that you stay on track and meet your communications objectives. Feedback generated after each completed step will help you carry out subsequent steps more efficiently.

Identifying Priority Audiences

To effectively target messages to the audience's interests and needs, first define audiences as narrowly as possible. For example, dairy farmers whose barns are within 100 yards of a stream have different information needs than lakeshore property owners. AEM partner agencies have different information needs than municipal officials. All four are examples of narrowly-defined audiences.

It is also necessary to understand their viewpoints, concerns, and motivations. Full-time farmers may be more concerned about profitability than part-time farmers. Different audiences will also have different levels of awareness of agricultural and environmental issues, as well as different abilities to act on these issues. For example, it is likely that farmers participating in AEM will have more understanding of and appreciation for environmentally-conscious farming methods than farmers not involved with the program.

Priority audiences for a local AEM working group may include:

- farmers
- local officials
- the non-farm community
- lending institutions
- educators & students
- businesses
- watershed groups & associations
- environmental groups

Priority audiences for an individual farm may include:

- neighbors in proximity of the farm, farm fields, or downstream from the farm
- local agricultural and environmental agency staff
- local media

Tailoring the Messages

Messages should support your objectives and at least one of your defined outreach goals. Each message should be simple and clear. A good rule of thumb is that you should be able to state your message in one sentence of reasonable length; otherwise it is not focused enough. It should be presented in a style and format that the targeted audience can use and understand. Spell out acronyms, avoid trade jargon, unless it's your audience's trade jargon, and present technical concepts in everyday language. If your audience cannot follow how you present it, your message will be lost and they may receive a negative impression of your program. Each message should be tailored to the interests, awareness and level of involvement of its target audience. For example, both of the following messages promote improved manure management through participation in AEM, yet are tailored to the interests of different priority audiences:

- Farmers: "AEM can help you save on fertilizer costs through better management of manure."
- Lake shore property owners: "Farmers participating in AEM in the watershed are improving the management of manure to help protect the water quality of Golden Lake."

Awareness is the first step toward action. Explore what people in your target audiences know about an issue or problem, and its affects on the resources they value. Then determine what education they need in order for them to take appropriate action.

Data gleaned from the *“Agriculture & the Community Worksheet”* can be very useful in determining how to tailor your messages for different audiences. For example, let’s say that worksheet data reveals that farmers in a watershed are maintaining many riparian buffers. This fact could be used in a message aimed at local officials and the community as an example of how local farmers take seriously their role as natural resource stewards. This may be extremely important if there is a public water supply reservoir or lake downstream. On the other hand, if the worksheet data indicates that farmers in a watershed are maintaining relatively few riparian buffers, it may be a priority to develop outreach and education activities that promote riparian buffers to farmers. Additional examples of tailored messages for key audiences are as follows:

- **Local Officials:** Our AEM Watershed Strategy provides a visible framework for partnering, documenting priority needs and obtaining additional funding for the protection of Golden Lake.
- **Lending Institutions:** Farmers’ investment in environmental protection measures protect your investment in their farm as well.
- **Tourism Boards:** Agricultural land provides some of the most scenic vistas in our county.
- **Watershed Groups and Lake Associations:** All sources of pollutants, non-agricultural as well as agricultural, must be addressed in order to keep the lake clean. Utilizing our local AEM program, the agricultural community in our watershed is doing their part.

Conducting Outreach and Information, Education, and Public Participation Activities.

Each activity should be designed to help reach communication goals, have a clearly-defined message and be targeted at a priority audience. When conducting outreach activities, the power of repetition cannot be underestimated. Television ads are a good example. Advertisers run them over and over, sometimes several times in the same evening. The same message, directed at the same audience, should also be repeated through different outreach activities and media outlets. Individual members of each audience respond differently to different activities. One farmer may never miss reading the local weekly, but misses the evening news because he is out in the barn. Summer residents may not see an article in the local paper, but come across it in a regional magazine mailed to their main residence. If you use only one activity or media outlet, you will miss many people in your audience. Simultaneous activities could include:

- **Publishing articles in community, environmental and farm newsletters, magazines and newspapers.** Each article should be written for the interests of its priority audience. For farmers, AEM could be presented as good business practice in the farm or business section of the local weekly. For a non-farm audience, an article on how farmers are participating in AEM as a way to help keep local waters clean could be published in a regional magazine.
- **Developing a general display** for use in public places and at the county fair.
- **Partnering with an interested farmer**, preferably an opinion leader in the community, to develop an AEM model farm, sponsor tours, and perhaps even recruit the farmer as an AEM spokesperson.
- **Running public service announcements**, preferably professionally-produced, on local radio stations that farmers listen to or farm radio shows during times when farmers are in the barn.

The target audience is your customer and you’re selling a message. A message that engages your audience will help them ‘buy into’ the attitudes and behaviors that will help achieve your goal.

Measuring Success

Base your measurement on how well you have met your communications goals and any objectives established to reach those goals. Conduct research to evaluate the impact and success of your outreach activities on target audiences. For example, convene a "focus group" of area farmers a few months after you begin your outreach efforts to see how many have heard of AEM and if they have a positive image of it. Distribute a survey to farmers as you conduct routine farm visits to gauge awareness and understanding of AEM. Keep track of requests for information and what groups the requestors are affiliated with.

Making Midcourse Adjustments

Modify your efforts as needed, incorporating new technology and information from evaluation efforts, the community, research, and other sources. Periodically evaluate goals and objectives to determine if they are still valid and relevant. Also, continue to identify and involve new audiences in your program as they are identified or come forward.

Linkages with Existing Educational Programs

Educational programs, such as the Integrated Pest Management and Pro-Dairy programs of Cornell Cooperative Extension, USDA's Farm Bill Conservation Programs, and various programs of Soil and Water Conservation Districts, are tools that can be utilized to spread the AEM message and involve farmers. Program representatives should be on your local AEM working group, and alert for ways to integrate AEM into their programs and vice-versa. At the state level, many partner agencies are involved in the development of AEM resources through the AEM Steering Committee. AEM training opportunities are conducted regionally and statewide, and include the annual Water Quality Symposium held each March.

AEM Outreach Materials

Resources and materials such as an AEM Display, AEM General Brochures, AEM Annual Reports, Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) Display, CREP Brochures, etc. have been developed at the state level for use with local outreach efforts. A list of items and ordering information is at the end of this section.

Utilizing the "Agriculture & the Community Worksheet"

As noted earlier, data gleaned from the "*Agriculture & the Community Worksheet*" can help determine how to tailor your messages for various audiences. The worksheet is designed to help farmers recognize the many amenities that their farm offers to their neighbors, the community and the regional economy. It should be completed when neighbor relations are identified as a concern, or if a farm will be part of a watershed or farmland protection effort.

On-Farm Applications: The worksheet can provide facts and figures to support an effective farm communications plan, which may be a component of the farm's Tier 3 plan. An effective plan, properly implemented, can help farmers convey key message that may prevent problems with neighbors and the community. Neighbors are less likely to complain if they:

- know the value and benefits the farm provides to the community
- understand the need for practices such as manure spreading and early morning crop harvesting
- recognize that the farmer is working to be sensitive to their concerns relating to odor, noise, etc.
- are aware of the farmer's efforts to protect the environment

County or Watershed-wide Applications: Worksheet information gathered for individual farms can be compiled and summarized for a county or watershed. The data may be helpful in determining how to best direct or locate funding, prioritize the relative importance of environmental issues, or support the need for farmland preservation efforts. It may also be of interest to local water districts, watershed groups and associations or local officials. This information also links to County Water Quality Coordinating Committee efforts, and can be utilized in their reports to county legislature regarding the progress of their County Water Quality Strategies. Sharing data with these groups can help publicize AEM, the need for AEM, or report back to the community on what farmers are doing to protect the environment. The data gathered can also benefit programs of AEM working group members. Worksheet data can provide information to document the importance of your role working with farmers on implementing AEM and BMPs, which can support your budget messages. Just filling out the worksheet with the farmer shows that you recognize and are interested in promoting their good stewardship and the benefits that their farm provides. Promoting AEM, promotes your work with farmers and the benefits of agriculture, which also supports the value of AEM and related programs.

Where does Education Fit into AEM?

Key Point 1

Every time you as a representative of the government interact with people about agriculture-environmental issues, you are doing AEM education.



Key Point 2

Define Your Audiences: Farmers and Farming Community
Elected and Community Leaders
Non-Farm Connected Public

Deliver Messages That Are: **C**lear, **C**oncise, and **C**onsistent

Key Point 3

The fact there are environmental regulations will help change people's practices. But their willingness and cooperativeness will depend upon the relationships you build with them as you assess, plan and implement AEM in a watershed.

Correlation Between Source of Power and Conformity

Source of Power	Attitude	Behavior
Coercive	+ .15	+ .66
Reward	+ .31	+ .34
Expert	+ .40	- .15
Relationship	+ .72	+ .14

American Sociological Review. 1968. Vol. 33 No. 6

**Communications Strategy
Outreach, Education & Public Participation**

SAMPLE

PRIORITY AUDIENCE	MESSAGE(S)	Possible ACTIVITIES	WHO	WHEN	DESIRED RESULTS
<u>Local Farm Organizations</u>	1) Farming in synergy with the environment is important to your members and will continue to affect how they farm. 2) Work with us to further develop the AEM program in our county. 3) Promote AEM to your members as beneficial to their business.	1) Letter, followed by phone call 2) Presentation at organizations' meetings or a farmer meeting they sponsor 3) Guest article in newsletter	Local working group Sue Smith; John Jones (CCE) Jeff Abbott for local working group (SWCD) Recruit a farmer that has already benefited from participating in AEM	Minimum one month before planning group's first meeting.	1) Farm Bureau, Grange local NOFA chapter, agribusiness, etc. participate in local working group to develop a plan with broad local support. 2) All support AEM actively to membership. 3) Member farmers hear about AEM in positive light from group they already know about.
<u>Conservation District Cooperating Farmers</u>	AEM is a more coordinated way for you to advance stewardship on your farm. You can set an example for other producers	1) Farm Visits 2) Presentation at Cooperator Dinner 3) Newsletter articles 4) Allow your experiences to be used as a local case study.	Jane Doe (SWCD); Art Link (NRCS)	Identify desirable cooperators at the second planning meeting	All cooperators know what AEM is and how it affects what they are already doing as cooperators.
<u>Property Owners/Renters on Golden Lake</u>	AEM is a new way for farmers to do their part in keeping Golden Lake pristine. Work with us to develop AEM in Smith County.	1) Display at Town Hall 2) Articles in weekly newspaper 3) Presentation at annual Lake Association meeting.	Sue Smith; John Jones (CCE)	June '05 - Sept. '06 Monthly - May - Oct. '05 July '05	Property owners are aware that an organized effort is helping farmers do their part to keep Golden Lake pristine. Representative from Lake Association sits on Golden Lake Watershed Advisory Group.

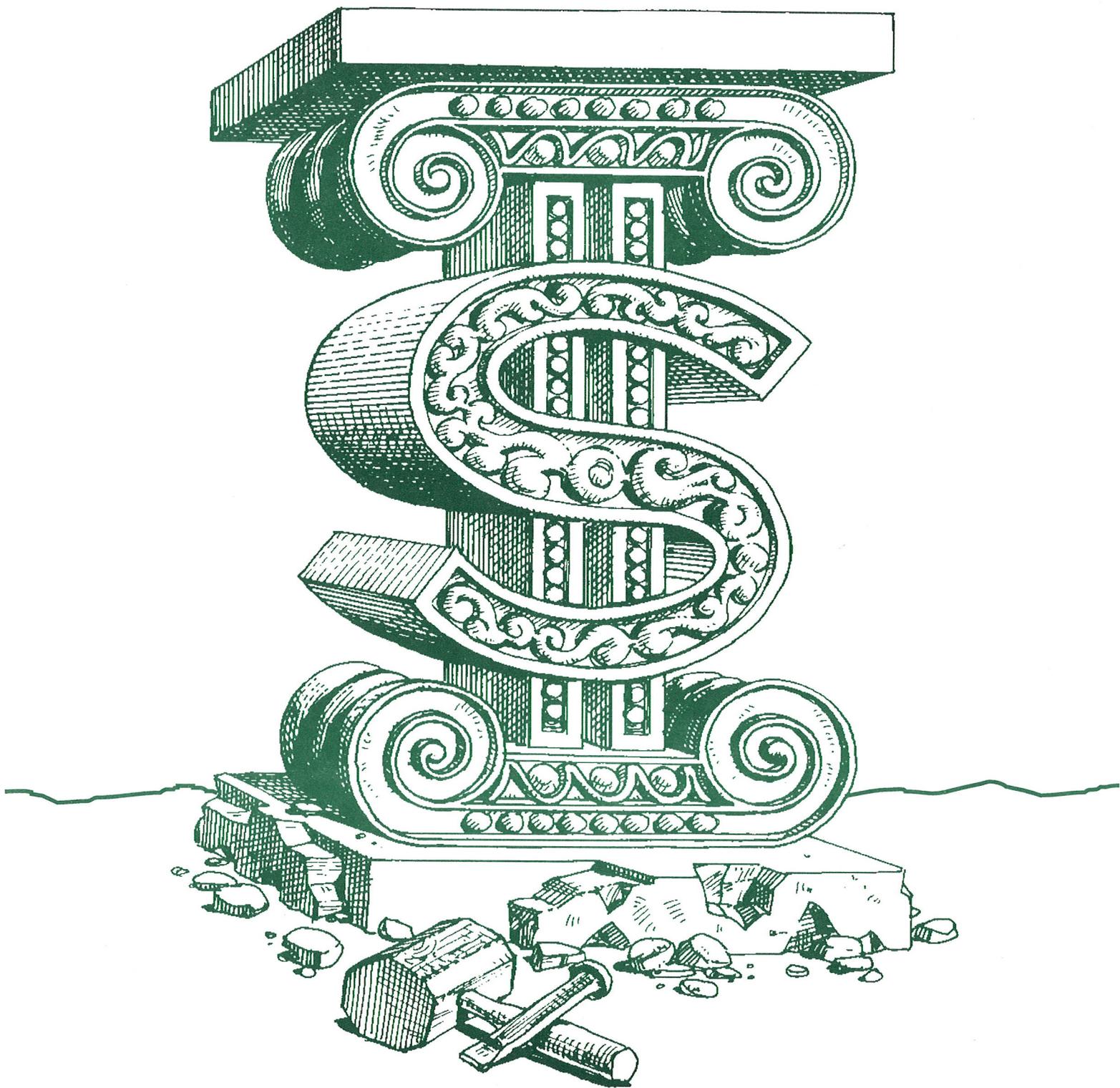
**Communications Strategy
Outreach, Education & Public Participation**

SAMPLE

PRIORITY AUDIENCE	MESSAGE(S)	Possible ACTIVITY	WHO	WHEN	DESIRED RESULTS
<p><u>All - Activities That Support Efforts Aimed at Priority Audiences</u></p>	<p>This is what AEM is all about. This is how AEM is working to help farms address environmental issues in County X This local effort helps farms, protects the environment and benefits the whole community</p>	<p>1-A: Brochure for farmers 1-B: Brochure for non-farmers. 2. Article in Daily newspaper kicking off and explaining AEM - business or local section. 3. Article on farm page of weekly. 4. Professionally produced PSA's on local radio farm show. 5. General display about AEM and what it means for farmers and community. 6. Develop impact statement that highlights the work 7. Case study of successes on farms 8. Annual report to legislators and other public officials on the effort and its results.</p>	<p>1-A&B: Sue Smith, John Jones (CCE) 2. Contact reporter - Jeff Abbott (SWCD) 3. Art Link (NRCS) 4. Sue Smith (CCE) to contact statewide Outreach Committee and secure. 5. Jeff Abbott (SWCD)</p>	<p>May '97 May '97 May '97 July '97 to start. June '97 - rotate around country.</p>	<p>Explain AEM; tell where/who to call for more information Announce start of AEM initiative - explain AEM initiative in general term & what it means for farmers and the community. Tell farmers about AEM and where to call for information. Farmers receive positive impression of AEM and may call office. Create AEM name recognition and positive impression. Support of local officials</p>

Ideas for Including Education in AEM Communications Plan Outreach, Education & Public Participation

PRIORITY AUDIENCE	MESSAGE(S)	ACTIVITIES	WHO	WHEN	DESIRED RESULTS
<p><u>Conservation District Cooperating Farmers</u></p>	<p>Current practices and situations on your farm may pose potential environmental concerns.</p> <p>An AEM Tier I and II assessment of your farm can help you identify these potential concerns</p> <p>The AEM partners have ways of assisting you in addressing environmental concerns on your farm.</p>	<p>1) Incorporate appropriate Tier II worksheets into producer classes, meetings and workshops.</p> <p>2) On-farm walks highlighting environmental issues around farmstead</p> <p>3) In field walks highlighting hydrologically sensitive areas, water control and soil erosion practices.</p> <p>4) Print questions from an appropriate worksheet in newsletters</p>	<p>Sue Smith, John Jones (CCE educators)</p>	<p>During winter programming season</p> <p>During TAG or other small group meetings</p> <p>When local events offer an educable moment</p>	<p>Producers are more aware of what a complete environmental assessment (Tier I and II) entails</p> <p>Producers step forward to have a complete assessment done on their farm.</p> <p>Producers make changes to a practice they identify as high concern on their farm</p>



More Dollars For Your District

A publication of the National Association of Conservation Districts

The Conservation Movement

Across the United States, nearly 3000 conservation districts are working to conserve and develop land, water, forests, wildlife and related resources for the benefit of all. More than 15,000 men and women serve on the governing bodies of these districts. Districts can be found in all 50 states — plus the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, Guam, the Northern Mariana Islands, American Samoa, the Federated States of Micronesia and the Republic of Palau.

The National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD) was organized by districts and their state associations to serve as the national voice for the conservation movement. Formed in 1946, NACD enables districts to do collectively what they cannot do individually. NACD pools district experience and develops national policies on a continuing basis. It maintains relationships with organizations and government agencies; publishes information about districts and works with leaders in agriculture, environment, industry, youth, religion and other fields. NACD provides services to districts through its Washington office, its five regional offices and the NACD Service Center. These offices can be reached at the following numbers:

Washington Headquarters

202-547-6223 • FAX: 202-547-6450

Service Center

713-332-3402 • FAX: 713-332-5259

ORDERS: 1-800-825-5547

Conservation Technology Information Center

317-494-9555 • FAX: 317-494-5969

Northeastern Office

413-585-8895 • FAX: 413-585-8897

Southern Office

405-755-2288 • FAX: 405-755-2377

North Central Office

715-341-1022 • FAX: 715-341-1023

Western Office

303-988-1810 • FAX: 303-988-1896

Pacific Office

509-334-1823 • FAX: 509-334-3453

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Raising money to operate district programs and to support your state and national organizations is a basic, but often difficult, task. Tight budgets at all government levels have squeezed public funds available for conservation programs, and most districts are searching for creative ways to replace these traditional sources of money.

Furthermore, as public funds have dwindled, the demands for district action have grown. In reality, most district officials constantly face the difference between the things they would like to do and the funds available to accomplish them.

This booklet provides some ideas about approaches to financing district operations. Most of the ideas come from conservation districts themselves. These are money-raising ideas that can be accomplished by small districts as well as large ones and by districts with minimal staff as well as those with numerous employees.

Experienced districts know that having effective programs makes it easier to raise money. They also know that a well-organized, successful fund-raising effort has innumerable positive spin-offs. People learn about district programs through such a fund-raising effort, so it builds good public support for district activities.

However, most districts must go beyond organizing traditional fund-raising events like barbecues and car washes to be successful. Other financing strategies, like cost-sharing with other organizations, securing grants from public or private sources and making district services profitable can provide long-term solutions to funding dilemmas. In any case, following basic marketing principles can help you achieve financial stability.

NACD hopes that this booklet will be a practical guide for you in raising the money you need to operate your district program. As you come up with innovative ideas that are different from those listed here, please let us know so we can share them with other districts.



Keep in Mind

NACD is committed to helping districts learn to market themselves more effectively. An easy-to-use workbook for marketing conservation services is available through the NACD Service Center. A variety of marketing guidebooks covering subjects from direct mail to media relations are also available. Call 1-800-825-5547.

Organizing a Finance Committee

As part of your district's fund-raising strategy, it is a good idea to establish a finance committee. It should be comprised of local experts, such as bankers, businesspeople, professional fund-raisers, civic leaders and others experienced in raising money for worthy community enterprises. By organizing a district finance committee, you can put these people and their ideas to work for your district.

Along with designing fund-raising projects, a finance committee can work with the district on a statement of overall financial needs. If everyone understands the relationship between the funding requests and the programs that the funding will support, then fund-raising efforts will go more smoothly.

A Supporting Membership Program

One successful way to raise funds for district projects is to develop a supporting membership program. In this program, members would make yearly contributions to the district.

One group to target is district cooperators. Farmers and other landowners who have been served by the district are most likely to appreciate the value of conservation district work.

A letter to this group announcing your supporting membership program should include information on major accomplishments of the district. It is also helpful to mention future projects that deserve support. Point out that district officials volunteer their valuable time to administer the affairs of the district. This may encourage support from those that the district serves. A membership fee plan can be recommended, but note that any and all support is valued.

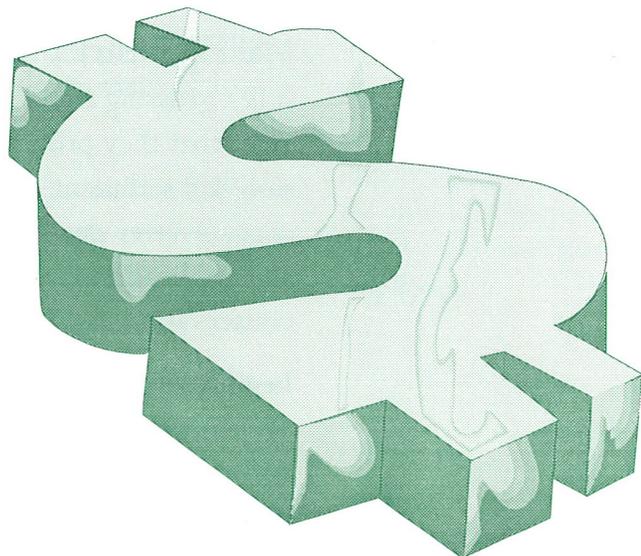
Institutions or prominent individuals interested in resource management may also be interested in supporting memberships. These may include local banks, farm supply businesses, community leaders, politicians or educators.



Try This

Districts with experience in organizing a membership program advise careful planning when contacting potential members. They suggest the following steps:

- *Identifying institutions and individuals who might be interested in memberships;*
- *Assigning each of these possible supporting members to a district official for a personal phone call or visit;*
- *Preparing for potential members a district program overview, which should include details about specific programs which need funding assistance.*





For Example

The NACD Service Center offers a short video called "Faces of the Future" that can serve as an icebreaker at meetings. Based on the concept that "kids say the darndest things," the video interviews elementary school students about their thoughts on conservation. This 5½ minute clip is guaranteed to make you laugh. The tape also includes three short public service announcements featuring the students. Call 1-800-825-5547.

Think ahead and plan activities for supporting members. A special meeting with a guest speaker can increase the opportunity for members to learn about district activities and to meet each other. Slide presentations or videos can be effective tools for these meetings (see the catalogue of audiovisual aids available from the NACD Service Center). You can also bring members together by hosting a yearly "open house" or field day.

Districts should create photo and promotional opportunities to recognize supporting members for their contributions.

Ongoing services, such as a newsletter or meeting notices, may attract supporting members. A certificate of membership, signed by the chairman of the board and suitable for framing, can also build pride in the program. Even a bumper sticker with the inscription "Supporter, _____ SWCD" can give prestige and publicize the district name.

After the first year's activities, send the supporting member a copy of the district's annual report along with a bill for membership dues. This might be a good time to ask for an increased contribution. A visit from the district official who originally contacted the member can be helpful, but is not always necessary.

Finally, to ensure that the program continues to grow, develop a process for adding to the list of supporting members each year. You might want to consider forming a committee of enthusiastic cooperators and supporting members to help promote this program.

Making District Services Profitable

It is a growing trend for districts to charge fees for the special services that they provide. Most commonly, districts involved in erosion and sediment control, reclamation of surface-mined land and certain water quality projects fund these programs through permit and application fees for the development, review and approval of conservation and land use plans.

In addition, many districts across the country support and encourage the rapid growth of conservation tillage practices by renting conservation tillage drills or other equipment. To make such programs cost-effective, rental fees should at least cover program costs. The fees can also generate money for your district.

Districts have covered their costs or generated additional district revenue with these programs as well:

- Brush eradication
- Certification of irrigation water depletion for income tax purposes
- Percolation testing
- Pond management service
- Recycling program
- Seeding of road banks
- Soil tests
- Sponsorship of professional speakers in a conservation series
- Subdivision plan review in urbanizing areas
- Timber stand improvement
- Tree planting
- Used equipment auctions
- Water quality tests
- Water withdrawal measurements
- Woodland assistance
- Workshops or seminars on topics such as attracting wildlife or home landscaping with native plants



It is important not to compete with local businesses when providing district services. The services should be related to the conservation goals of the district and not conflict with any federal, state or local mandates or priorities.

Finally, in contracting to perform services, districts may be liable to legal claims if the services are not performed properly or if damages occur in connection with such services. Legal advice and appropriate insurance are vital parts of a service program.

Check with your state conservation agency personnel to determine the appropriate level of liability and errors and omissions coverage for your district's program.



Remember

There must be a definite understanding that paid district services are provided by the district only and do not involve the on-site technical assistance of USDA Soil Conservation Service employees.



Grant Sources

Private

The Foundation Center is an independent national service organization established to be an authoritative source of information on private philanthropic giving. It has a nationwide network of cooperating collections for public use. Call 1-800-424-9836 to find the nearest location.

The Environmental Grantmakers Association can provide information on grants available from various private foundations for various kinds of initiatives. Call 212-373-4260.

Public

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

*Public Information Center
202-260-7751*

*Environmental Education Division
202-260-4962 or 202-260-4965*

USDA Natural Resources and Environment

*Environmental Coordination
202-720-7173*

Multiplying the “Buying Power” of District Funds

In addition to raising money, districts can often “make a bigger splash” with their existing funds by developing a good action plan.

Working with groups rather than with individuals, for example, maximizes the use of staff time. In organizing conservation education work, some districts plan teacher workshops rather than sending staff members into individual classrooms. And when dealing with erosion and drainage problems, an area meeting of landowners can save many staff hours versus visiting individual sites.

In all cases, “helping people help themselves” can effectively multiply the staff time of districts. Reaching out to influential community leaders can also multiply the impact of district programs and affect large projects or multiple sites through a single contact. Additionally, developing contacts with the local news media can multiply the conservation message.

Districts can maximize the buying power of their funds by cooperating with neighboring districts or other local organizations on projects. Public service announcements are a good example. Multiple sponsorship cuts the purchase price for each district and also demonstrates broad support for the project. Districts have also cooperated with each other in activities ranging from sharing county fair booths to jointly sponsoring a publication.

Another way to save money is to apply for nonprofit or governmental subdivision status from the U.S. Post Office (if you do not already have it). This will reduce your costs for bulk mailing. Contact the NACD Service Center for information on how to do this.

Grant Funding and other Contractual Arrangements

Grant money can be obtained for a wide variety of projects and from a diverse assortment of organizations. Grants are not only available through federal, state and local agencies, but also through private foundations and businesses. Federal and state grants commonly address issues such as water quality, forestry, habitat restoration and education, to mention a few. Private sector grants are sometimes less restrictive, but they must coincide with the goals or address the needs of the granting organization.

Your local library may have information on businesses and foundations that offer grants to worthy projects. Your state conservation agency may also have information on grant possibilities.

Contractual arrangements to perform surveys, studies or other resource-related projects for city and county governments can also generate revenue.

Don't overlook the possibility of gaining grants from local businesses, many of whom have a vested interest in projects beneficial to the community.

Sales of Conservation-related Items

Districts have raised funds for many special projects by selling conservation-related products. Among these are:

- Aerial maps or other photography of area
- Bird seed
- Bumper stickers
- Calendars with photography of local scenery
- Conservation-related materials such as moisture meters, irrigation equipment, pipe for drop structures
- Cooperator signs
- Dry hydrant supplies (local fire protection which reduces insurance)
- Firewood
- Fish for stocking farm ponds
- Grass seed
- Hats or T-shirts featuring conservation themes
- Literature developed in relation to local conservation needs
- Native plant sale
- Nesting boxes or other wildlife supplies
- Soil surveys published by district
- Stakes and flags
- Tree or shrub seedlings
- Wildlife and windbreak packets



Innovation

Team up with your national association to raise funds. An innovative district tree sales program allows districts to share revenue with NACD on any of the following sales programs:

- **Habipak Tree Sales:** sell groups of trees and shrubs preselected for your area.
- **Bounce-Back Sales:** market unique and seasonal gift items.
- **Indirect Group Sales:** work with groups interested in selling these products as a fund-raiser and sharing profits.

Call 1-800-825-5547 for details.



In some states, like North Dakota and Washington, the state associations and districts join together to sell conservation trees and shrubs. The state associations sell the plant materials wholesale to their conservation districts, who in turn sell the trees as a fundraiser in their community.

However, when developing a fund-raising sales campaign, try not to choose an item which places the district in direct, unfair competition with a local, taxpaying business. Check to see that there is a real need for the item you have in mind, and that a local dealer does not already supply that item to your customers.

Special Events

If fund-raisers are well planned, they can raise money, take the district message out to the community and involve supporters in a worthwhile and enjoyable project. They can also build conservation spirit. Some successful ideas from districts include:

- Barbecue with local produce and meat
- Boat trips
- Car washes
- Celebrity dinners (charge a fee, like \$50 per plate)
- Equipment auctions
- Fish fry
- Harvest dinner
- Hunting and fishing clubs (charge membership and registration for trips)
- Nature hikes (charge a registration fee)
- Raffle of a conservation-related item (a quilt with nature-related designs, a special conservation service, produce or meat donated by a cooperator)
- “Run (or bike) for conservation” with sponsors for each participant. Donation of prizes and sales of such items as T-shirts can add to the profits.
- Wine-tasting with wine from local wineries
- Yard sale with contributions from cooperators and supporters



Appropriate insurance is advisable for these events. Insurance coverage for a special event can normally be obtained at a reasonable cost.

Support for your Newsletter

A regularly printed newsletter can be a major way to get the conservation message out to district cooperators, supporters and to the district population at large. Because printing costs are proportionally less as the volume of newsletters printed increases, doubling the budget for a newsletter may allow the district to move from printing 200 copies to printing 2000 copies. Thus, the newsletter would reach a much larger audience. But newsletters cost money, and printing and mailings costs can be a good chunk of the budget for small district operations.

Getting funding for the newsletter through sponsorships or from display ads helps many districts pay for their newsletters and use their regular budget funds for other important projects.

For example, local businesses or organizations interested in supporting conservation work may sponsor your newsletter as a special project. In this case, the district may acknowledge this support with a small note in the newsletter that states "This newsletter is produced with the financial support of _____."

Display ads are a second source of newsletter income. As the newsletter's circulation increases, more businesses may find it profitable to advertise in your newsletter. The business may pay to have the ad printed in just one issue, or it may pay to have it printed in every issue. Printing ads is fairly simple, especially if the business provides the camera-ready ad.

Support for Other Specific Projects

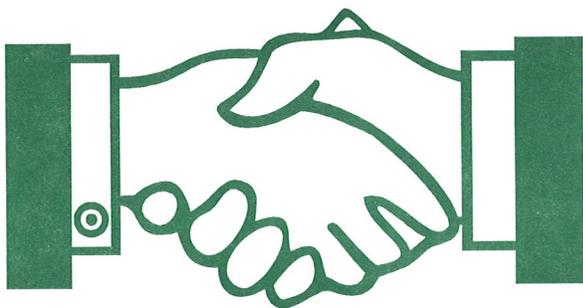
Other district projects — such as award programs, essay, poster or speech contests and special or annual reports — also attract supporters. Although businesses may have limits on the "charitable contributions" section of their budgets, they can often provide money for these projects from their advertising or marketing funds. In such cases, the project usually includes some discreet form of advertising, such a note acknowledging sponsorship. For example, many districts



Details, details

The NACD Service Center can help with all aspects of producing a newsletter, including typesetting, layout, printing and mailing. They can also give districts guidelines on how much to charge for display ads. For more newsletter information, call the Service Center at 1-800-825-5547.





find that farm equipment dealers are willing to contribute to a district equipment rental program or help support a demonstration project. These projects give recognition to both the dealer and the district.

Make a list of projects which could attract support of one or more sponsors. Try to match sponsors with the programs you think will interest them most.

Consider ways to advertise the sponsorship without interfering with the objectives of the district program, then contact potential sponsors.

Volunteer Support

Volunteers can assist a district in many ways. They can help with the office workload, increase the number and range of contact hours possible for professional staff and provide the extra assistance necessary to make special projects possible. The key to good volunteer programs is developing clear objectives about the work volunteers will do, gaining commitment from the volunteers and rewarding them.

Each volunteer needs to have a job description and information packet that lists projects requiring volunteer support, explains who supervises each activity, and gives details about the work place, insurance coverage, use of vehicles, etc.

Districts may find that their local university or college is a good source of volunteers. Many degree plans require each student to spend one semester as an intern in a field related to the student's degree or future career. For example, interns may help with conservation education programs or with publications.

Interns are usually eager to gain work experience, especially if they get college credit. Although many internships are unpaid, businesses often try to give their interns some financial compensation or at least recognize them in some way. To find out more about working with interns, call your local university or college.

Youth groups are also good sources of volunteers. Group members might clean up litter, seed erosion sites or give conservation talks to other youth groups or schools. Developing a strong youth program builds the district capacity.



Hints

Volunteers need:

- *To know their responsibilities*
- *To have information about their projects or activities*
- *To make a meaningful contribution toward the district's mission or goals*

Senior citizens may also serve as volunteers. Many of them enjoy participating in rewarding, community-oriented projects, and they can contribute in a variety of ways, from typing to planning events. There are many healthy and active seniors who would lead hikes, present seminars or conduct other projects.

Gaining Funds from Local and State Governments

Regular appropriations from state and local governments are essential to the funding of most district programs. Working hard for adequate funding from these levels can make substantial sums of money available for district work. Strong reasons exist for both state and local government to support district programs:

- Protecting soils from erosion saves government funds otherwise spent on dredging sediment from rivers, cleaning up ditches or purifying polluted water for public consumption.
- Flood prevention structures reduce damage to roads, hydroelectric operations and other public facilities. They can also reduce the size of bridge needed for a particular area.
- Conservation achievements contribute to county and state goals for environmental quality and economic growth.
- District personnel salaries contribute to the local economy.
- The added value of well-cared-for properties maintains the local tax-base and helps build a prosperous community.
- Volunteer time in district work (including time spent by district officials) makes all these district programs available at a low cost.

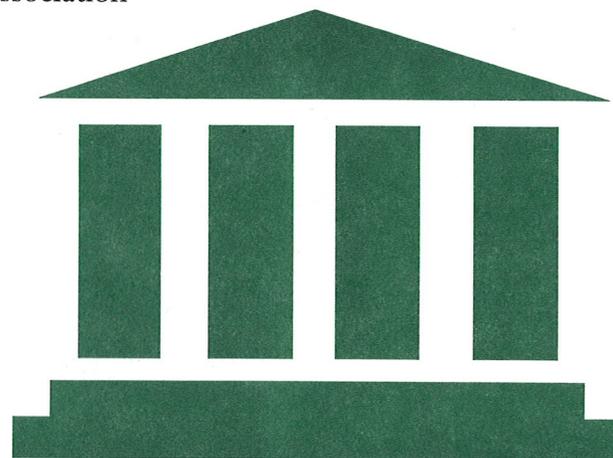
To gain state funding, districts, their state association and state agencies should work together to develop a unified conservation campaign. They must earn the support of state legislators, who will help develop and pass legislation supporting conservation goals.

For example, the state of Missouri receives soil and water conservation activity funds from a one-tenth percent sales tax. Conservation districts obtained the



Insurance

The Earth Team program of the USDA Soil Conservation Service can provide insurance coverage for volunteers in many conservation projects. Check with your district conservationist for more information on this.





Some Tips

Successful districts have developed some guidelines for requesting funds from county government:

- *Tabulate district service to localities and landowners.*
- *Tabulate local jurisdiction assistance to the district.*
- *Develop an economic summary of the total benefits to the county's citizens through the conservation district and field office programs.*
- *Compare the benefits to the current level of funding.*
- *Prepare a packet with above information, long-range plans, project proposals and other appropriate materials.*
- *Enlist support and assistance from local government staff and local organizations with development and sharing of the information packet.*
- *Visit local government officials to deliver the packet and discuss district activities.*
- *Present budget requests at appropriate time for local government procedures.*
- *Do yearly follow-up with copies of annual report and other materials to show the ways in which funding has been used.*

funding by securing a constitutional amendment. In Colorado, districts may levy a tax of up to half a cent on lands within the district. But first they must secure the approval of the majority of voters within the district. In Washington State, a local improvement assessment of cents per acre or dollars per parcel can be approved by the county commissioners after a public hearing.

“Reinvest in Minnesota” includes strong state support for district programs, with several million dollars allocated yearly for erosion control and water quality management. Projects supported include flood control, abandoned well sealing, forestry improvement programs, local water resource protection and management programs and environmental agriculture education programs. Meanwhile, South Dakota uses unclaimed, off-road diesel tax receipts to fund conservation district activities through a competitive granting program. Other states (Ohio and Texas, for example) match funds raised by districts.

Letting legislators know about your work and the ways legislation can increase the effectiveness of soil and water conservation work should be a regular part of your effort at the state level.

District Taxing Authority

When the model conservation district legislation was sent to states in 1937, it contained a section which would grant districts “taxing power” to fund their conservation programs. Most states did not include that provision in the legislation they passed, but some did. Since that time, more states have passed laws giving taxing authority to districts, and other states are currently considering such laws.

Examples of this funding source are dedicated taxes, district taxing authority or local improvement assessment. A number of states, including California, Colorado, Kentucky, Montana, Nebraska, South Dakota and Washington, are very active in this area of district funding.

Contact your state association or state conservation agency if you are interested in pursuing this means of providing funds for your district programs.

Other Resources

How to Shake the Money Tree: Creative Fund-raising for Today's Nonprofit Organizations, by Thomas Dunn. Penguin Books, 1988.

Program Planning & Proposal Writing, by Norton J. Kiritz and Jerry Mundel. The Grantsmanship Center, 1988. (Contact The Grantsmanship Center, 1031 South Grand Avenue, Los Angeles, CA 90015 for ordering information.)

Conservation Partnerships: A Field Guide to Public-Private Partnering for Natural Resource Conservation. Management Institute for Environment and Business, 1988. (Contact U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service at 703-358-1711 to order.)

A Guide to Designing Effective Proposals, published by World Wildlife Fund Publications. (Call 410-516-6951 for ordering information.)

National Association of Conservation Districts
408 E. Main St., P.O. Box 855
League City, TX 77574-0855

New York State Soil and Water Conservation Districts

Leveraging Spreadsheet for Promoting Benefits of Districts vs. Costs to Local Governments

Spreadsheet Purpose

New York's Soil and Water Conservation Districts receive financial, technical and educational support from a number of federal and state agencies in addition to county government. They also receive direct or in-kind operational support from other public and private organizations that support their mission. County government support is vital to District operations to carry out programs and provide services. Too often county councils and commissions are reluctant to extend additional funding to Districts because they are unaware of the significant federal and state dollars, as well as private funding, that a District brings into their respective counties to support the local economy, improve the soil, water and related natural resources of the county and, in turn, improve the quality of life for its citizens.

It is hoped that this Leveraging Spreadsheet will help Districts demonstrate the significant amount of non-county financial support that comes into their respective county through the network of partners working with and through their District. We encourage Districts to carefully complete the spreadsheet and use it to present their local officials with a “bigger picture” of how their District impacts their local economy and the quality of life in the community.

Items to Promote & Discuss With Public Officials

Once the spreadsheet is complete and desired handouts are created, there are several items of budgetary significance that District Directors, managers and staff should discuss with local officials:

- 1.) Explain to your local official how your District is the local governmental agency responsible for determining *their* constituents' needs, and for setting local conservation policies carried out by various agencies and organizations. Assisting the District with increased funding allows for trained and equipped staff to better meet the soil and water quality needs in the county.
- 2.) Discuss how establishing specific agricultural and/or urban practices aids in controlling erosion and run-off, while reducing expenses to other county agencies by solving problems like ditches filled with sediment, decreased property values, poor water quality at water treatment plants, animal waste run-off, urban sedimentation in city streets, or other challenges that your District helps the county address or prevent.
- 3.) When speaking with local officials, discuss facts such as how many dollars from outside sources are matched for each dollar invested by the county. Many competing county agencies will not have such matches, so *demonstrate why it is wise for the County to invest in your District and its programs*.
- 4.) Bring attention to the fact that Districts are a key mechanism for federal NRCS assistance to local landowners, meaning that all salaries, office space, equipment, and all technical and financial assistance may not be available to your officials' constituents without your District's continued presence. NRCS staff often live and make purchases in the counties in which they work, adding to the local economy. Practices installed through NRCS also utilize local construction firms, materials, seed, etc., further stimulating the local economy.
- 5.) Demonstrate to local officials your District's future plans for addressing county concerns by explaining your recent Business Plan or Long Range Plan, and explain how your budget is needed to accomplish your plans. Show your District's goals for solving local challenges as well as your administrative ability to do so!

For additional assistance, your AEA or State Committee staff are willing to assist with completing your spreadsheet. They will probably not have individual financial data for your county, but may be able to suggest resources and contacts to find the needed information.

Spreadsheet Construction & Data Entry

Completion of the spreadsheet is relatively simple for those experienced with Microsoft Excel software. Items or programs are simply entered under the appropriate heading with the correct dollar amount to the far right, and the spreadsheet calculates most subtotals and totals, as well as the leveraged impact of the District on the local community. For best results, District Directors, managers, staff and conservation agency partners should discuss individual programs, practices, and funding amounts *as a group* to best represent total conservation efforts in your county.

Contribution sources will vary depending on the agency or outside program being listed. For local sources, individual Districts will identify and list those resources they received from the local community. For state and federal grants, Districts will also list the source for non-traditional funds they are receiving such as Clean Water Act grants including EPA 319 grants, foundation grants, private or commercial donors, etc.

Technical agencies, average salaries and support figures are provided within the spreadsheet to allow District staff to complete these sections.

For the NYS Soil and Water Conservation Committee Associate Environmental Analyst (AEA) or other State Committee staff, you will need to locate the appropriate tables for each position located on the extreme right of the spreadsheet (follow blue arrows from main spreadsheet). The value of support for each position will be calculated by providing an estimated number of days each position has assisted your District and its programs.

For USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service staff stationed in your District, select the section at the bottom of the spreadsheet labeled "NRCS Salary & Support Info." Select the averaged salary and support information needed based on the number of NRCS staff, their grades and appropriate support (office rent, vehicles, supplies, etc.).

Installed conservation practices and their respective costs, which is a value to the local economy, are available from the USDA-NRCS P.R.S. reporting system, with assistance from your local NRCS District Conservationist. At printing, the conservation practices section of the spreadsheet should be printed on the **back** of any handouts generated for further discussion with officials on what the supervisors and local partnership staff have accomplished in your county and what these practices are worth to the general public. Note: If you prefer not to include the information on the value of conservation practices applied you can use only page one of the worksheet by itself, however adding the information on conservation practices applied provides a more complete picture for your local officials of the total benefits of your District to the county, and its taxpayers.

Utilizing Spreadsheet Data

Once the spreadsheet is completed, the marketing begins! The spreadsheet is designed as a tool to assist District Directors, managers and staff in one-on-one discussions with County Councilmen, Commissioners, and other appropriate local officials. *However*, we recommend that under no circumstances should the spreadsheet be printed and mailed to these individuals unless accompanied by a well written letter detailing how these figures are derived. Local leaders will not see the true value of what your District brings to the county without a detailed explanation. Without an explanation by someone in your District, officials may regard some figures as highly inflated. They need to know that even though the District doesn't directly control some of the non-county dollars, they do however strongly *influence* these dollars coming into the county. They also need to know that some other non-county appropriated dollars shown, such as 319 grants and state funds for operations, are in the direct control of the District.

<YOUR> County Soil and Water Conservation District

From (Month/Day/Year) to (Month/Day/Year)

<i>Assistance for District Operations Costs:</i>	<i>Contribution</i>	<i>Total</i>
County Investment for District Operations		
<i>Other LOCAL Investments for District Operations</i>		
District Tree Sales 1		
Other District Income 2		
Total Local Investment for District Operations (Other Than County Tax Dollars)	\$ -	
<i>STATE Investments for District Operations</i>		
Part A District Reimbursement		
Part B Natural Resource Projects		
Part C Performance Measures		
Other State Investment for District Operations		
Total State Investment for District Operations	\$ -	
<i>FEDERAL Investments for District Operations</i>		
USDA - NRCS Staff & Support (Local - District Conservationist)		
USDA - NRCS Staff & Support (Regional - Watershed Team)		
USDA - NRCS Contribution Agreement (Technical or Administrative)		
Other Federal Investment for District Operations		
Total Federal Investment for District Operations	\$ -	
TOTAL PARTNER INVESTMENT FOR DISTRICT OPERATIONS		\$ -

<i>Cost Share to County Landowners/Operators for Conservation Practices:</i>	<i>Program Total</i>	<i>Total</i>
Local*:		
Other Local 1		
Other Local 2		
Total Cost Share Provided Through SWCD	\$ -	
State*:		
AgNPS Grants		
Other State		
Total Cost Share Provided Through State Agencies	\$ -	
Federal*:		
Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)		
Conservation Reserve Program (CRP)		
Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP)		
Conservation Security Program (CSP)		
Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program (WHIP)		
Wetland Reserve Program (WRP)		
Grassland Reserve Program (GRP)		
EPA 319 Nonpoint Source Program		
Other Federal		
Total Cost Share Provided Through Federal Agencies	\$ -	
TOTAL COST SHARE THROUGH CONSERVATION PARTNERS		\$ -

* Does not include landowners' investments in practices, which may range from 10% - 50% of total cost. For a detailed list of new conservation practices installed during this timeframe as well as their estimated values, see the reverse side of this form.

TOTAL CONSERVATION INVESTMENT LEVERAGED THROUGH THE SWCD	\$	-
RETURN: EACH COUNTY TAX DOLLAR INVESTED IN THE SWCD LEVERAGES:		#DIV/0!

Local Economic Impacts of Soil & Water Conservation Districts

Key Messages:

- District work to address natural resource conservation needs identified at the local level and have the flexibility to respond as needs arise.
- Districts are able to get conservation projects done quickly, efficiently and cost effectively.
- Districts are able to build on their county appropriation, which pays for core staff, by bring in conservation dollars from state, federal and private sources.
- As Districts bring in more dollars, it multiplies the benefits of the county's investment in the District, but their county base funding is necessary to maintain operations.

Example:

Orleans County Soil & Water Conservation District - 2008 Local Economic Impact Summary

This relatively small District with only 3 employees multiplied their \$55,000 county appropriation over 27 times, for a total for a total of \$1.5 million in conservation projects supporting 63 local businesses.

- District leveraging brought in \$800,000 in grant funding for implantation projects on 27 farms.
- The remaining \$700,000 was mainly farmer contribution, along with FLOWPA and AEM funding.
- A total of \$1.5 million benefited 63 local businesses hired or that sold products for the projects:

Torrey Farms Manure Storage / Transfer

- Wellmans Service, LLC
- R&W Trucking & Excavating
- Oak Orchard Concrete
- Fairview Fencing
- Troyer Construction
- Pacesetter Trenching
- Team Ag

Van Lieshouts Manure Storage

- Art Hill Excavation, Inc.
- Wellmans Service, LLC
- Panek Coating
- Barre Stone Products
- Shelby Crushed Stone
- Eagle Harbor Sand & Gravel
- Suburban Electric
- VP Supply Corp
- Lee Shuknecht
- Team Ag
- Tractor Supply

Sun Rich Farms Barnyard Project

- Ludwick Paving, INC
- RKK Construction, LLC
- Oak Orchard Concrete
- Keeler Construction
- Eagle Harbor Sand & Gravel
- Wellmans Service, LLC

Mathes Farms Barnyard/Bunk Leachate Collection System

- Grant Seaward Engineering
- Drafting & Design
- Richard Truesdell Contracting
- Agenivine Farms
- Hu-Lane Farms
- North Star Pipe & Tank
- Barre Stone Products
- Lowes
- Lake Shore Metal
- Rochester Steel
- ACE Hardware
- Tractor Supply Company
- Booth Electric Supply
- VP Supply Corp
- EJP
- Oak Orchard Concrete
- Stockham Lumber
- Mark J. Seider, P.E.

Hu-Lane Farms Agri-Chemical Mixing Facility

- Tru-Cut Construction
- Oak Orchard Concrete
- Rochester Steel
- ACE Hardware
- Suburban Electric
- County Line Electric
- Barre Stone Products, Inc.

- Kistner Concrete Products
- VP Supply Corp
- Charles A. Dahlke R.A.
- Jim Babcock Construction
- Stockham Lumber

Kast Farms Agri-chemical Mixing Facility

- Jim Babcock Construction
- Kistner Concrete Products
- Stockhams Lumber
- Vinny & Ron Concrete
- Oak Orchard Concrete

S&K Herefords Barnyard Project

- Mike K Shinnick P.E
- Brigham Construction
- Austin Industries
- Frey Well Drilling
- Tom Fuller Trucking
- Shelby Crushed Stone
- Oak Orchard Concrete
- Art Hill Excavating
- United Mileage Plus

Sommerfeldt Rotational Grazing System

- Rochester Steel
- Brajo Incorporated
- Kencove Farm Fence Supplies
- Tractor Supply Company

Angevine Farms Agri-chemical Mixing Facility

- Sunrise Doors
- Home Depot
- Putney Construction
- Barre Stone Products
- Germeo Excavating
- Kistner Concrete Products
- Ludwick Paving
- Rochester Steel
- Hanson
- Smart Design

Toussaint Agri-chemical Mixing Facility

- Tru-Cut Construction
- Grant Seaward Engineering
- Drafting & Design
- Art Hill Excavating
- Oak Orchard Concrete
- Kistner Concrete

Pettit Agri-Chemical Mixing Facility

- Grant Seaward Engineering
- Drafting & Design
- Country Contracting
- Oak Orchard Concrete
- Kistner Concrete Products
- Somerset Lumber Company

Panek Agri-chemical Mixing Facility

- Tru-Cut Construction
- Grant Seaward Engineering
- Drafting & Design
- Oak Orchard Concrete

Zone Tillage Program

- Bentley Bros.
- Monroe Tractor
- Empire Tractor
- Goodrich Farm Supplies

Tile Drainage Installers - 250,000 feet designed on 19 farms ~ \$1/ft

- Pacesetter trenching
- Hu-Lane Farms
- Mawinny

Soil Sample Programs - 70 farms; Nutrient Management Planning on 50 acres

- BCA AG Technologies

District Purchases

- Anderson Equipment
- George & Swede Equipment



ESTABLISHING AND MAINTAINING RELATIONSHIPS WITH LAWMAKERS

Each year, a small group of conservation district officials made visits to their U.S. Congressional Representatives' offices. As they walked between appointments, discussion typically revolved around whether or not the last visit was a good one. The group measured their success by how well the legislator or staff member seemed to understand the message they delivered. After leaving one particular appointment with a relatively new Congressman, the district officials were frustrated that he just didn't "get it."

He was in the room, but he really didn't seem to relate to our issues," stated one district official. The others agreed.

Another district official exclaimed, "It was the same with our second appointment this morning, and we have met with him every year for the past five years during these trips!"

If this conversation sounds familiar to you, it is time to examine your relationship with your elected officials. Developing and maintaining personal relationships with elected officials at all levels is an important part of successfully delivering your conservation message and influencing legislation, policy and budgets. Developing a strong personal relationship with decision makers is critical, and it does not have to be difficult.

Over the years, NACD has conducted a variety of surveys of conservation districts. A vast majority have indicated that "lobbying for federal conservation programs that provide resources for conservation districts" is the most important function that NACD carries out. Similarly, a high percentage of the responses indicate that conservation districts are highly satisfied with the services NACD provides in legislative affairs and helping districts with access to Congress.

However, sometimes districts indicate that they would rather focus on state and local issues and rely on NACD to work on issues at the national level. Ironically, it is *you*, our members who are needed to

carry out grassroots advocacy on the national level by personally contacting your members of Congress. They want to hear from you on all conservation-related issues. The NACD Board is responsible for fostering a single, unified voice for conservation, but it is *your* responsibility to take that voice to Capitol Hill. To your member of Congress, yours is the only voice that matters!

An important part of NACD's legislative efforts is grassroots advocacy. When legislation related to NACD's legislative priorities begins to move, NACD calls upon conservation districts across the country to communicate with elected officials and their staff about issues that impact local conservation efforts. It is a similar process when working with state and local levels of government. Conservation districts work with state legislators or county officials to ensure natural resource conservation policy is written in a way that works and that conservation programs have adequate funding.

A key to having the greatest impact when participating in grassroots advocacy is building relationships with lawmakers and their staff. Lawmakers are always interested in hearing from constituents, and conservation district officials possess a great deal of influence and credibility related to natural resource programs. The next few pages include some valuable resources that can be used to develop and maintain strong relationships with decision makers at all levels.

Establishing Relationships

Legislative bodies at all levels of government are constantly changing. New lawmakers are elected frequently and legislative staff members are always coming and going. If you have never met or do not know your lawmakers or their staff, it is never too late to find an opportunity to introduce yourself and get acquainted. Specific opportunities can include:

- Contact the lawmaker's district office to schedule a personal meeting with him or her when they are back home meeting with constituents;
- Attend a town hall meeting held by your lawmakers;
- Request a meeting with a member of your lawmaker's staff. Staff members are often more accessible for scheduling face-to-face meetings; and
- Attend events attended by lawmakers that are hosted by state or local associations, charitable organizations, or political parties to which you belong.

Check your local newspapers or visit your lawmaker's website for announcements of meetings or other opportunities.

Maintaining Relationships

The work involved in establishing a relationship with your lawmakers is only half of the equation. There are many people seeking to build relationships with lawmakers in an effort to advance a variety of policy agendas. As a result, efforts to maintain established relationships should be ongoing and persistent. Below are some methods for maintaining your established relationship.

- Provide regular constituent correspondence with federal lawmakers by participating in NACD Action Alerts and providing information that is specific to your local area. It is important for lawmakers to know how programs will work back home.
- Participate in NACD's Legislative Conference and meet with your federal lawmakers in Washington, D.C.
- Host conservation tours to highlight successful implementation of programs.



(left) North Carolina conservation leaders James Ferguson and Franklin Williams welcomed North Carolina Congressman Howard Coble to NACD's 2008 Congressional Reception. (right) NACD Board Member Andrew Wargo discusses state conservation issues with Arkansas Congressman Marion Berry at NACD's 2008 Congressional Reception.

- Serve on relevant advisory committees that your lawmakers might convene.
- Host issue forums and invite lawmakers to participate.
- Attend and participate in town hall meetings.

Remember that lawmakers are people too. Make sure that any contact with them is in the appropriate context and does not infringe upon their personal or family life.

Hosting Conservation Tours

Inviting your lawmakers and their staff to participate in a conservation tour is a valuable opportunity to maintain a mutual relationship. Your lawmakers will develop a better sense of how the conservation programs they influence are implemented on the ground and see first-hand the benefits of sound natural resource management for the community. Tours also provide opportunities to highlight program successes, suggestions for improvement, or provide education on emerging issues. The following are some key points in planning a tour:

- Plan tours during Congressional recess periods. Lawmakers will have the most time to take tours during this time.
- Send a written letter of invitation to lawmakers and staff. Offer several dates for the visit to accommodate the lawmaker's schedule. Sometimes it can require several invitations before the lawmaker accepts.

(left) Partners from across Wyoming gathered last summer for the Sublette County Conservation District's Ecological Site Description tour. The SCCD Board served as host to the County Commissioner, representatives from Wyoming Game and Fish, Bureau of Land Management, Forest Service, Wyoming Grazing Association, Natural Resources Conservation Service and others.



- Confirm the visit with your lawmaker's scheduler or district manager. This may require several telephone calls. Make sure to also invite key staff, such as the legislative assistant for agriculture or natural resource issues.
- Ask your state association representative to help plan and participate in the tour.
- Invite local news media to participate in the tour.
- Consult with NACD Government Affairs staff for guidance on current federal issues to discuss with the lawmaker.
- Develop an agenda that allows enough time for the tour and a briefing on the issues of concern to your conservation district. There also should be ample time for the lawmaker to meet and talk with cooperators along the way.
- Use the tour as an opportunity to communicate with your lawmaker about the issues affecting conservation districts and how these issues affect natural resources. Be sure to prepare handouts for the lawmaker and staff to take home with them.
- Arrange to have a photographer take pictures of the lawmaker and district officials during the tour. The pictures can be useful in future district or state association communications or when creating a press release about the tour.
- Send a note of thanks to your lawmaker after the tour is over. Do the same thing for any staff who also attended.

Information Gathering

For meetings and tours, it is always good to be prepared and to speak knowledgeably about the topic on which you are meeting. This involves making sure you have adequate information about what you want to share with your lawmakers. Thoroughly research the topic you want to talk about, try to know your lawmaker's position by looking at his or her past legislation, news releases, or editorials on the topic, and look for areas of current activity on the topic in your lawmaker's district

Congressional Schedule

Knowing when Congress is in and out of session can help you plan meetings and tours more effectively with federal lawmakers. Members of Congress generally are in Washington, D.C. while Congress is in session and return home during recess and after adjournment. While specific dates vary from year to year, Congress generally follows the following schedule for recess periods:

January – Martin Luther King, Jr. Day

February – Presidents' Day

April – Spring District Work Period

May – Memorial Day District Work Period

July – Independence Day District Work Period

August – Summer District Work Period

September – Labor Day

October – December – Target Adjournment*
(*varies on an annual basis)

Things You Should Do and Not Do

Do:

- Schedule your appointment well in advance
- Be punctual for your meeting
- Dress appropriately for the occasion
- Prepare adequate materials, handouts and a brief leave behind
- Stay focused on your issue
- Provide relevant, specific examples from the legislator's home district
- Follow up after your meeting to answer any questions or unresolved issues

Don't:

- Show up 15 minutes late
- Talk about your recent doctor's appointment
- Wear your work boots
- Bring everyone you know to the meeting
- Get upset if you only get to meet with staff
- Wear out your welcome
- Mix personal and professional agendas



(center) In October 2008 the Pecan Bayou SWCD joined forces with local, state and federal partners to host Texas Congressman Mike Connaway on a field tour showcasing local flood control structures and EQIP projects. In the picture on the left, SWCD Director Jule Richmond and a local FFA student discuss native grass identification with Congressman Connaway.

(right) Congressman Jerry Moran brought together various partners for a "Partners in Conservation" tour last spring in Kansas. Pictured at left with the Congressman are FSA County Executive Director Aaron Fall, NRCSS State Conservationist Eric Banks, and Kansas Association of Conservation Districts board member Bevin Law.

Checklist

Make sure to review your plans before any meeting with lawmakers. Double check to be sure you:

- ✓ Know the date, time and location of the meeting;
- ✓ Have specific topics to discuss;
- ✓ Prepare materials and handouts for lawmakers and staff; and
- ✓ Bring plenty of business cards.

Ideas for Effective Tours

Tours are a great way to give lawmakers first-hand experience with conservation programs. Some ideas for effective tours include:

- Visiting with local producers who have utilized conservation district services to enroll in federal or state conservation programs;
- Conducting a boat tour to talk about water. This can include water quality or quantity, riparian habitat, streambank erosion and any number of other issues;
- Showcasing demonstration projects or other innovative conservation practices;
- Walking tours to highlight neighborhood conservation projects or opportunities to implement conservation practices; and
- Tours of forestland to show sustainable forest management, wildfire risk or impact, and wildlife habitat.



"It all begins with Soil and Water!" explained Hardin Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) Board Chair Jerry McBride to Cliff Hite (pictured above). Mr. Hite was running for a seat in Ohio's General Assembly, but he had never heard of a conservation district. The Hardin SWCD did not wait until Mr. Hite was elected; they introduced themselves while he was on the campaign trail and educated him about the importance of conservation and districts. Since elected, Representative Hite has become a major supporter of the Hardin SWCD, attending the Districts' various meetings, conservation tours and Customer Appreciation Days. Hite was also instrumental in securing a substantial funding increase for Ohio's 88 SWCDs.

Regardless of the type of activity, be sure to do your homework, prepare relevant information sheets or handouts, and be ready to answer questions.

Establishing and maintaining quality working relationships with your elected officials is not difficult, but it is extremely important! For you to have an effective dialogue and the ability to influence legislation, policy and funding, your elected officials need to know you on a first-name basis. As a locally-elected conservation district official, one of your many duties and responsibilities is to work with local, state and federal elected officials to help carry out your conservation program. NACD counts on your engagement and participation as a local leader to develop these close personal relationships.

To learn more about how your district can develop and maintain successful relationships with your lawmakers, visit NACD's website at www.nacdnet.org.

Minnesota State Representative Rick Hansen (left) and Minnesota Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts President Steve Sunderland (right) participate in a legislative tour in Southeast Minnesota. The tour gave Rep. Hansen and other participants an opportunity to view soil and water conservation district projects and on-the-ground results.



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Garnering Support from Legislators

Tips from County Legislators and District Managers

Communications & Relationships are Key:

- Keep in contact. Stay on top of their concerns, anticipate their needs & be responsive meeting them. Know what they are working on, offer them assistance. Focus on visible projects that matter to legislators and benefit their constituents.
- Be responsive to their immediate needs, which creates opportunities to inform, educate and create buy in for bigger picture needs and opportunities to conduct a watershed assessment to gain data that can result in grant funding for projects.
- Be responsive in disasters. When flooding causes roads and bridges to wash out, work to get funding to combine with funds secured by the Highway Department.
- Keep them informed on what you're working on.
 - Update them several times a year, not just at budget time.
 - Report monthly at the committee level and annually to the full legislature.
 - Attend Board of Supervisors meetings every other month. Request to be on the agenda at least once a year.
 - Give them ownership of what's been done in their town & credit their help for everything you can.
 - Mail reports and letters. Follow up with a call to see if they have any questions. Email your monthly minutes highlighting any pertinent topics.
 - Mail your newsletter to home addresses when appropriate, rather than county offices.
- Articulate how cost effective your important programs are. Emphasize how you leverage county dollars to bring in money from grants and other sources.
 - Because Districts bring in additional money, they run programs for cents on the dollar, getting the county more for every dollar they invest. Determine your percentage.
 - Help legislators to change their mindset so they realize that continuing to fund an agency that brings in money, gets them more for their dollar.
 - Get them to consider why they would cut a program that cost less and is as, or more, responsive to county needs than other agencies?

- Translate everything into an environmental and economic message.
 - Connect how you are at the forefront of the County's environmental efforts and the economic benefits of your programs:
 - Implementing projects supports local businesses – contractors hired, supplies and equipment purchased, etc.
 - Preventing erosion on farmland protects the local tax base.
 - Restoring land to better condition retains more market value.
 - Implementing AEM practices helps farmers protect resources, cut costs and stay in business, supporting the local economy.
- Use every avenue to plug your program and its value to decision makers.
 - Develop partnerships and alliances.
 - Share equipment and services with Highway Department and neighboring Districts to get a bigger bang for the buck.
 - Join County Hwy Superintendent Associations, involve organizations like Trout Unlimited.
 - Promote programs to anyone who has a relationship with legislators.
 - Offer free services such as hydroseeding to Highways Departments or surveying road project centerline and cross-sections to help save town money.
- At budget time, be aware of the situation in your County
 - Get your budget requests in early; only ask for what you need.
 - Be prepared with well thought out answers to tough questions. Be transparent and straight forward.
 - Know your county employee bargaining agreements, so that you know what you are asking for is in line with the county.
 - Make sure they understand importance of what you do, how you leverage funds, ways you are working with other departments and that you are doing what no one else in the county does.
 - Utilize performance based budgeting to showcase what you do.

Legislative TOUR TIPS

1. Feed them more than a meal – Feed them your key messages.
2. An effective legislative tour demonstrates how valuable the District is.
3. Prepare and convey 3 key messages.
4. Assign staff to greet and talk with each legislator or staff member present.
5. Use name tags so everyone knows who the legislators are.
6. Explain how you leveraged funds to get projects done.
 - Connect the benefits to the environment, the local economy and to their constituents.
 - Connect to watershed needs and how the District can fill the county's long-term natural resource protection goals.
7. On conservation tours, narrate in bus about what's been done as you drive past projects in all towns with legislators present.
 - In Seneca County, the District rents a bus on the day of a County Legislature Board Meeting. They pick them up at 2:30 at the County Office Building. They make 2 stops, driving through every town represented on tour to talk about what was done in that town. They have dinner and get back for their 5:30 meeting.
 - In Chemung County, legislators look forward to the annual tour. They pick the day and rent the bus. They receive a basket of local farm products. Mark's tip: feed them and give them a hat!
8. Host the meal in or near an area where something was constructed.
 - In Madison County, lunch is held in a park where stream stabilization was implemented.
9. Credit their help for everything you can.
 - Even if it was funding support for equipment you got years ago, if it was used to complete the project, give them credit that the project wouldn't have been possible without their support.
10. Generate press on your event and mail it to the legislators. If you don't get press, email photos of the legislators at the event.

Tips for Conducting On-Farm Media Tours

The following are general recommendations to follow when hosting the media at your farm:

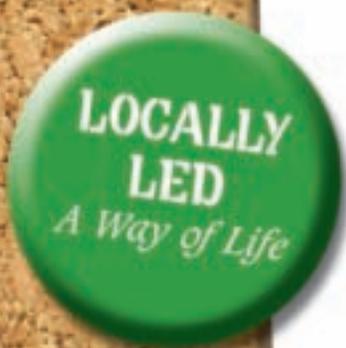
- Have a single, clearly marked entrance** for all visitors to control traffic flow. Specify a location in which vehicles entering the farm should park. This area should be separate from the animal housing area.
- Establish check-in procedures.** Require media to show proper identification and sign in and out upon entering and leaving the facility. Record names, addresses, phone numbers, reason for visit, and time since last contact with farm animals.
- Ask if the individuals have been on another farm** prior to visiting your facility. Do not allow any visitors on the farm if they have been outside the continental U.S. in the past two weeks, unless it can be verified that they have not been in contact with any cloven-hoofed animals for the past five days.
- Have all media wear "visitor passes."** Collect badges when the media leaves.
- Supply disposable plastic boots** to all media visitors and provide a means for their disposal. Disposable boots will help protect your animals and impress on the media the importance of herd health.
- Escort media and non-service visitors at all times.** Media should never be allowed to wander the premises on their own. Employees should be instructed to report all unescorted visitors to the appropriate management personnel immediately.
- Maintain accessible, functioning hand and boot wash stations.**
- Maintain basic security** by locking office doors and cabinets.
- Keep feed and veterinary supplies in a secure location.** Use security lighting and alarms. Maintain fencing and gates.
- Lock the milk-storage area.** Inventory your potential hazardous chemicals and review your security for them. Are they stored in a non-secure, non-supervised area? Are they stored outside? Are bulk delivery systems secure? Do you make it easy for a disgruntled employee or terrorist to obtain chemicals and potentially add them to the milk or feed supply?
- Post signs indicating restricted areas** and to inform all visitors of rules. The signs discourage trespassing and remind the media that dairy operations have biosecurity practices in place to help prevent disease transmission.

Nothing can replace the message conveyed by having your farm in a clean and well-kept condition. You never get a second chance to make a good first impression.

Conservation Districts— Your Community's Gateway to Natural Resource Conservation



Courtesy of NRCS



In a world of varied government programs,

comprehensive legislation and broader focuses on national issues, everyone can agree on one thing: no single program, piece of legislation or single issue can fully address the needs of local communities across the country. This is especially true of natural resource conservation.

Because of the vast array of natural resource conditions and uses throughout the United States, it is common sense that community members are best suited to identify and resolve the natural resource concerns in their respective areas, not just those identified by federal programs, legislation or national priorities.

Conservation districts' success in the past has been largely due to the emphasis on their ability to identify needs, set priorities and carry out programs based on local conditions and needs. As conservation programs, funding and focuses continue to shift, it is more important than ever for districts to step up to the plate and fulfill their responsibility as local leaders and facilitators—their communities' gateways to local, resource-driven conservation.

Locally Led—A Way of Life

In the past, the term *locally led* has been used to describe a way of addressing natural resources needs—one that begins, is carried out and ends at the local level. Over the years, the term has been frequently used—perhaps overused at times—but its core concept remains the same and very relevant in the world of natural resource conservation.

The natural resource needs of the local community—whether a town, county, watershed or multi-county region—are at the core of the locally led process. It involves the community in the assessment of those needs, as well as the solutions and priorities. The approach emphasizes voluntary, non-regulatory, incentive-based approaches before use of regulatory measures. It is not driven by any single piece of legislation, any one fiscal year or any individual program; it is an ongoing, timeless approach that is not tied to any particular year. As such, it is able to be evaluated regularly to ensure it is effectively meeting the long-term needs of the local community.

Locally led conservation is a grassroots effort to identify and resolve natural resource conservation concerns. It is essential in promoting and developing the stewardship ethic where people help each other in local communities to enhance and conserve those resources today for future generations.

NACD Secretary-Treasurer Jack Majeres

Locally led is not a program; it is a way of doing business, a way to effectively meet communities' needs and get the right kind of conservation on the ground where it is most needed.

Conservation Districts' Role

Conservation districts hold a unique position on local, state and national levels. The nearly 3,000 conservation districts across the U.S.—each governed and staffed by local people—are the ideal facilitators for the locally led process. Districts are familiar with the land uses and needs in their communities, and they can build lasting relationships with their community stakeholders.

Conservation districts have demonstrated time and again their ability to act as a focal point for the local coordination and delivery of technical assistance and funding to private land managers. Over the years, all levels of government, private corporations and nonprofit organizations have channeled assistance through conservation districts to address resource conservation needs. This process has helped districts achieve their missions—to get conservation on the ground. However, basing conservation practices solely on broad-scale programs and funding sources can ultimately dictate the work that gets done at the local level, which can result in some local needs going unmet. To be truly successful, conservation needs to be resource driven, not program driven.

Districts need to take the lead to ensure the process stays at the local level. They can do so by helping each community identify its needs and serving as a gateway between the community and outside technical, funding and educational resources, using a mix of federal, state, local and private sector programs as tools to solve local concerns. Districts then need to carry out all conservation programs at the local level.

With the leadership, hard work and ingenuity they are known for, conservation districts have the ability to step forward and ensure the process begins, is carried out and ends at the local level, ultimately ensuring all the natural resource needs of their communities are met.

Local Work Groups—Bringing Stakeholders through the District's Front Door

Local Work Groups are another example of local leadership engaged in identifying and prioritizing needs. Much of the work of Local Work Groups has been focused on priority setting for Farm Bill Conservation Programs. But when districts assemble a work group and hold deliberations on local needs, the output of the process can and should be used for all of the districts needs. A key improvement in the 2008 Farm Bill created local work groups as subcommittees of state technical committees. Local work groups are not limited in who can attend to contribute ideas and priorities.



Courtesy of NRCS



Courtesy of NRCS



UNITY

Steps to Become Your Community's Conservation Gateway

To position your conservation district as your local community's gateway to conservation, there are several key steps you need to take:

- ✓ Public Outreach—obtain public participation
- ✓ Conservation Needs Assessment—assess the specific conservation needs of your community
- ✓ Identify and prioritize those needs
- ✓ Set goals
- ✓ Identify programs and funding sources to help meet those goals
- ✓ Develop the district's area-wide conservation plan and/or strategic or long-range plan
- ✓ Implement your district's plan(s)
- ✓ Measure performance

A few of the items above are detailed below. Additional resources to aid your locally led efforts are available on NACD's website at <http://nacdn.net.org/resources/>.

Public Outreach

Reaching out to your community is the first and most important step in the process. Without input from stakeholders, the locally driven process cannot work. Community members must help identify the natural resource issues that affect them. Their feedback will determine the resource base, help set district priorities and ultimately help your district carry out the necessary conservation programs.

To begin your public outreach process, first identify all the individuals, businesses, organizations and agencies within your community that have a stake in natural resource management. Involving a broad representation of your customer base increases your program's credibility, visibility and base of support within the community. Be sure to include groups that have not traditionally worked with the district.

Next, reach out to those groups and gather feedback. Some of the activities your district could organize to gather stakeholder input include public meetings; ongoing advisory committees; surveys; social networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter and blogs; and focus group meetings.

To ensure maximum credibility, conservation district officials should convene and facilitate all outreach activities. In addition to gaining insight into your community's needs, the outreach process will build your grassroots network and relationships with local leaders that will be helpful in implementing the programs and activities needed to address their concerns.



Courtesy of NACD





Assess, Identify and Prioritize Local Needs

Assessing, identifying and prioritizing your community's resource needs is another crucial element in determining the direction of your locally led process. A conservation needs assessment analyzes the work that must be done to achieve broad conservation goals and solve specific natural resource concerns. It should be based on public input *as well as* a detailed analysis of natural resource concerns within your district. The needs assessment should address the entire resource base, including the predominant land uses with which the district works.

To successfully assess your community's conservation needs, you will need to

- identify specific concerns and existing conditions and trends for each natural resource in your district;
- identify, agree upon and document community objectives;
- analyze conservation needs and priorities;
- prioritize natural resource concerns; and
- identify geographic areas and potential priority areas.

The needs assessment and priority setting will ensure the district's efforts address the most important local resource concerns. At the end of this process, you will have a comprehensive evaluation of the condition of your natural resource base. From that, you can build the platform for priorities and policies in all your district's conservation programs. It will help you determine the type and extent of needed conservation systems and practices and provide guidance for funding priorities and priority areas to be addressed.

Conservation district staff and district officials can further support the needs assessment process by keeping track of resource concerns year-round; recognizing problem areas around the county or watershed; and discussing them at monthly district board meetings. You should also call upon your federal and state partners for technical advice and natural resource information to present at stakeholder meetings.



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Putting it All Together

Setting Goals; Identifying Funding Sources; Developing and Implementing a Plan; and Measuring Performance

Once the information has been gathered through public outreach and the conservation needs assessment process, the next steps in the process involves the district board. The district board will need to

- set measurable conservation goals and objectives;
- identify conservation initiatives, systems and practices needed to achieve these goals and objectives; and
- identify federal, state, local and non-government programs and services that are available to address specific conservation needs.

As traditional funding sources decline or shift, this process will provide opportunities to examine new sources of assistance and new players to help carry out your conservation program. Here, again is another reason to include a large array of stakeholders in the input process. Expanding constituent and stakeholder participation increases the number of potential ideas, opportunities and financial resources available to carry out your goals. This process will help you identify ways to secure and coordinate support from a variety of sources.

The locally led process establishes a foundation upon which all of your district's conservation efforts are based. From there, your district can pull the necessary resources from the state, federal, corporate and non-profit sectors to carry out the conservation practices your community needs.

This process will ensure that the conservation work in your district is based on resource needs, not on programs and outside priorities. As a result, local elected officials, organizations, businesses and individuals as well as funders will recognize your district as the gateway to conservation assistance in your community—the role districts are meant to fill.

For additional resources about developing a district-wide conservation plan, please see the many related resources available on NACD's website at <http://nacdn.net/resources/>.



Formula for County Funding Success

New York Soil and Water Conservation Districts typically obtain funding from their County Legislature, Board of Supervisors, or City Councils. Each District uses different strategies in this process. However, the most successful Districts have a year-round strategy, with specific actions planned to address each of the following:

Key Ingredients

Requesting	Informing	Involving	Recognizing
<p>The formal budget request should be presented by one or all District Directors. The request should be well thought out, planned and presented along with a one page overview of your main points. A short, 15 minute PowerPoint with photos, graphs or other visuals illustrating projects and their benefits to the environment, the community and the local economy should reinforce the benefits of the District and establish the value of continued funding.</p>	<p>Informing elected officials of District programs and major activities is a year-round action. Opportunities to inform include newsletters, annual reports, workshops tours and news clippings. Effectively communicating your vital role in addressing local conservation needs, supporting the local economy and contributing to public health, safety and quality of life, is key to garnering the understanding necessary for continued funding support.</p>	<p>Ask elected officials that are not on your Board to serve on program committees or as advisors for the District. Many of these elected officials have experiences on their own farms or businesses that will bring a valuable perspective to workshops, field days, tours or other District programs. They will feel more a part of the District if they are involved.</p>	<p>Elected officials appreciate public recognition of their official decisions and funding efforts. Take every opportunity to recognize them at public meetings, award events, field days, workshops, in newsletters, news articles, etc. Invite them to present your District awards and give them recognition for their support. This effort should be planned along with your other action items throughout the year.</p>

Ideas for Action

The following are examples of actions Districts have taken to enhance understanding of the valuable services they provide and to support their local funding requests. It is important to have as much information about the budget cycle, and your Legislature's schedule to most effectively plan specific actions.

A successful funding strategy will involve at least two actions for each component.

Requesting – Documenting Funding Needs.

1. Prepare a formal budget displaying major expenditures, total amount requested and various funding sources. Explain that some funds are provided from the state as a match, but the remainder must come from county, city or private sources and earned income programs.
2. Emphasize the necessity of the county appropriation for core staff, which enables the District to seek state, federal and private grants to support county conservation needs. Illustrate how the District brings new funding into the county and how these project dollars support local businesses. Express the new funding as a ratio to the county appropriation, for example, \$1,000,000 grant compared to a \$100,000 county appropriation equals a \$10 return for a \$1 investment in the District program.
3. Develop a County Highway Map with dots indicating the location of projects and those served that year. Create overlays with each layer representing a specific program, such as AEM, EQIP and WQIP.
4. Prepare powerpoint presentation or video to visually display conservation practices applied to address priority conservation issues, and benefits to county residents, the environment and the economy.
5. Create charts or graphs showing practices applied, persons assisted, conservation plans prepared, etc. displaying the types of services provided by the District.

6. Ask District Directors to make personal contacts with each elected official to inform them of programs and services prior to, or immediately following, the formal meeting with the governing officials.
7. Submit your budget request early and only ask for what you need. Know your county employee bargaining agreements so what you ask for is in line with the county.
8. Present a resolution adopted by the Board and signed by the Chairperson requesting the funding.
9. Estimate the total benefits of District programs on the local economy.
10. Provide letters of support from clients or other influential persons in the District.
11. If additional funding is needed, meet with key decision-makers prior to the formal budget process.

Informing – Keeping Legislators Knowledgeable:

1. Be sure to keep all elected officials on the mailing list for District newsletters, annual reports, etc. If more than one page, provide a one-page bulleted overview of major accomplishments.
2. Send a personal letter to each elected official who impact your budget when there is something noteworthy occurring in their legislative district.
3. Invite elected officials to all District sponsored events. They may not come, but they will know you're involved. Be sure to give them credit if they supported the event in any way.
4. Host a breakfast, luncheon or tour aimed at informing Legislators of the District programs and benefits. You probably do not want to discuss or request funds at this time. (see 'Tour Tips' Sheet)
5. Deliver a special copy of the District Annual Report to the Legislators along with a one page bulleted overview of accomplishments. Translate into an environmental and economic message.
6. Develop a brochure or one-page fact sheet on the accomplishments and benefits of the District.
7. Develop a strategic plan and share it with your Legislators.

Involving – Continually Engaging Legislators:

1. Ask elected officials to serve as advisors, meeting with the Board semi-annually or annually and recruit them on committees such as the AEM Advisory Committee or Water Quality Coordinating Committee.
2. Ask a Legislator who has applied conservation practices on their farm to be a participant in a workshop or field day, or have the event on their farm. Get photos and articles in the press and your newsletter.
3. Have Legislators present awards at the District's Annual Meeting, workshops or other events. Include them in the recognition and get a picture and article in the local newspaper and your newsletter.
4. Invite them to participate in the Water Taste-Off, Envirothon, etc., and to serve contest judges.
5. Involve them in videos or presentations about the District programs and accomplishments.
6. Ask them for quotes in your press releases and be sure to mail them the clipping if it gets in the press.

Recognizing – Publicly Acknowledging Support:

1. Seek opportunities to include Legislators in newsletters, news articles, radio programs, etc. to recognize their support. Elected officials who have to seek re-election appreciate the publicity.
2. Host an annual awards banquet to thank elected officials for their support. News articles with photos are almost an essential outcome. This is a great opportunity to prepare the way for next year's funding.
3. Recognize County elected officials at demonstrations, workshops, tours, annual dinners, award events or other District meetings as major supporters of District programs. Inclusion of their attendance in news articles related to the event is also a key outcome.
4. Send them the press clippings with a note thanking them. Send your newsletter with a personal letter from Chairperson pointing out their photo, thanking them and highlighting accomplishments.

Managing the Calendar Example of Monthly Activities with Legislators:

January – Ask County Legislators, City Council, and State Legislators, department heads to attend a District Board Meeting to review strategic plan goals and objectives and discuss Annual Work Plan. This could be a banquet or pot-luck supper at the District Office. (Informing, Involving, Recognizing)

February – Send the County Legislators, City Council and State Legislators, etc. copies of District Annual Report highlighting last year's accomplishments and Annual Work Plan for the coming year highlighting key goals and activities along with a personal letter from the Chairperson thanking them for their support and looking forward to the working with them in the coming year. Attend at least quarterly meeting of Legislature, Board of Supervisors, City Council, Environmental Committee or Committee who approves your funding request. (Informing)

Have one or more County Legislator or City Council member to judge and present awards for Conservation Poster Contest that illustrates value of District to county. Picture and article published in local newspaper recognizes Legislature/Council support of District. (Involving, Recognizing)

March – Send a copy of newsletter or with a personal letter from the District Chairman to each County Legislator, City Council, State Legislator, etc. illustrating the help the District is providing to the citizens of the county. Also include a feature story of a successful conservation practice or event of the District. (Informing)

April – Invite County Legislators to attend County or Regional Envirothon and present winners with a plaque or certificate. Take photos and publish in local new recognizing their support. (Involving, Recognizing)

For Soil Stewardship Week, Earth Day or Arbor Day have Legislators, Councils, etc. sign proclamation of observance. Provide news release with photograph to send to local newspapers. (Involving, Recognizing)

May – Celebrate "Water Week", invite the County Legislators to participate in "Water Taste Contest" or taking water sample. Photograph and publish an article in the newspaper to recognize what the district is doing to protect drinking water and acknowledge support of all involved. Send them press clippings with their photo in it with a note thanking them. (Involving, Recognizing)

Send District newsletter with a personal letter from Chairperson to the Legislature, Council, etc. pointing out their photo, thanking them, and highlighting the District's progress during the past quarter. (Informing)

June – Submit request signed by all board members to the County Legislature, Board of Supervisors, County Administrator/Executive or City Council for funding for the next year. This date will vary from County to County and City to City. Board Chair and Manager attend committee meeting to explain budget request. (Requesting)

July – Each Director makes a point of contacting their County Legislator or City Council Member personally to encourage their funding support for the District programs. The two legislators on the Board explain budget needs to the county legislature in a joint presentation. (Requesting, Informing)

August – Ask County Legislators or City Council Member to present the "AEM sign" to recognize a farm's environmental stewardship. Provide photo of farmer with Legislator or Council Member for news article on districts work with farms in the county. (Involving, Recognizing)

September – Ask County Legislators or City Council Member to attend dedication of District developed outdoor classroom at a local school. Recognize County Legislators and/or City Council for supporting District Conservation Education efforts. Provide picture of Legislator or Council member teaching some children and include with article for publishing in local newspaper emphasizing district's conservation education efforts. (Involving, Recognizing)

October – Send copy of District Newsletter with a personal letter from Chairperson to County Legislators, City Council, and State Legislators highlighting progress of District during the last quarter, current conservation issues and issues involving their legislative district. (Informing)

November – Invite County Legislators, City Council and State Legislators to Annual Recognition Banquet or Holiday Get-together and thank them for their support of District Program. No hard sell or request at this time just a friendly get-together. Present a brief (15 minute power point highlighting projects and their benefits to residents, the environment and economy, while recognizing how these projects wouldn't get done without their support. Photo, article and quotes in newspaper. (Recognizing)

December – Give them a rest.

Communication Success CALENDAR

JANUARY

FEBRUARY

MARCH

APRIL

MAY

JUNE

JULY

AUGUST

SEPTEMBER

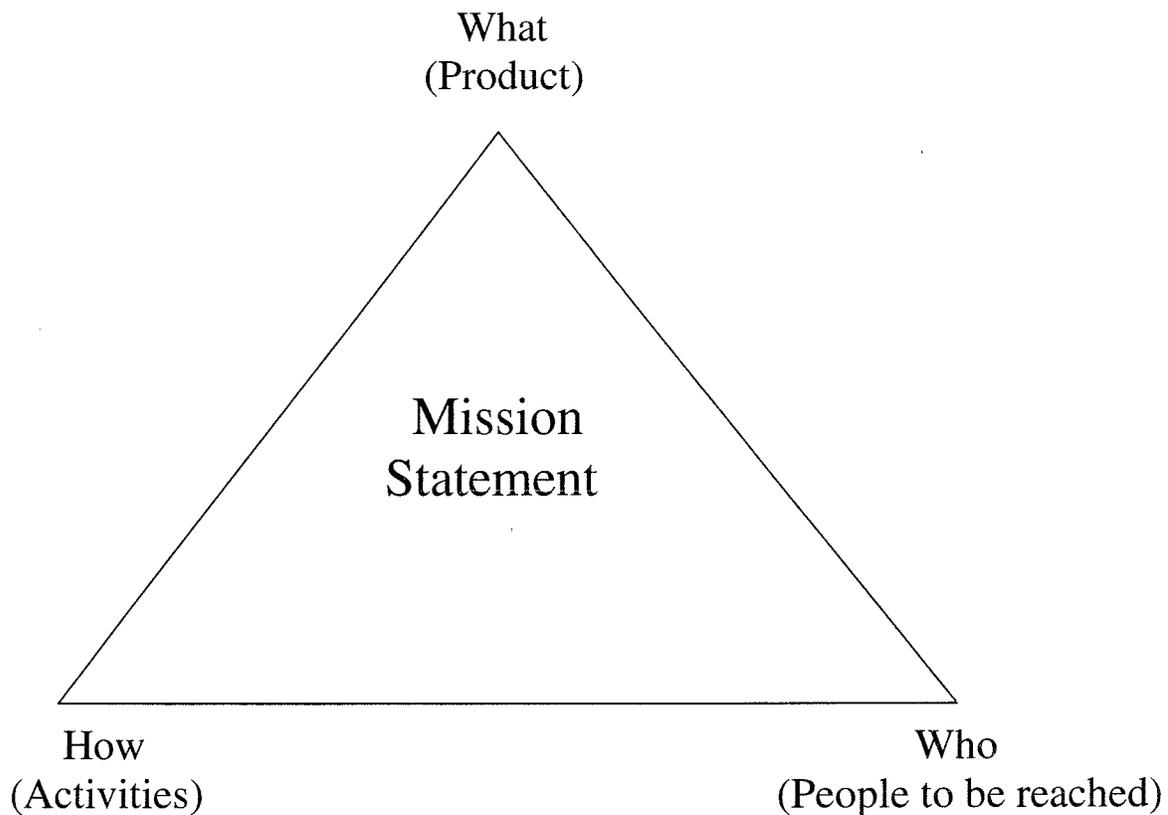
OCTOBER

NOVEMBER

DECEMBER

Mission Statement Formation Worksheet

1. A mission statement should provide a clear indication of what the district is, and what it is doing or should be doing.
2. Ask the following questions when formulating a mission statement:
 - a) **What:** What are we currently doing? However, look to what might be, not just what is currently happening. What product or service does the district deliver or want to deliver.
 - b) **Who:** The district cannot meet the needs of all people. Mission requires a clear identification of what portion of the potential audience (public) is to be targeted.
 - c) **How:** How will the mission be accomplished. What is the conduit for delivering the product (s) or service (s) that the district provides.



Mission Statements Should:

- Define who you are, who you serve and how you serve them.
- Be clear enough to serve as a test of every action made by the District at any time.
- Be short, no more than two sentences. If it is too long, people cannot remember it.
- Be a brief answer to the question, “What exactly does the District do?”

Developing a Mission Statement:

An easy way to develop a mission statement using the assistance of a facilitator is as follows:

Write the following questions on a flip chart:

1. Why do we exist?
2. What do we hope to accomplish?
3. Who do we need to target to be successful?
4. How will the mission be accomplished?

The facilitator leads a brainstorming session with the group (District staff, Directors, and key stakeholders) to provide answers until each topic is fully addressed.

- All answers are posted on flip charts around the room.
- Each member of the group is asked to privately draft a mission statement utilizing all or part of the information gathered. Allow about 20 minutes or until most people have finished writing.
- Willing individuals share their mission statement with the entire group.
- The shared mission statements are written so everyone can see them at the same time.
- With the group’s input, the facilitator underlines key phrases or words that are common among the various statements.
- Using consensus, the group selects one or two of the statements to work on. These are modified until the group develops a statement that all can support.

Once developed, a typed copy of the mission statement should be provided to the group. A large copy of it should be on display at all future group meetings.

Sample Mission Statements:

- **Example process of honing down the core mission:**

<p>The mission of the <i>New York State Soil & Water Conservation Committee</i> is to develop a responsible natural resource conservation program implemented by County Soil & Water Conservation Districts by establishing policy to guide District programs and assist in organizing, developing, and implementing them. The State Committee fosters new partnerships and secures new funding sources to support District efforts on farms and in communities as the statewide focus for water quality protection is addressing both agricultural and non-agricultural pollution sources. The State Committee also serves to advise all agencies of government on matters relating to soil and water conservation, and works in concert with partner agencies to protect and improve the state's water resources.</p>	<p>The mission of the <i>New York State Soil & Water Conservation Committee</i> is to promote a comprehensive natural resource program for New York State by supporting local Soil & Water Conservation Districts to develop and implement projects and programs that will preserve, protect and enhance the wise use of the state's soil, water and all related resources.</p>	<p>The mission of the <i>New York State Soil & Water Conservation Committee</i> is to preserve, protect and enhance New York's natural resources by supporting County Soil & Water Conservation District projects and programs.</p>
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- **Example of a District Mission Statement**

<p>The District's mission is to protect & improve the lakes, rivers, streams, soils & other natural resources of Warren County through locally-led conservation projects & programs</p>

Talking Conservation: Does the public hear what we say?

In an effort to increase public awareness of the conservation cause in America, a Communications Research Report prepared by the National Conservation Partnership highlights results of a study that determined whether messages developed by the partnership are understood by the general public.

To **test the public's understanding of 13 key conservation terms and their interest in the cause**, four focus groups of urban and suburban participants were held across the nation. Participants were screened to ensure a cross section of men and women distributed by age, and a representation of various ethnic and racial backgrounds.

Survey results showed the general public does not understand the terminology that the Conservation Partnership uses in its messages and is not influenced by conservation messages directed to them. In addition, the words that are understood are generally thought of as conservation on public lands, not private lands.

Results

Public's level of understanding of 13 key conservation terms:

- Most said they understood: *conservation, natural resources and, water quality.*
- 1/3 said they didn't understand: *technical assistance, wetlands and stewardship.*
- 1/2 or more said they didn't understand: *biodiversity, locally led conservation, best management practices, sustainable agriculture, watershed, nutrient management and nonpoint source pollution.*

Understanding of issues associated with conservation:

- Public understanding of conservation issues is largely based on popular opinion of the day.
- When asked what topics came to mind when they heard the term *conservation*, many mentioned common headline issues of the day, such as recycling, endangered species, forest preservation, waste management and water conservation.
- They generally don't think in terms of private land conservation or associated benefits.
- Consumers feel the major focus of conservation should be on education and information, especially with the youth.

Assessment of 5 statements describing the conservation cause:

- They liked "*Conserving natural resources for our children and future generations.*"
- The statement most liked was "*Helping citizens become better stewards of natural resources in their own backyards.*"
- To improve public awareness, respondents recommended that messages be few and brief.
- Respondents said *nature-oriented messages and appropriate graphics have strong appeal.*

Preferences about conservation services and individual involvement:

- People are interested in learning what they can do for the environment in their own backyards and exhibited a broad-based willingness to volunteer on their own terms.
- Respondents were concerned about the potential negative impact conservation efforts may have on jobs and business success.
- Respondents recommended the primary focus be on local government involvement with state and federal support.

Recommendations

Utilizing these recommendations in communications efforts should improve the chances of delivering more effective messaging and increase involvement of consumers in conservation activities.

Message delivery

- Express messages in non-technical terms the public understands. Most conservation words need supplemental explanation with specific examples.
- Shorter and fewer messages should be used in order to gain attention and interest. Messages and graphics should be designed with personal, relevant appeal and tested with target audiences.

Conservation terms

- Emphasize *water quality* in communication efforts, as it is a well understood and important issue.
- Use the phrase *natural resources* freely as it is a well understood term.
- Use the term *conservation* in communication efforts, but provide some explanation to ensure the interpretation is consistent with goals of your message. *This explanation must emphasize conservation on private lands because consumers today generally limit their interpretation to that of preservation related to public lands.*
- When using the locally-led conservation concept make sure to explain what it means.

Strategies

- Identify partners who have an interest and ability to communicate similar messages.
- Work the volunteer element into outreach efforts.
- Don't make the public choose between conservation and business success.
- Specify the benefits of private land conservation, such as wildlife habitat, water quality, air quality, tourism, aesthetics, and recreation such as fishing and hunting.

Guiding Principles for Public Communications

Compiled from results of this and other conservation communications surveys:

1. People will support messages they see that affect them personally. *Make your message relevant.*
2. People buy into ideas when they see actions they can take to improve their situation. *Your message should ask them to do something.*
3. People support ideas put forth by people they trust. *Build relationships of trust before you ask for action.*
4. People respond to ideas that are practical, easy to do and clear. *Your message should focus on one idea and be easy to understand.*
5. People form opinions more by events than by words. *Center your outreach efforts around events as much as possible.*
6. People will allow local leaders to make decisions for them if they feel they have had input. *Your messages and activities should always allow for public discussion.*

Who Are You?

Soil & Water Districts are the unsung heroes of conservation across the nation.

- Their vital role assisting landowners and municipalities is essential to addressing local conservation needs, safeguarding public health, safety and quality of life, and supporting the local economy.
- Recognizing the trends that are unfolding around us, their work helping farmers to protect the environment and remain profitable is more important than ever to the survival of our local farms.
- Districts are key to protecting our precious natural resources and to the future of farming because:

Districts are Respected:

- They have earned the trust of farmers and other landowners.
- Their programs are growing in participation and recognition.
- They have helped farmers to be good stewards and comply with environmental regulations.
- They provide answers and solutions to diverse local problems, before anyone else can respond.
- They have helped to bridge the gap between agricultural and non-agricultural communities.
- They are known for their technical expertise and 'know-how'.

Districts are Resourceful:

- They leverage money better than anyone for a minimal investment.
- They are very good at getting the resources needed to get the job done.
- They work as a team, sharing services and equipment across county boundaries, to get the biggest bang for the buck.

Districts are Effective:

- They get conservation on the ground quickly, efficiently and cost effectively.
- They are flexible, and respond to conservation needs on farms and in communities as they arise.
- They help farmers and communities implement conservation practices that protect the environment, which often also help communities save time and money.
- The grant dollars they bring into their county also help support the local economy.

Districts are Humble:

- Once the best kept secret in their county, the success of Districts is now more in the public eye helping the public understand their vital role in safeguarding natural resources, the local tax base and local food supplies for all New Yorkers.

Connecting to what Matters

**Conservation practices
protect drinking water quality &
enhance fish & wildlife habitat.**

**Erosion control practices
& improved drainage
enhance food production.**

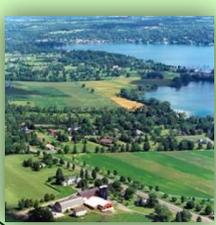
**Stream & stormwater projects
help protect public health
& safety.**

**Farm ponds provide
rural fire protection
& recreational opportunities.**

**Conservation projects maintain
working landscapes, open space
& a rural quality of life.**

**Improving soil health
& preventing erosion
protects the local tax base.**





Farmland
Preservation
Open Space

Natural
Resource
Protection &
Enhancement



Regional
Economy

Local Food
Supply



Drinking Water
Supply
Protection

Rural Fire
Protection
Emergency
Assistance



Multifaceted

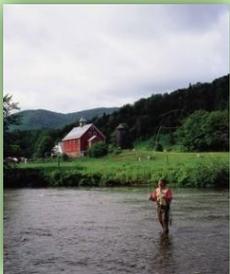


Benefits



Recreation &
Tourism

Cultural Heritage



Resource Strategies

1. Protected Open Space

Identify, permanently protect, and manage critical open space resources and systems

2. Water Resources

Protect and manage water resources

3. Working Landscapes

Enhance the viability and protection of working landscapes

4. Landforms and Natural Features

Protect the County's valuable landforms and natural features

5. Ecological Communities

Develop priority biodiversity areas and ensure that land use decisions incorporate habitat protection and species diversity

6. Historic and Cultural Resources

Promote stewardship of historic and cultural resources

7. Recreation Resources

Create, preserve, enhance and provide managed access to parks, hiking trails, active and passive recreation facilities, and historic resources



The Ulster County Open Space Plan (2007) was developed collaboratively by the Ulster County Environmental Management Council and the Ulster County Planning Board. For more information about the Plan, contact (845)340-3340 or planning@co.ulster.ny.us or visit the Plan website at: www.co.ulster.ny.us/planning/ospace.shtml

Ulster County Open Space Plan

Executive Summary

Ulster County has a long history of open space protection.

The environmental conservation movement has its roots here. With our "forever wild" Catskill Forest Preserve and Minnewaska State Park we have two of the most significant open spaces in the region.

Each community in the county has valuable open space resources. Abundant and critical water resources, rich biodiversity, renowned recreational and historic sites, and valuable, productive agricultural lands are all part of Ulster County's open space landscape. These contribute to the well-being of the region's environment, economy and quality of life.

However, these resources are still at risk.

Much is already protected, but current development activity and existing regulatory controls foster a pattern of intrusion into our open spaces. Limited availability of water and sewer infrastructure is also a barrier in preventing a more compact land use pattern. These issues have become increasingly important as development proposals continue to accelerate in Ulster County.

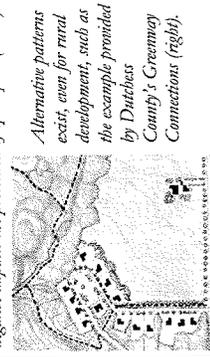
We need to face the future with a **pro-active regional approach** – one that embraces scientific, legal, financial, and participatory tools to determine where and how we grow. Overwhelming evidence points to the benefits of preserving open space and growing "smart." Communities that plan ahead to protect open spaces, preserve their natural resources while creating a vision for accommodating sustainable and compact development are likeliest to succeed economically.



Spring Grove, G. Shaw Jordan



The postwar development pattern of sprawl has negative impacts the protection of open space (above).



Alternative patterns exist, even for rural development, such as the example provided by Dutchess County's Greenway Connections (right).

Accomplishments

Streambank Stabilization Projects	23
Critical Area Seeding (acres)	65.75 ac
Weed Harvesting On Lakes	192 tons
Soil Group Worksheet	160
Pond Site Reviews	40
DEC Dam Safety Reviews	26
DEC Stream Permits	29
Army Corp Permits	29
Mining Plans Completed	6
NPS Ag Project Submitted	2
NPS Ag Project Approved	1
AEM Tier 1	51
AEM Tier 2	51
AEM Tier 3a	37
Acres with Conservation Plans applied	6,115
CNMP Written	1
CNMP Applied	3
Conservation Tillage	332.6 ac
Pest Management	7,349 ac
Strip Tillage	140 ac
Forest Stand Improvement	24 ac
Access Road	1,216.4 ft
Mulching	56 ac
Cover Cropping	3,310.1 ac
Subsurface Drainage	23,345 ft
Strip Cropping	336.7 ac
Nutrient Management Planning	1,333 ac
Diversion Ditches	5,250 ft
Conservation Tillage	332.6 ac
CREP	538.0 ac
CRP	2,151.2 ac
NRCS WHIP (approved)	6
NRCS EQIP (approved)	40
(submitted)	130
NRCS AMA (approved)	3
FSA CREP	16
FSA CRP	120

Funding

FLLOWPA	\$85,000.00
AEM	\$31,000.00
Ag NPS	\$204,389.19
Non-Ag NPS	\$88,273.73
Contractual Services	\$57,006.75
Performance Measures	\$28,448.63
Conservation Technical Project	\$12,000.00
Technical Reimbursement	\$30,000.00
USC Wetland Development	\$33,588.92
Reimbursement Program	\$7,371.29
Earned Income Programs	\$21,662.96
Senate Initiative Program	\$6,820.40
NRCS WHIP	\$57,952.00
NRCS WRP	\$42,765.78
NRCS EQIP	\$1,024,035.00
NRCS AMA	\$16,882.00
FSA CRP (general & continuous)	\$208,254.00
FSA CREP	\$33,086.00

Total Funds Brought Into Steuben County

\$1,988,536.65

What does this mean? For every dollar the County appropriated to the District, the District and partnering agencies brought \$13.96 dollars back into the County via grant applications & programs



What Conservation Districts do for Agriculture & Your Rural Economy

County Soil and Water Conservation Districts work with farms of all types and sizes to help safeguard our environment, while supporting our local food supplies and rural economies. A wide range of conservation projects are helping farmers protect natural resources and remain economically viable by reducing input costs, improving efficiency, recycling waste and even creating on-farm energy, while also benefitting the local economy.

KEY MESSAGES:

- **Districts work with farms of all types and sizes.**
 - Assist farms, including NY's larger livestock farms that are regulated by the state, with the development of comprehensive nutrient management plans.
 - Utilize new techniques and technology to helping growers reduce fuel consumption, labor per acre, nitrogen and spray chemical applications by more than 40%.
 - Work with farmers to adopt changes in farm operations that do not require public funds, yet still provide public benefit.
 - Recognize farms for exemplary environmental stewardship with AEM Sign Awards which:
 - Educates the public about the value of well managed farms.
 - Helps producers market their farm products and attract customers.
- **Districts coordinate and deliver the technical, educational and financial resources necessary to help farmers in their efforts to farm cleaner, greener and more efficiently into the future.**
 - From 1994 - 2009, Districts have acquired over 100 million in State grants, cost sharing over 5,000 conservation projects on over 2,000 farms in 50 counties. (MAP in 09 AEM Report).
 - For their share, farmers contributed over \$25 million toward state sponsored projects, and millions more through federal and local programs.
 - In 2009, \$8 million in projects were funded with a direct farmer contribution of over 5 million. Districts also assisted in leveraging over \$43 million in USDA conservation program funds.
- **Good Environmental Stewardship is Good Business:** Delivery of AEM; types of projects reducing input costs, improving efficiency; creating on-farm energy – digestors and windmills boost bottom line, while reducing greenhouse gases and energy costs. (Biomass crops?)
- **AEM Recognition:** District AEM Sign Awards recognizing exemplary farmers. Helps producers to market their farm products and attract new customers. Also helps educate the non-farm public on the value of local farms.
- **Environmental benefits:** Farmers are doing their part to protect and enhance water quality. Restored water quality of waterbodies now removed from State's impaired water bodies list.
- **Community Benefits:** Local food supply, local/regional economy, agricultural heritage, tourism, rural quality of life.
- **County and State Funding Support:** Vital for Districts to maintain the level of assistance provided to farmers as their programs diversify to meet other local conservation needs.

- **Districts can diversify to meet local needs:** By law, the breadth and scope of what Districts can do. Ability to work with private landowners and municipalities on public and private lands. Coordinate shared services within the County and neighboring Districts.
- **Help farmers chart the course to energy independence: Traditional practices & technology.** Protect the environment, cut costs and boost their bottom line.
 - Many traditional AEM practices help farms to conserve energy and reduce petroleum consumption while also providing water quality benefits. For example, prescribed grazing systems and no-till plantings cut down on machinery use, and nutrient management decreases the need for fossil fuel-based fertilizers.
 - Districts are assisting a growing number of farmers who are producing energy on-site with anaerobic digestion, wind turbines and biomass crops.
 - Innovative manure storage systems collect and destroy greenhouse gas, reduce odor, improve farm efficiency and keep clean water clean. Some larger farms even producing energy on-site with anaerobic digestion, powering the entire farm operation.
 - Biomass Crops and Wind energy on farms also on the rise.
 - New legislation in 2008 broadened the role of the State's AEM program beyond protecting water quality to help connect farmers with expanded opportunities to produce renewable energy and further reduce greenhouse gas emissions.
 - Strengthening the relationship between agriculture and renewable energy helps keep farmers farming by reducing their input costs while diversifying into profitable new opportunities. With the support of Districts delivering the State's AEM program at the local level, New York's agricultural community is ready, willing and able to step up and meet this challenge.
- **Benefits to local economy:** Districts multiply conservation dollars in local economies
 - Leveraging funds from county, state, federal and private sources for conservation projects provides economic stimulus in rural communities by creating or maintaining hundreds of green jobs and supporting an estimated 40,000 local businesses including hardware stores, construction companies and equipment dealers
 - For Example, multiplied county appropriation over ___ times, totaling \$___ million in 2009 by bringing in funding from state, federal and private sources for AEM projects on 26 farms.
 - In addition to multiplying the county's investment, these dollars benefited ___ local businesses including hardware stores, construction companies and equipment dealers, that provided services and materials needed to complete the conservation projects.
 - County and state funding are vital for Districts to maintain the level of assistance provided to farmers as their programs diversify to meet other local conservation needs.
- **Recycling saves space time and money for farmers and municipalities:**
 - Districts are helping farmers recycle their agricultural plastics, eliminating up to 80% of their trash hauling fess, while keeping the plastics out of landfills - saving municipalities space, time and money.
 - Clinton County Conservation District manages the Lake Champlain Ag Plastics Recycling Program that has grown into a commercial scale enterprise helping farmers, while benefiting the regional economy. Their success has helped to develop similar programs expected to launch in Jefferson, Otsego, St. Lawrence, Tompkins, Washington and Wyoming_Counties.

County Soil & Water Conservation Districts: Working for You

What better opportunity to acknowledge the many achievements of County Soil and Water Conservation Districts in New York than as we celebrate the 70th Anniversary of the State's first Districts. Soil and Water Districts have a lot to be proud of, and their delivery of conservation programs is vital to helping New York agriculture thrive and to protecting natural resources for all New Yorkers.

Soil and Water Districts have delivered significant benefits to both individual landowners and communities. Districts safeguard our environment, support our rural economies, and help to protect the local food supply. Together with the thousands of family farms across the state, they protect nearly eight million acres of New York land, and support the farm businesses that are the backbone of our local economies. Well managed farms protect natural resources, preserve open space, maintain our cultural heritage and provide recreational opportunities for residents and tourists alike. Districts provide technical, educational and financial resources to assist farmers in their efforts to farm cleaner, greener and more efficiently into the future. More than 12,000 farms in 55 counties are participating with local Districts in the State's Agricultural Environmental Management (AEM) program delivering tangible, cost effective improvements that benefit farms and communities. Districts also play a key role in linking individual farm level projects together with others, creating watershed-level results.

Districts Multiply Dollars in Local Economies

Between 1994 and 2009, Districts put over \$100 million in State grants to work on over 2,000 farms across 50 counties involving more than 5,000 conservation projects. (A map showing the distribution of these funds and projects is on the Web in the *"2009 AEM Annual Report"* at: www.nys-soilandwater.org) This truly is a partnership, for farmers have also contributed over \$25 million toward projects sponsored by the state, and millions more for projects sponsored by federal and local funds. In 2009, \$8 million in projects were funded with an unprecedented direct farmer contribution of over \$5 million. Districts also assisted in leveraging over \$43 million in USDA conservation program funds into the program.

This money gets spent in our rural communities, creating and maintaining hundreds of green jobs. It is believed that this spending supports 40,000 local businesses like hardware stores, contractors, construction companies and equipment dealers.

Districts can only bring this money in if they are adequately funded by their annual county appropriation. County support provides operational expenses like staff, office space and vehicles. The return on their County's investment is multiplied several ways. Consider, for example, the Orleans County Soil and Water District. They multiplied their county appropriation over 32 times, totaling \$1.8 million in 2009, by bringing in funding from state, federal and private sources for AEM projects on 26 farms. In addition, these dollars benefited 61 local businesses that provided services and materials needed to complete the conservation projects.

Extensive Community Benefits

Agriculture and tourism are two of the largest industries in upstate New York, and for many recreational areas statewide, the economic health of the communities surrounding lakes and streams depends on the ecological health of the water itself. Anglers and boaters alone spend millions annually enjoying the State's water resources, and Districts, together with farmers, landowners and municipalities protect the natural resources that attracts them.

Moreover, by protecting drinking water, District watershed projects have delivered environmental improvements to save municipalities money. For example, Herkimer County Soil and Water District efforts in the Steele Creek Watershed improved water quality for Ilion's 10,000 residents, saving the Village thousands of dollars annually in water treatment.

Districts are also helping farmers recycle their agricultural plastics, eliminating up to 80% of their trash hauling costs, and keeping the plastics out of our limited and expensive landfills. The Clinton County Soil and Water District manages the Lake Champlain Ag Plastics Recycling Program that has grown into a commercial scale enterprise helping farmers across 10 northern counties, while benefiting the regional economy. Its success has helped to inspire similar programs expected to launch this year in Jefferson, Otsego, St. Lawrence, Tompkins, Washington and Wyoming Counties.

Sustainability = Profitability for Farmers

Soil and Water Districts have traditionally worked with farmers to adopt techniques and conservation practices that prevent soil erosion, improve soil health and protect water quality. Today, Districts combine traditional practices with innovative technology that also helps farm businesses remain profitable. Innovative manure storage systems now collect and destroy greenhouse gas, reduce odors, improve farm efficiency and keep clean water clean. New techniques and technology also help growers reduce fuel consumption, labor per acre, nitrogen and spray chemical applications. In the grape industry, that translates into nearly half a million dollars in reduced fertilizer costs, and environmentally-friendly growing practices also provide an advantage when marketing their products.

Charting the Course to Energy Independence

Many AEM practices help farms conserve energy and reduce petroleum consumption while providing water quality benefits. But there's a lot more happening. A growing number of farmers are now producing energy on-site through anaerobic digestion, wind turbines and biomass crops, and we are working together to increase this effort. Legislation in 2008 charged AEM with connecting farmers with opportunities to produce renewable energy. Strengthening the relationship between agriculture and renewable energy helps keep farmers farming. It reduces input costs and opens new opportunities. With the support of Districts delivering the State's AEM program locally, New York's agricultural community is ready, willing and able to step up and meet this challenge.

Celebrating Success

Back in 1940 when the Schoharie County Board of Supervisors created the State's first Soil and Water District, they were at the forefront of the conservation movement that led to the creation of Districts across the rest of the state. Today, New York is nationally recognized as a leading state in agricultural conservation. As we celebrate the success of Soil and Water Districts, it is also a tribute to the strong local, state and federal partnerships forged over the years. Seeing the progress that has been made can only strengthen our resolve as we move ahead together to meet tomorrow's environmental and agricultural challenges.

- *Adapted from NYS Association of Towns Magazine article – Fall 2009*



Key Messages for Key Issues*

Agricultural Environmental Management (AEM)

“12,000 farms across New York are working to farm cleaner and greener through Agricultural Environmental Management”

What does AEM have to do with it?

In the face of growing public concerns regarding food production and the environment, AEM is helping New York State’s farm families continue to farm cleaner and greener in today’s globally competitive market.

AEM brings together the technical, educational and financial resources farm families need to be proactive in safeguarding water quality and other natural resources in their community. Local AEM teams of conservation professionals’ work with farmers to develop farm plans that identify and address potential environmental risks before problems occur.

Over 10,000 farms of all types and sizes across New York are participating in this voluntary program.

Concentrated Animal Feeding Operation (CAFO) Regulations

What is a CAFO?

CAFO regulated farms are family-run businesses grown from a long legacy of farming in New York.

The US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) regulate water quality impacts from agriculture through the Concentrated Animal Feeding Operation (CAFO) section of the Clean Water Act.

CAFO regulated farms, often larger livestock farms, are required to follow a Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plan (CNMP) which guides environmentally sound management of farmstead and fields, and includes record keeping requirements and emergency action plans. The DEC oversees CAFO permitted farms through regular on-farm inspections and review of annual farm reports.

CAFO permitted farms in New York are family-run businesses, which have grown from a long legacy of farming. New York’s soils, climate, and nearby markets have made livestock and field crop farming a lasting pillar of our communities, providing locally produced food, unpaved open space, rural economic development, jobs and lower taxes for non-farming neighbors for years.

“CAFO regulated farms follow farm-specific plans to guide environmentally sound management and minimize risk.”

These farms are doing their part for the economy, food security, and environmental protection by making significant investments for the benefit of soil, water, and air quality. When packaged together, agriculture represents a form of development which serves the economy, local communities, and the environment - the three pillars of sustainable development. How many other forms of rural development provide so many valuable products?!

Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plans (CNMPs)

What is a CNMP?

“CNMPs are complex, science-based plans farmers use to help conserve soil, recycle nutrients, and manage their farm businesses in harmony with the environment.”

Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plans (CNMPs) are developed and regularly updated for farms by Certified AEM Planners according to the State’s AEM process and standards developed through the AEM partnership.

CNMPs assess environmental risks on farms and identify site-specific conservation practices to address concerns, while also meeting farm business objectives. Practices include managing nutrient sources, conserving soil, controlling runoff, and recycling nutrients on crop fields.

CNMPs are complex, science-based, site-specific plans farmers use to help conserve soil, recycle nutrients, and manage their farm businesses in harmony with the environment.

The plans are based on USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) standards, research from top universities, and policies from the EPA and DEC.

The plans assess farmsteads and fields and recommend conservation practices to protect natural resources, based on USDA-NRCS standards, Cornell University guidelines, and DEC policy. Practices include structural items, such as manure storages, barnyards, and filter strips, as well as management practices including careful timing and placement of nutrients, conservation tillage, crop rotations and cover crops.

In addition to conservation practices, the plans include:

- annual updates to keep the plan current,
- recommendations for proper operation and maintenance of practices,
- record keeping requirements, such as for tracking nutrient applications and recording soil and manure analyses, and
- Emergency Action Plans to guide responders should an accident occur.

The farm plans often cost each farm several thousand dollars to develop and hundreds of thousands to implement and maintain, all toward the goal of protecting water quality.

Are CNMPs required for all farms?

CNMPs are required for livestock farms designated as CAFOs by the US-EPA and the DEC, as well as for farms seeking federal or state cost-sharing to construct nutrient storage and handling facilities.

Any livestock farm seeking to achieve their production and natural resource conservation goals can develop and implement CNMP.

AEM Certified Planners

“AEM Planners undergo a rigorous training and certification process to assure farmers, environmental regulators and the public of quality planning.”

What is a Certified AEM Planner?

A Certified AEM Planner is a professional, certified by the USDA-NRCS and the NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets, to develop and certify CNMPs in New York. They are uniquely qualified to develop CNMPs because of their cross-training and expertise in environmental conservation, best management practices and standards, farming, and environmental policy. They coordinate

the efforts of other planning team members, such as Professional Engineers, crop consultants, nutritionists, and others, to ensure the most effective CNMP for the farm and the environment.

What training and credentials are required?

AEM Planner certification is performance based and rigorous for the life of the certification. Certification requires that a planner:

- be a Certified Crop Advisor by the American Society of Agronomy, a distinction requiring education and experience in agricultural environmental management, continuing education requirements on a two-year cycle, and a code of ethics
- pass the online NRCS Conservation Planning Course
- take the 4-day CNMP Training at the Water Quality Symposium in NYS;
- receive successful reviews of all 3 plans required to be submitted to the CNMP Specialists to achieve certification based on the standard CNMP criteria
- receive successful quality assurance reviews of 1 or more randomly selected plans submitted to the CNMP Specialist every two years

Why are planners certified?

The three primary reasons that AEM Planners are certified as part of the AEM Program are to:

- assure the public that experienced and properly trained individuals, working under a code of ethics and public oversight, are developing sound plans to protect and enhance the environment.
- assure farmers that the planner developing their plan has the training and experience necessary to develop an effective CNMP meeting NRCS Standards and the specific needs of their farm.
- assure regulators that planning is done by qualified professionals who have been appropriately trained to meet federal and state standards and address the needs of specific watersheds.

Spill, Runoff & Leaching Concerns

If the plan is so good, why did manure...runoff into the stream?

“We follow our farm plan carefully to safeguard the environment, but situations beyond our control, such as un-forecasted, severe weather and equipment malfunctions can still present challenges.”

...contaminate the well?

...spill from the storage?

Customized farm plans are developed to minimize risk. Farmers follow their plans carefully to safeguard the environment, but variables such as un-forecasted, severe weather and equipment malfunctions can still present challenges.

Even the best available technology may not prevent problems in all instances. If an incident does occur, farmers initiate their Emergency

Action Plan in the farm’s plan to quickly and safely respond. By following their plan, farmers help to prevent isolated incidents and are poised to respond should one occur.

If you’re not clear that your farm or client has caused a problem, consider the following messages:

We’ve been applying manure to our fields according to our farm plan, so we wouldn’t expect that the source of the impact would be from our farm.

Regardless, we’re working with our neighbors, the DEC, and others to determine the source of the impact and fix the problem.

After talking with our neighbors, we understand that some of their wells may be impacted with [for example, total coliform, nitrate, E. coli, odor, particulates, etc.].

We’ve been applying manure to our fields according to our farm’s plan, so we wouldn’t expect that the source of the impact would be from our farm.

Regardless, we’re working with our neighbors, the DEC, the Soil and Water Conservation District, Cornell Cooperative Extension, our planner, and local officials to determine the source of the impact and fix the problem.

In the meantime, we’re supplying our neighbors with bottled water.

If an incident has occurred, consider the following messages:

CNMPs are developed to minimize risk. We follow our plan carefully to safeguard the environment, but variables such as un-forecasted, severe weather and equipment malfunctions can still cause incidents to occur.

We are a [#] generation farm committed to environmental protection. We have implemented multiple conservation practices and have even received awards for our good stewardship. This is the first time we have had a problem like this in [#] years of farming.

We experienced an unexpected, isolated nutrient runoff event. We informed our neighbors and the DEC right away and will make sure the situation is corrected. The situation is being addressed and is under control.

By responding immediately according to our Emergency Action Plan, involving the DEC, local emergency responders, our planner and the Soil and Water Conservation District, we were able to stop the flow and reduce impacts to the environment.

We will continue working with them to modify our farm plan and make sure it never happens again.

We experienced a manure spill this morning due to a valve malfunction on our storage. This is the first time we have had a problem like this in [#] years of farming. The storage was designed and certified by a Professional Engineer and properly maintained, but malfunctions happen in farming, as in any industry.

“Our farm plan prescribes exactly what needs to happen, when and where, to maximize nutrient recycling by crops and protect water quality.”

By responding immediately according to our Emergency Action Plan, we involved the DEC, local emergency responders, our Certified AEM Planner and the Soil and Water Conservation District and were able to stop the flow and reduce impacts to the environment. We will continue working with them to address the accident and make sure it never happens again.

Our family takes part in the State’s AEM program. We farm according to a plan developed specifically for our farm by a Certified AEM Planner. This science-based farm plan takes into account soil type, slopes, vegetative buffers, etc., and prescribes exactly what needs to happen, when and where, to maximize nutrient recycling by crops and minimize nutrient loss. Our farm’s plan cost our family thousands of dollars and many hours of time, and we follow it carefully. If we did not follow our plan, we would be in violation of New York State regulations, would be subject to punitive action and could be put out of business.

Yesterday we checked the weather, checked the plan, and chose the best available field to apply manure. Unfortunately, farming is a weather-dependent industry. Sometimes things happen outside the parameters of our plan. Because of AEM and our hard work toward the AEM goals, this is an extremely rare occurrence. Things like this would happen much more often without AEM.

“There are hundreds of AEM conservation professionals in the field helping us farm cleaner and greener in New York.”

We are working with a team of professionals to modify our farm plan to minimize the risk of future runoff. The AEM team includes our Certified AEM Planner, the USDA NRCS, the local Soil and Water Conservation District, Cornell Cooperative Extension, and Cornell University. There are hundreds of conservation professionals in the field helping us farm cleaner and greener in New York.

Like any public policy, CNMP development is designed to minimize risk because risk elimination is not possible or has unintended negative consequences. It’s a cost-benefit scenario like the speed limit; if we travel at 55 MPH we reduce our risk of an accident, but we can still have an accident. If we drive at 25 MPH, we further reduce our risk, but our productivity and economy significantly declines. 55 MPH is the speed that society has agreed upon as the optimum point between safety and productivity. The CNMP is the equivalent for Agricultural Environmental Management.

Farmers follow their farm plans to prevent accidents and safeguard the environment. If un-forecasted, severe weather conditions happen or equipment malfunctions, the best management practices may not prevent accidents in all instances. If an accident does occur, farmers initiate their Emergency Action Plan in the CNMP to quickly and safely respond. By following CNMPs, farmers both further prevent isolated accidents and are poised to respond should one occur.

Pesticide and Fertilizer Concerns

What about all the pesticides and fertilizer runoff from farm fields?

“To make the safest and most effective use of pesticides and fertilizers, we apply them to crops when weather conditions are most favorable with carefully calibrated equipment.”

No farmer wants to use more chemicals than absolutely necessary because they are expensive! We use precision in applying the minimum amount necessary according to our AEM plan. Farms generally apply far less chemicals per acre than other land uses. For example, pesticides and fertilizers are often used much more intensively for residential lawn care than for agriculture.

Through AEM we evaluated our pesticide and fertilizer mixing and storage facility and made the changes necessary for the safest and most efficient use.

“We minimize pesticide application using a combination of on-site weather monitoring equipment and frequent scouting for insects, which benefits the environment and our bottom line.”

Pesticides are strictly regulated and used only when necessary. Pesticides are applied by NYS Certified Pesticide Applicators in accordance with DEC and EPA regulations, which require detailed recordkeeping, annual reporting, and regular training.

To make the safest and most effective use of pesticides and fertilizers, we apply them to crops when weather conditions are most favorable with carefully calibrated equipment.

Many farmers use a combination of practices to manage pests based on an approach called Integrated Pest Management (IPM). IPM is a systematic way to manage pests that focuses on long-term prevention or suppression with minimal impact on human health, the environment and non-target organisms.

IPM incorporates all reasonable measures to prevent pest problems by identifying and monitoring pest populations and combining cultural, physical, biological or chemical pest control methods to reduce pests to acceptable levels.

IPM practices help minimize or avoid pest problems, reduce or eliminate pesticide use and costs, and maximize profitability of crop production. These practices include crop rotation, use of disease-resistant varieties, cultivation, timing of planting or harvest, appropriate soil pH and fertility, and pest scouting.

Manure Storage & Recycling

Why does the plan allow for that huge pond of manure at the farm?

“Nutrient storage systems allow farmers to carefully apply nutrients at times of the year when they can be best conserved and recycled by crops.”

Cow manure is a sought-after, natural, organic fertilizer that enriches the soil naturally and reduces the need to import synthetic fertilizers. Nutrient storage facilities provide temporary storage for nutrients that will be recycled and carefully spread at prescribed rates and times to enrich the soil for healthy crops.

Nutrient storages are often an integral part of a farm’s conservation plan. Nutrient storage systems allow farmers to carefully apply nutrients at times of the year when they can be best conserved and recycled by crops.

Professional Engineers design and certify nutrient storage systems according the Natural Resources Conservation Service standards and farmers follow maintenance programs to ensure sound operation.

Why does the farmer spread manure on the ground?

“Manure is a local, natural form of nutrients and organic matter, essential for healthy soils and healthy crops.”

Cow manure is a sought-after, natural, organic fertilizer that enriches the soil naturally and reduces the need for synthetic fertilizers. By using our farm’s manure to fertilize our crops, we’re recycling nutrients right here on our farm.

In developing a farm’s conservation plan, AEM Planners assess each field for the risk of runoff, erosion, and leaching with established, science-based methods. Manure is a local, natural form of nutrients and organic matter, essential for

healthy soils and healthy crops. When applied according to the farm’s plan, nutrients are targeted for efficient use by crops. Farmers do not want to waste this valuable resource by treating it like a waste.

We farm according to a plan developed specifically for our farm by an AEM Planner. This science-based farm plan takes into account soil type, slopes, natural resource concerns, etc. and prescribes exactly what needs to happen, when and where, to conserve soil and minimize the chance of nutrients running off the land.

The plan cost our family thousands of dollars and many hours of time. We follow it carefully in order to safely recycle manure nutrients for both crop production and environmental protection.

Won’t it be harmful to apply manure containing contaminants near our home?

“In developing our farm’s plan, our AEM Planner assessed each field for the risk of runoff, erosion, and leaching with established, science-based methods.”

Manure is a natural, organic form or nutrients and organic matter, essential for healthy soils and healthy crops. There are many sources of nutrients and pathogens in the environment, including wildlife, pets, septic systems, soil microbes, livestock, and even us. Some of these sources cannot be managed, but others, such as residential septic systems and livestock manures, can.

In developing a farm plan, AEM Planners assess each field for the risk of runoff, erosion, and leaching with established, science-based methods. Manure is a local, natural form of nutrients and organic matter, essential for healthy soils and healthy crops. When applied according to the plan, nutrients are targeted for efficient use by crops. Farmers do not want to waste this valuable resource by treating it like a waste.

The most effective, state-of-the-art methods for maintaining clean well water in rural areas are two-fold: first, manage agricultural lands according to Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plans and second, make sure residential septic systems and wells are installed and working properly and evaluated frequently. Contact your local health department and/or Cornell Cooperative Extension for further guidance. Do these methods eliminate risk? No; other uncontrollable sources still exist and accidents can happen, but these methods are key for reducing risk.

Why does the plan allow winter spreading?

“Some fields identified in our plan have a low enough risk to allow for winter applications.”

Spreading manure on snow covered fields can be an option in a farm plan, given proper soils, slope, etc. AEM Certified Planners assess each field for the risk of runoff, erosion, and leaching with established, science-based methods. Based on the assessment, they plan conservation practices with the goals of soil conservation, nutrient recycling by crops, and risk reduction.

The practices will include specific restrictions on nutrient applications to achieve these goals. Some fields will be low enough risk to achieve these goals with winter applications; others will be restricted to the growing season only.

This field-by-field approach is better for the environment than one-size-fits-all winter spreading bans, as it provides a way for farms to safely apply nutrients in frequent, small applications, throughout the year.

Manure Odor Concerns

Why do I still smell manure when it’s applied?

“Manure is a natural, organic fertilizer that we use to meet our crops’ needs. We do our best to minimize odor by quickly incorporating the manure into the soil.”

Farmers do their best to control odor through technology and good management. At the same time, it’s important to remember that there can be odors at certain times of the year associated with agriculture.

We’d like to work more closely with our neighbors to see if we can plan our manure applications to accommodate their plans, avoiding times when they are hosting parties or outdoor activities.

While odor can occur, it is a short-term effect of recycling our on-farm nutrients to produce healthy, fresh, local food, while following a plan to protect water quality.

Technology to reduce odors on farms continues to be researched and is in the development phase. While currently cost prohibitive for most farms, this technology may become more practical and affordable in the future.

Manure is a natural, organic fertilizer that we use to meet our crops’ needs. We do our best to minimize odor by quickly incorporating the manure into the soil.

“Odor is a short-term effect of recycling our on-farm nutrients to produce healthy, fresh, local food, while following a plan to protect water quality.”

We participate in New York’s Agricultural Environmental Management program and apply manure according to a farm-specific conservation plan that prescribes efficient use of nutrients for the benefit of crop production and the environment. We spent a lot of money on our conservation plan, and we follow it.

Manure produced on our farm is a local form of nutrients and organic matter, essential for healthy soils and healthy crops. Its effective use allows us to rely less on imported, synthetic fertilizers, that are costly and don't contain the valuable organic matter that keeps our soil and crops healthy. This approach is best for the environment and the farm's bottom line.

Occasionally weather conditions are such that manure odor can be detected after application to a field, but the odor will soon dissipate. When applied according to the Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plan, nutrient applications are targeted to minimize odors and maximize recycling by crops. Manure is a local, organic form of nutrients and organic matter, essential for healthy soils and healthy crops. Farmers do not want to waste this valuable resource by treating it like a waste.

Farmers and the citizens of our community want the same thing – a healthy environment in which to live and work, and quality water to drink. If our neighbors have concerns, we want to address them. There are many factors that contribute to the quality of our water and air.

Through AEM, farmers are working with a team of conservation professionals to protect water quality and other natural resources.

Expansion:

“Protecting the environment has more to do with proper management practices than the number of cows on the farm.”

Farmers expand for the benefit of their family and family-run businesses, their employees, the environment, and the communities in which they live.

Protecting the environment has more to do with proper management practices than the number of cows on the farm. When working with AEM, farmers consistently meet state and federal standards and work to farm in harmony with the environment.

As farmers, we live on the land that our families farm and understand the importance of protecting our natural resources. We depend on this land for our business and our quality of life.

Farmers buy supplies and equipment at retail prices and sell their products at wholesale prices. While costs continue to rise, along with the cost of living for their families and employees, the prices received for their products have remained the same. To bridge that gap and maintain the family run business, farms have expanded to stretch their investment costs over more cows to become more efficient. This allows farm families and their employees to enjoy a better standard of living, invest in conservation, and continue their contribution to the local economy.

Similar to other industries, agriculture is a regulated industry and should be allowed to grow and expand as long as we follow the rules, which we are willing to do.

Often, additional family members choose to work on the farm. Just as when a son or daughter comes back to work in any family business, farm families need to grow to provide a living for a second-generation family.

Just like every other aspect of life, dairy farming has become more expensive, and the price we receive for our milk has not kept up with our costs of doing business, including costs of feed, animal care, energy, equipment, labor, etc. So we choose to expand in order to produce more milk to cover those costs.

Conserving Natural Resources through AEM

“AEM brings together the technical, educational and financial resources farm families need to be proactive in safeguarding our natural resources.”

AEM farmers are doing their part to farm cleaner and greener while remaining competitive in today’s global market.

AEM is a voluntary program with over 10,000 farms of all types and sizes participating across New York State.

Farmers know that in order to remain economically viable, they need to be vigilant about protecting natural resources. AEM provides the tools to help accomplish both.

Farm families work with their local AEM team of conservation professionals to make practical, cost-effective decisions that help them continue to farm cleaner and greener.

AEM farmers are doing their part to farm cleaner and greener while remaining competitive in today’s global market.”

AEM brings together the technical, educational and financial resources farm families need to advance their commitment to conservation, which benefits all New Yorkers. AEM makes good business sense, especially since many farmers plan to pass their farms on to family members.

“We work with our County Soil & Water Conservation District and other local AEM partners to protect our soil and water resources.”

In the face of growing public concerns regarding food production and related environmental impacts, AEM farmers are doing their part to farm cleaner and greener while remaining competitive in today’s global market.

AEM brings together the technical, educational and financial resources farm families need to be proactive in safeguarding water quality in their community.

Local AEM teams of conservation professionals work with farmers to develop individualized, comprehensive farm plans that specifically prescribe where, when and how organic nutrients should be used on the farm. By following their conservation plans, farm families are proactively protecting water quality.

The goal of the AEM program is to support New York’s diverse farming community in its efforts to conserve and protect our natural resources, while helping farms remain economically competitive. Local AEM teams work with farmers to assess potential environmental impacts of their operations, and plan, implement and evaluate new conservation practices.

New York’s farm families work hard and spend millions of dollars annually to implement these conservation practices. For example, if a stream runs through the farm, the farmer may set aside land on both sides of the stream as a conservation buffer and plant that land with trees and other permanent vegetation. The conservation buffer filters out sediment and nutrients from rainwater runoff flowing across farm fields, while also enhancing habitat for birds, fish and other wildlife.

County Soil and Water Conservation Districts work with local farms through the AEM Program to implement projects that protect soil from eroding and keep our water clean. Water quality projects range from those preventing rainwater from carrying soil or other contaminants into waterbodies, to the planting of streamside buffers that also help sustain a rich diversity of fish and wildlife. By participating in the AEM program farm families are helping to keep our streams and lakes clean, while also maintaining the status of agriculture as a preferred land use for natural resource protection.

Benefits of Agriculture

“New York’s family farms produce abundant safe food, protect the environment, preserve open space and provide wildlife habitat, which benefits all New Yorkers!”

Farming is a preferred land use for protecting natural resources, providing open space and enhancing critical wildlife habitat.

As stewards of nearly eight million acres of New York’s land, farm families work every day to protect our valuable natural resources.

Most farmers live and work on their farms, so it’s important to them to protect the land, water and air for their families, communities and future generations. When you make your living from the land, you take care of the natural resources you depend on.

Farmers work hard and spend millions of dollars annually to implement conservation practices on their farms to protect water quality and other natural resources that we all depend on!

Farms produce the fresh, quality food and beverages we enjoy everyday. Farmland provides habitat for birds, fish and other wildlife and offers recreational opportunities, such as hiking and fishing. New York farmers plant hundreds of thousands of trees on their farmland, along streams and wetlands every year. Farms preserve our open space, scenic views and rural quality of life. Farms keep the great outdoors great!

“Buying New York products supports the multiple benefits that farms provide - from producing abundant, safe food, to protecting the environment, preserving open space and providing wildlife habitat!”

Farms play an important role in our local economy. They keep rural taxes low by requiring less infrastructure and fewer services compared to other land uses. Every dollar they earn multiplies four times in our local economy. For example, for every 200 cow dairy there is over \$1 million that circulates in the local economy.

Agriculture is a major industry in New York, one that we can keep, one that is about more than the food on your table. Buying New York products supports the multiple benefits that farms provide - from producing abundant, safe food, to protecting the environment, preserving open space and providing wildlife habitat!

Our farm has been here for [#] generations [or # years]. We’re part of the community and our local economy. The food each farmer produces feed an average of 144 people.

Sustainable Development

“AEM brings together the technical, educational and financial resources farm families need to be proactive in sustaining natural resources and working landscapes in their community.”

Environmental stewardship, economic growth, and prosperous communities, are the pillars of sustainable development, which protects natural resources, wildlife habitat, and open space, while supporting the production of a safe local food supply. Agriculture, including the larger family-run livestock farms designated as CAFO farms, is a key a component of sustainable development in New York for the following reasons:

Environmental Stewardship

- Farmers grow crops on 25% of the state’s land area (7.5 million acres), yielding locally produced foods, unpaved open space, wildlife habitat, storm water management, soil conservation, water and air quality, and local energy production. Large dairy farms in NYS grow crops on over 1 million of those acres (National Agricultural Statistics Service, NYS).

Economic Growth

- Farms contribute billions of dollars to New York’s economy, including over \$3 billion in annual sales (\$0.75 billion by large dairy farms) and an additional \$2.5 billion in economic multipliers (\$0.63 billion by large dairy farms) due to the local, in-state nature of agricultural transactions (National Agricultural Statistics Service, NYS; Nelson Bills, Cornell University, 2001).

Prosperous Communities

- Farms stimulate employment in rural communities because 1.24 additional jobs are created in the community for every on-farm job (Nelson Bills, Cornell University, 2001).
- They are also highly beneficial for local tax bases. For every dollar paid in taxes, residential areas require \$1.11 in public services compared to only \$0.33 in services required by farmers (American Farmland Trust).
- Finally, farms further contribute to quality of life by conserving the scenic landscapes treasured by both rural residents and tourists, alike.

***6-07 Draft**

These messages were developed from *AEM Working with the Media Workshops* and with AEM partners, including the NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets, NY Farm Bureau, and the American Dairy Association and Dairy Council, Inc.

This collection of key messages is intended to support work with the media, and we welcome your suggestions for additional topics and messages for future draft.

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Example: Nonpoint Sources of Pollution

(per land unit)



Urban vs. Ag landuses

- urban runoff
- contaminated sediment
- industry
- municipal landfill leachate
- hazardous landfill leachate
- dredging
- spills atmospheric deposit
- municipal treatment plant overflow

- failed septic systems
- lawn fertilizers and maintenance
- land disposal of sludge
- impervious surfaces
- leaks spill and accidents
- golf courses
- erosion/runoff

- construction sites
- road sanding
- streambank modification

- ground spreading of sludge
- municipal sewage overflow
- paved surface runoff
- failing on-site systems
- pet wastes

- Heavy Metals
- Phosphorous
- Sediment
- Pathogens



- manure runoff
- fertilizer runoff
- milkhouse waste
- livestock in streams

- soil erosion/ runoff
- streambank modifications

- agricultural runoff



AEM Vocabulary

Words matter!

Commonly Used	Public Messaging
1. Animals	Cows, chickens, etc.
2. Best Management Practices	Conservation practices or projects
3. Confinement	Free stall; Controlled feeding
4. Confinement Facility	Barn; Animal housing
5. Expand; Expansion	Grow; Growing
6. Factory Farm; Corporate farm	Farm operated by several generations; Farm families 99% of the 36,000 farms in NYS are family owned
7. Inject	Administer
8. Manure	Organic nutrients; Natures fertilizer; Natural form of nutrients and organic matter; manure
9. Manure injection	Nutrient Incorporation
10. Manure Lagoon; Pit	Nutrient Storage & Recycling System
11. Manure Management	Nutrient Management
12. Manure (waste to energy)	Biomass Material
13. Migrant Worker	Seasonal Labor; skilled, reliable workforce
14. Producer; Operator	Farmer; Farm family
15. Spread	Recycle; apply
16. Spread manure	Recycle organic nutrients

AEM...For the Future of Farming!



I Have Only One Day to Prepare for a Presentation! What Should I Do?

One hour: Research and gather as much information as possible on the topic you'll be presenting. You will be tempted to spend many more hours than this on research, but that's a huge mistake. Additional research this late in the game is just an excuse for you to avoid doing the hard work of preparing, refining, and rehearsing your presentation. If you don't stop gathering facts after one hour, you will doom your presentation because you will waste the time necessary to do the remaining vital tasks.

30 minutes: Make a bulleted list of points—10 words or less each—of every major message point you might want to communicate to that audience.

30 minutes: Email the bullet points to any friends who might be in the audience or who have a similar mind-set to audience members. Additionally, call three people and tell them your options for messages. Ask the friends you've emailed and called for a list of their top five messages on this topic.

30 minutes: Narrow your 20 to 30 message points down to your top 5 points.

One hour: Think of a case study, an example, and a story involving a conversation you had with a real client, colleague, or customer involving this issue for each of the five points.

30 minutes: Write down every fact, number, or data point that is absolutely essential for you to present. Eliminate anything that is not 100 percent imperative.

30 minutes: Type a simple outline that has five key bullet points—one for each of your main messages. Underneath each one, include a couple of words to remind you of your stories, examples, and case studies. Finally, put at most one or two essential facts under each message point. Make sure the outline is in large font of at least 20 points and that the entire outline fits on a single sheet of paper.

30 minutes: Create one PowerPoint slide for each key message. It's preferable to use a picture or image instead of text; but if using text, limit each slide to three bullet points with no more than five words for each.

One hour: Create a document that has all of your remaining factors, numbers, slides, charts, graphs, messages, and data points on your topic. Organize in either bullet points or paragraphs, whatever is easier and faster for you. This is not for you to read during the presentation, but to hand out to audience members afterwards to help those who want to learn more, and to impress the rest that you did your homework.

One hour: Rehearse and time your presentation by going through the whole thing as if you were delivering it for real to your intended audience. Record the entire presentation using a webcam, flip camera, cell phone camera, digital camera, or other video recording device that's available to you. Watch the video and figure out what you like and don't like. Do this as many times as possible in one hour (even if it's just once).

15 minutes: Make any final adjustments to your outline, examples, facts, and slides.

45 minutes: Do final rehearsal. Record and watch yourself. Do as many times as possible until your time is used up. Preferably, don't stop rehearsing until you like the final video of your speech.

You are now ready to deliver your presentation!

ACRONYMS & TERMS

- **AEM** - Agricultural Environmental Management. New York's agricultural conservation program to assist farmers maintain viability while protecting the environment
- **AMA** - USDA Agricultural Management Assistance Program. Federal program provides cost sharing to farmers for irrigation water management, water quality and erosion control.
- **ANSACP** - NYS Agricultural Nonpoint Source Abatement and Control Program. State grant cost-share funding for AEM projects.
- **AWEP** - USDA Agricultural Water Enhancement Program. Federal program leverages financial and technical resources to help state or local government, organizations, and groups of producers to address water quality or quantity issues in a geographic area.
- **BCAP** – Biomass Crop Assistance Program. Provides financial assistance to owners and operators of agricultural and non-industrial private forest land to establish, produce and deliver biomass feedstocks.
- **BMP**- Best Management Practice. Practices determined to be the most practical in preventing or reducing the impacts of pollutants generated by nonpoint sources to a level compatible with water quality standard established by NYS Law.
- **CAFO** - Concentrated Animal Feeding Operation.
- **CALS** - College of Agriculture and Life Sciences at Cornell University.
- **CAP** – USDA Conservation Activity Plan – Provides funds for farmers to develop a management plan, which must be developed by a TSP.
- **CCA** - Certified Crop Advisor.
- **CCE** - Cornell Cooperative Extension.
- **CCPI** – USDA Cooperative Conservation Partnership Initiative. Federal funding to state or local government, organizations, and groups of farmers to address resource concerns in a geographic area.
- **CFO** - Conservation Farm Option Program of the US Department of Agriculture.
- **CBWI** – Chesapeake Bay Watershed Initiative.
- **CCRP** – USDA Continuous Conservation Reserve Program. Federal program similar to CRP focusing on smaller parcels of land that provide high environmental benefits.
- **CMZ** - Critical Management Zone. A compilation of hydrologically sensitive areas.
- **CNMPs** - Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plans.
- **Conservation Plan** - Record decisions and schedule of operations to solve natural resource problems.
- **Conservation Practice** - Specific treatment, usually part of a plan.
- **Cooperator** - Any client with a working arrangement with a SWCD.
- **CREP** - Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program. Federal program that provides rental payments and reimbursements for farmers to place environmentally sensitive land located near streams, lakes, water bodies and public wellhead areas into an approved vegetative cover.

- **CRP** - Conservation Reserve Program. A federal program that pays farmers to retire environmentally sensitive lands from crop production.
- **CSP** – USDA Conservation Stewardship Program. Rewards farmers for stewardship with incentives.
- **CWA** - Clean Water Act. The Federal Water Pollution Control Act Amendment of 1972 that contains provisions regarding point and nonpoint source pollution.
- **CWICNY** – Champlain Watershed Improvement Coalition of NY.
- **CWQCC** - County water Quality Coordinating Committee. A group of agencies and organizations within a county that coordinates nonpoint source pollution efforts.
- **CZARA** - Coastal Zone Act Reauthorization Amendments of 1990. Federal legislation that states with approved coastal management programs (such as NY) to develop and implement programs to protect coastal waters.
- **DC** - District Conservationist. USDA NRCS employee.
- **DFN** – Debt for Nature Program or Debt Cancellation Conservation Contract Program. Provides debt management for landowners that protect important natural resources and sensitive areas.
- **ECARP** – USDA Environmental Conservation Acreage Reserve Program. Includes the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), the Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP), and the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP). Allows the USDA to designate environmentally sensitive areas as priorities eligible for enhanced federal assistance.
- **EIS** - Environmental impact statement.
- **EPA** - United States Environmental Protection Agency.
- **EPF** - New York State’s Environmental Protection Fund. Provides funding for nonpoint source programs and SWCD reimbursement
- **ESF** - State University of New York College of Environmental Science and Forestry at Syracuse.
- **FA** – Financial Assistance.
- **FDA** - Food and Drug Administration.
- **FEMA** - Federal Emergency Management Agency.
- **FIP** – USDA Forestry Incentive Program.
- **FLOWPA** – Finger Lakes-Lake Ontario Watershed Protection Alliance.
- **FPP** – NYS Farmland Protection Program. Provides grants to municipalities for the purchase of conservation easements, or development rights, from farmers.
- **FOTG** - Field Office Technical Guide. The official guidelines and standards of the USDA NRCS for planning conservation practices.
- **FRRP** – USDA Farm and Ranchland Protection Program. Federal program provides matching funds for the purchase of development rights with State or Local Farmland Protection Programs to keep productive farmland in production.
- **FSA** – USDA Farm Service Agency (or Food Security Act).
- **GIS** - Geographic Information System. A computer system that allows for the manipulation and layering and of land use data.

- **GLCI** – USDA Grazing Land Conservation Initiatives. Provides technical assistance to farmers on the planning and design of grazing systems.
- **GLRI** – Great Lakes Restoration Initiative.
- **GRP** – USDA Grassland Reserve Program. Federal Program that funds restoration and preservation of pasture and grassland with easements, rental agreements and cost share payments.
- **HEL** - Highly Erodible Land.
- **HSA** - Hydrologically Sensitive Area.
- **ICM** - Integrated Crop Management.
- **IPM** - Integrated Pest Management.
- **LHCCD** – Lower Hudson Coalition of Conservation Districts.
- **LPA** - Local Priority Area. A local area with high priority natural resource needs.
- **LWG** - Local Working Group. The county-level group formed to designate priorities for federal agricultural incentive programs.
- **MRBC** – Mohawk River Basin Coalition of Conservation Districts.
- **NACD** - National Association of Conservation Districts. Nonprofit organization representing America’s 3,000 SWCDs and the 17,000 individuals who serve on their governing boards.
- **NASS** – National Agricultural Statistics Service. Provides timely and accurate statistics on US agriculture.
- **NOAA** - National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration. Oversees the Coastal Zone Management Program of the EPA.
- **NPS** - Nonpoint Source. Water pollution that does not come from a point source, such as a pipe.
- **NRCS** – USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service.
- **NYFB** – NY Farm Bureau.
- **NYACD** - NY Association of Conservation Districts, Inc. A professional organization representing the 58 SWCDs in New York State.
- **NYC DEP** - NYC Dept. of Environmental Protection.
- **NYC** - New York City.
- **NYC WAP** - NYC Watershed Ag. Program.
- **NYS AMP** – NYS Agricultural Mediation Program.
- **NYS CDEA** - NYS Conservation District Employees’ Association. A professional organization of the employees of the SWCDs.
- **NYSCHAP** – NYS Cattle Health Assurance Program.
- **NYS DAM** - NYS Dept. of Agriculture and Markets.
- **NYS DEC** - NYS Dept. of Environmental Conservation.
- **NYS DOH** - NYS Dept. of Health.
- **NYS DOS** - NYS Dept. of State.

- **NYSERDA** – NYS Energy Research and Development Authority.
- **NYSHHAP** – NYS Horse Health Assurance Program.
- **NYS WRI** – NYS Water Resources Institute.
- **PWL** - Priority Waterbody List. Published by NYSCDEC, it identifies waterbodies that may have its use impacted.
- **QA/AC** – Quality Assurance/Quality Control.
- **RC&D** - Resource Conservation and Development.
- **SDWA** - Safe Drinking Water Act. Federal Law authorizing EPA to regulate public drinking water supplies.
- **Section 319** - A section of the federal Clean Water Act that requires states to develop and implement programs to control nonpoint pollution sources, and provides grant funding to manage such programs.
- **SLWAP** - Skaneateles Lake Watershed Agricultural Program. Protects City of Syracuse drinking water.
- **SWCC** - New York State Soil and Water Conservation Committee. By NYS Law, sets policy and provides administrative support for the SWCDs in New York State.
- **SWCD** - Soil and Water Conservation District. There are 58 in New York State.
- **SWTR** – Surface Water Treatment Rule. Federal requirement that surface water used for drainage be tested to remove pathogens.
- **TA** – Technical Assistance provided to landowners to plan, design and install conservation practices.
- **TMDL** - Total Maximum Daily Load.
- **TSP** – Technical Service Provider.
- **USC** – Upper Susquehanna Coalition.
- **USDA** - United States Department of Agriculture.
- **USGS** - United States Geological Survey.
- **WHIP** – USDA Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program. Federal program that provides funding for landowners to establish wildlife habitat improvement programs.
- **WRP** – USDA Wetlands Reserve Program. Federal program that provides landowners with funds to enhance, restore or create wetlands.
- **WQIP** – Water Quality Incentive Program. NYS DEC grant funding for water quality projects.

County Soil & Water Conservation District Technical Assistance to “Communities”

authorized under NYS Soil & Water Conservation District Law



What Makes News?

- Interview, press release, press conference, PSA, ads -

If your first three sentences can't convey how your story fits into one of these categories, you're sunk!

1. Affects large number of people, directly or via direct connection...connect the dots for media
2. Has the power to alter lives, lifestyles or routines
3. Evokes strong emotions or opinions
4. Is shocking, surprising or funny
5. Marks a milestone in local/regional/national history –a first

Use simple terms:

- Complicated explanations and terms unfamiliar to city folk make you sound unsure or evasive
- Many of the people you need to reach live in the city
- Very few of them took earth science beyond high school
- Avoid acronyms or jargon

Press Release Outline

News Release – Large Font

Your Logo

Contact for more information:

Spokesperson

Phone, Email

For Immediate Release, DATE

Headline –The one you want to see in paper (one line best, two OK), boldface

CITY (TOWN), N.Y. –Lead Paragraph is the single most important sentence

Two more sentences to tell entire story

“First quote”

Two pages tops, one page better

End with a sentence on who you are, your website and other contact information

- END -

TV News Media: What you need to know

- Always looking for local 'spin'
- Not always in search of 'negative' news
- Typical use of '1 man band'
- Loves real people stories/visuals (kids and cows)

Newsroom Structure:

General Manager → News Director → Executive Producer → Assignment Editor → Reporter → Producer

Best time to call:

- 8:30-9:00am
- 12:30-2:00pm
- 6:30-8:00pm

Best time to schedule an event:

Early in the week, early in the day

Best method to get coverage:

Send **Press Release** – 2 weeks in advance and again 1 week in advance.

- Snail mail is best, fax 2nd, email 3rd. Call to see if received.
- KIS(S)! Keep it Simple
- W-W-W-W-W: Who, What, When, Where, Why
- Time, location, DATE!!!
- Follow up call morning of the event

Don't overlook smaller regional papers, radio stations, especially public!



User "How-To" & Overview

A beautiful sunset...

A fender bender on the interstate...

The spectacular game-winning goal at your daughter's soccer game...

A glimpse of the colorful farmer's market...

Your amazing dog, Lola, dancing in a tutu....

What do all of these have in common? Be a part of YouNewsTV™ and your video or photo may be featured on <http://dev.www.northlandsnewscenter.com/younews> and possibly even used on-air!

- Just go to www.wtvh.com (or your local TV station), complete the simple registration process, and upload breaking news, weather, or other news-worthy content directly to the station. There's a 30mb upload limit; allowed video types are mov, avi, mpg, mpeg, wmv, mp4.
- Once your submission is reviewed by YouNewsTV™ moderators (no violent, obscene, graphic or copyrighted material please), it will be posted to the website. It may take up to several hours for your video or photo to appear, so please check back. You will receive an email if your submission failed to upload or was not cleared for posting.
- Once your content has been approved, it will be subject to further peer review and may be flagged for removal. If we remove your video or photo after reviewing it, you can assume that we removed it purposefully in accordance with our Terms of Use.
- Station news directors will be watching YouNewsTV™ closely, and may use some of the best clips during daily newscasts! Be sure to provide your email address so that we can contact you for additional details about your video or image.
- SOME NO-NOs...
 - No copyrighted material, including copyrighted music
 - No pornography, sexually explicit content, nudity or profanity
 - No depictions of dangerous or illegal acts (i.e. animal abuse, drug abuse)
 - No hate speech which contains slurs or the malicious use of stereotypes
- REMEMBER
 - The purpose of YouNewsTV™ is to serve as a place for you to upload and share news videos and photos from your neighborhood. We moderate all submissions according to our Terms of Use. Keep in mind that we're looking to put your content on the news so only submit things that are appropriate for broadcast television. If it's something that would be inappropriate for the evening news, it won't make it onto YouNewsTV™.

BE SEEN... BE HEARD... YOU ARE... 



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b18ke00
February 25, 2010
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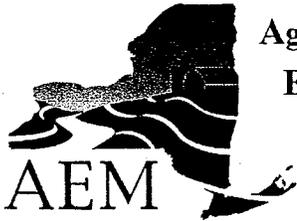
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Agricultural
Environmental
Management

Working with the Media Communication Tips

FREE Communication Tips E-Newsletter!

As part of our Working with the Media initiative, you can access a free subscription to the Media Training Worldwide Presentation Tips Newsletter. Each week, this newsletter offers 10 quick, concise tips on how you can be a better communicator. It is no-nonsense, very practical and can be read in less than 30 seconds. **Subscribe by sending a blank email to:**

weeklytips@mediatrainingworldwide.com

Sample contents include:

Speaking/Presentation Tips

1. Every day you speak to colleagues, clients and associates on areas of expertise without using notes. Public speaking should be no different.
2. Don't write your speech unless you are willing to re-write it 10 times.
3. Eliminate empty chairs from the room--you want a full house.
4. Your eyes are your most powerful weapon with your audience.

TV/Media Tips

5. When appearing on television, dress in a simple, boring manner, unless you are a fashion designer.
6. Don't wear White on TV. It's not that white looks bad, it's just that it is bright and it becomes the most noticeable thing on the TV screen. You want your face to be the most noticeable thing on the screen so viewers can focus on what you are saying.
7. Pass along newsworthy tips to reporters, even when the story has nothing to do with you and you have nothing to gain from the story.
8. Send media people thank you notes for taking the time to talk with you.

Crisis Communications Tips

9. Have the facts on your side, but you'd better have emotion on your side too.
10. The beauty of a crisis communications plan is that you won't have to "think" during a crisis. Instead you will just "do" what was already planned.

More useful tips and information can be accessed at the Media Training Worldwide website at:
www.mediatrainingworldwide.com

If you do subscribe, please let me know if this is something that you find useful by emailing me at:
barb.silvestri@agmkt.state.ny.us

If you decide to un-subscribe, just click on the link to cancel found on the bottom of all their emails: <http://autocontactor.com/app/r.asp?ID=58545197&ARID=61305>

The future of farming depends on us all.



AEM for the future!

An Editor's Primary Nuisances and Gripes, For Those Writing Press Releases

1. If space is limited, and your release involves a lot of editing, it may not take highest priority, unless it is of general interest or importance. If you are trying to get a message out to wood lot owners, and it's up against a release from bird watchers, who conformed more closely with newspaper style, you may lose out. Write clear, concise properly formatted releases.
2. Newspapers don't print the news using all capital letters. E-mailed messages that require turning all those capital letters into lower case letters become tedious, and there is never a time that an editor feels that writing in all caps is anything but intentionally annoying.
3. Funny colors and fonts are also annoying, see #2.
4. The newspaper is the only we. The agency submitting the copy is what it is, for example: We will hold a project tour ..., should be, The Conservation District will hold a project tour...
5. Newspapers don't talk to 'you'. For example: "Have you ever wondered how you can help protect natural resources? The Conservation District will hold a workshop on....).
6. Acronyms may be common language in the office, but probably not elsewhere. Newspapers will usually spell out the entire name once, before using abbreviations. However, an acronym in one office can mean something entirely different elsewhere. (We see this most often in government offices and public schools). An example is NYPA, which stands for the New York Press Association and the New York Power Authority.
7. An advisory board, town council, board of directors, etc. is a single entity. Newspapers don't refer to a school board as they, but as it, or preferably, the board of education or the board.
8. *Pet Peeve*: Will be holding, instead of will hold. Writing should be tightened, where possible.
9. Newspapers don't use address abbreviations for states. Newspapers use p.m. and a.m., not PM and AM. Today is April 26, not April 26th. Know what capitalizations newspapers do use and where, and which months are abbreviated.
10. The AP Stylebook should be used to format press releases correctly.

Six Tips for Writing Concisely

Long, wordy text is as obsolete as the typewriter. But what exactly does it mean to be concise? Many people think that concise means short. But short by itself doesn't guarantee conciseness. Concise writing is also precise, straightforward, and relevant. The American Heritage Dictionary's definition of conciseness—"Expressing much in few words"—is itself an illustration of conciseness.

Writing concisely doesn't mean providing a summary or truncating your message. The key to conciseness is honing the essential and editing out the non-essential.

But how exactly do you do that?

1. Stay on Message

One of the obstacles to conciseness is losing focus. It's easy to veer off course and take a side road that includes interesting but unessential information: background, history or a related idea. Here's an example:

Where Does Your Natural Gas Come From? Most of the natural gas used in the United States comes from domestic gas production. The remainder comes from imports, primarily from Canada. Domestic gas production and imported gas are usually more than enough to satisfy customer needs during the summer, allowing a portion of supplies to be placed into storage facilities for withdrawal in the winter, when the additional requirements for space heating cause total demand to exceed production and import capabilities.

The following concise edit answers the question succinctly, deleting the interesting but off-topic info about seasonal demand:

Where Does Your Natural Gas Come From? Most of the natural gas used in the United States comes from domestic gas production. The remainder comes from imports, primarily from Canada.

2. Say It Clearly--Once

If you've struggled to explain a difficult concept you may find yourself using words such as "In other words," "In short," "To restate this." These phrases creep in when you haven't done a good job of saying something clearly. So rather than try to clarify your original attempt, you take a second stab. If you see these phrases in your writing, take a second look and see whether both are needed. Here's an example:

Researchers found that national rates of breast cancer inversely correlate to solar radiation exposure. In other words, breast cancer occurs at a much higher rate in colder, cloudier northern regions than in sunnier southern regions.

The second explanation (In other words) says in plain language what the first explanation said more technically. A concise revision:

Researchers found national rates of cancer occur at much higher rates in colder, cloudier northern regions than in sunnier southern regions.

3. Use Plain Language

Many people think that writing like a bureaucrat gives their writing power. That's not true. Powerful writing uses plain and straightforward language. Bureaucratic language tends to inflate your word count and confuse your reader. Here's an example of inflated and officious writing:

Local Veterans Employment Representatives conduct outreach to employers to engage in advocacy efforts with hiring executives to increase employment opportunities for veterans.

Using plain language, we reduced this 22-word mouthful to 14 words:

Local Veterans Employment Representatives reach out to employers to encourage them to hire veterans.

4. Say It Simply

Sometimes your writing has so many trees that you lose the path through the forest. In this overly specific, tree-filled sentence, the main message gets lost:

To inquire concerning the status of your compensation, DIC, pension, burial, accrued, clothing allowance, automobile, specially adapted housing, or spina bifida claim or to ask any general Compensation & Pension (C&P) benefit question, you may call our toll-free number.

By taking out some trees, our clear and simple message emerges:

Call our toll-free number if you have any questions about Compensation & Pension benefits.

5. Show, Don't Say

A picture, figure, diagram is often worth 1000 words (or 10 or 50). Here's a description of a bride's gown from a wedding announcement. "The bride wore an empire waist, ivory-beaded Chantilly lace over rum-pink silk-duchess satin-soft fluted gown." Wouldn't you rather have a photo?

6. Write In The Active Voice

Structuring your sentence to emphasize the "doer" of the action, rather than the object, helps you write short sentences. This active voice sentence is six words: *Jane delivered the gift to William.* Writing in the passive voice uses eight words: *The gift was delivered to William by Jane.*

Writing concisely is difficult and takes more time, since it often means taking your first draft and chopping away with an eye to conciseness.

Witness Mark Twain's reply to a publisher who sent this telegram:

NEED 2-PAGE SHORT STORY TWO DAYS

Mark Twain's pithy and concise reply:

NO CAN DO 2 PAGES TWO DAYS. CAN DO 30 PAGES 2 DAYS. NEED 30 DAYS TO DO 2 PAGES.

Mark Twain would have hated text messaging!



Interview Tips

If called by a reporter

- Buy yourself some time. It's always okay to say "Can I call you back in ten minutes; I'm in the middle of something," and then follow through.
- If possible, find out when their deadline is and gather information about the story.
- Call a media resource for backup, tips or advice.

Preparing for an Interview

- Think about your key messages and jot them down before you call back.
- Practice talking in 15-20 second sound bites.
- Picture the perfect headline (key messages); say it early, say it often!
- Anticipate difficult questions and create answers.

Targeting Your Message

- Target your message to urban dwellers who don't understand the issue, and who vote.
- Take this opportunity to help people understand agriculture, feel connected to agriculture and take an interest in where their food comes from. This will encourage them to support farming in the community and the conservation work that farmers are doing.
- Remember that farming is a traditional business that people simply need some help to understand.

During the Interview

- Use the name of the farm and the term "farm family" when appropriate.
- Be conversational and use stories/analogies to personalize your message.
- Use clear, concise sentences – they make it easy to pull sound bites.
- Project calmness and confidence.
- Smile, but don't nod – nodding implies that you agree when you may not.
- Don't repeat an incorrect statement – say "that's not quite accurate; this is..."
- Don't speculate or interpret others' actions.
- Don't use jargon, acronyms or provide technical details.
- Talk about "cows" not "animals."
- If being asked tough questions, answer the question then STOP!
- It's always okay to say "I'm not sure, but I'll find out."
- Have something to say when the reporter asks, "Anything else you'd like to add?"

Staying in Control

- Determine your top three key messages and keep referring back to them.
- Practice first.
- Don't be afraid to repeat the same phrase. Repeat, repeat, repeat your messages.
- It ain't over 'til it's over; nothing's off the record.

Being Proactive

- Why work with the media? If they don't have a relationship with you, they will go to other organizations with different ideas. If they turn to you, they will get the story you want.
- Hold a press event with visuals to get reporters to your farm for a positive story.

What makes news?

- Affects large number of people
- Affects people locally
- Timeliness, changes and trends
- Pictures and sounds, kids and animals
- Alters lives, lifestyles or routines
- Evokes strong emotions or opinions
- Shocking, surprising or funny
- Marks a milestone in local/regional/national history – a first or an anniversary
- Connect with fair season, Memorial Day, Earth Day, first day of spring, etc.

Interview Techniques

Key Messages

Develop 3 key messages with 3 supporting points each. Answer questions briefly, then follow up with your key message.

- It's the truth
- It states your position concisely
- It can influence the audience
- It's memorable

Bridging

Moves from what the questioner wants to discuss to what you want to discuss.

- I don't know. But, what I do know is...
- Let me just add that...
- That reminds me...
- Let me answer you by saying that...
- That's an important point because...
- What that means is...
- Another thing to remember is...
- If you look at it closely, you'll find...
- That's not my area of expertise, but I think your audience would be interested to know that...

Hooking

Let the reporter know that you have several points to make, helps guide the interview where you want, and also lets the listener know that you have several things to cover:

- The first of the three elements involved is...
- There are two primary reasons...
- We really have three important reasons for...
- You'll be excited to learn what our survey showed...
- There are several points we find extremely important...

Flagging

Highlight your most important points and stress key elements in your message:

- The most important point here is...
- The underlying cause...
- The ultimate goal is...
- The real issue is...
- Just follow these tips...

Quote Controller Outline

- **Main Topic:**
- **Media Audience/Organization:**
- **Reporter's Name:**
- **Interview, Speech or Presentation Date:**
- **In fifty words or less, what would you like to communicate?**

- **List no more than 5 essential facts of interest to the reporter in 10 words or less each.**

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

- **What are your three main message points?**

1.

2.

3.

Create quotable soundbites for each message point. A quotable soundbite should have one or more of the following elements:

- **Analogy** *“He is faster than a speeding bullet.”*
- **Bold Action Words** *“They trashed the office!”*
- **Examples** *“When that happened to me, I...”*
- **Emotions** *“I am outraged/excited/relieved that...”*
- **Absolutes** *“We will close our New York Office over my dead body.”*
- **Attacks** *“He couldn’t manage his way out of a brown paper bag.”*
- **Clichés** *“If it sounds too good to be true, it probably is.”*
- **Humor** *“He knows so little about foreign policy, he couldn’t find his way to an International House of Pancakes.”*
- **Pop Culture Reference** *“She’s the Michael Jordan of widget making.”*
- **Rhetorical Questions** *“How did we end up in this situation? Let me tell you...”*
- **Opposition Quotes** *“Our competitors say, ‘Acme is too aggressive.’ We are guilty as charged, we will do...”*

Message Point 1:

Sound Bite 1

Sound Bite 2

Message Point 2:

Sound Bite 1

Sound Bite 2

Message Point 3:

Sound Bite 1

Sound Bite 2

Dear _____:

On [date] the _____ County Soil and Water Conservation District Board approved a motion to request that the _____ County Board of Legislators proclaim [date, week, month] as “_____ **County Soil & Water Conservation District [Day, Week, Month].**”

The District has achieved great success over the years getting conservation on the ground, which benefits all residents of _____ County. Proclaiming the [date, week, month] as _____ **County Soil & Water Conservation District [Day, Week, Month]** will allow us a greater opportunity to inform, educate and involve the public regarding the environmental stewardship of our local farms and the conservation of our county’s precious natural resources.

We have reserved a radio spot on WXXX on [date] and plan to provide press releases to all local papers highlighting the following activities and events:

- Date: **Ag Tour & Local Foods Luncheon** – Visits to farms to observe conservation practices that are protecting the environment and helping farmers reduce costs, improve efficiency and increase productivity. Legislators, elected officials, local farmers, and interested individuals will be invited to attend. The event will feature a homegrown/local foods luncheon prepared by _____.
 - Date: **Cover Crop Demonstration** – Area farmers and conservation partners will see our new 15’ grain drill in action. This equipment will help farmers save time, energy and money, while improving soil health, crop productivity and water quality. Lunch will also be prepared by the _____ Fire Department.
 - Date: **Conservation Farm of the Year Award** – Dinner honoring the environmental stewardship of _____, owners of _____ Farm in ____.
- Agricultural Environmental Management (AEM) Sign Awards** - AEM Roadside Signs will be installed on four farms previously awarded our AEM signs.
- Conservation Project Tour** - Riparian Plant Materials Center, Stream Stabilization Projects, Rain Gardens, Stormwater Projects [as in examples above, mention benefits of each].

We are looking forward to the exciting weeks ahead and hope that we can count on your support to proclaim _____ as “_____ **County Soil & Water Conservation District [Day, Week, Month].**”

If you have any questions, please contact me at _____.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Conservation District Day/Week/Month Proclamation

COUNTY BOARD OF Legislators LETTERHEAD:

P r o c l a m a t i o n

WHEREAS, the _____ County Soil and Water Conservation District helps farmers, landowners and municipalities make environmentally sound, cost-effective and science-based decisions that support farm businesses, save taxpayer dollars and protect the County's natural resources; and

WHEREAS, the Farmers of _____ County have long been regarded as stewards of the land and the Farmer's livelihood directly depends on the health and vitality of the soil and water resources; and

WHEREAS, a primary goal of the District is to protect and enhance the environment while maintaining the economic viability of agriculture in _____ County; and

WHEREAS, the _____ County Soil & Water Conservation District has established strong partnerships with landowners, farmers, municipal officials and cooperating agencies and associations in implementing a diversity of important conservation programs; and

WHEREAS, the implementation of conservation practices implemented by the District on public and private lands benefits every citizen of _____ County and surrounding Counties;

NOW, THEREFORE, in recognition of the important role of the Soil and Water Conservation District in _____ County, **I**, _____, Chairman of the _____ County Board of Legislators, **DO HEREBY PROCLAIM** the [day/week/month] of [Date] as **Soil and Water Conservation District Day** in the county of _____ and I urge all citizens to support District conservation efforts that benefit our local farms and our communities.

PRESS RELEASE



Jefferson County Soil & Water Conservation District

FOR RELEASE: Immediate, Tuesday, October 5, 2010
CONTACT: Christine Watkins (315) 782-2749
cwatkins@centralny.twcbc.com

Jefferson County proclaims October as Jefferson County Soil & Water Conservation District Month!

On Monday, October 4, Jefferson County Administrator, Robert Hagemann III, signed a resolution proclaiming October as “*Jefferson County Soil & Water Conservation District Month*”.

Executive Director, Brian J. Wohnsiedler, stated that “Jefferson County Soil & Water has achieved great success over the years in getting conservation on the ground, which benefits all County residents. The proclamation will allow us a greater opportunity to inform, educate and involve the public regarding the environmental stewardship of our local farms and the conservation of our county’s natural resources.”

On Wednesday, October 6, 790 WTNH will feature Jefferson County Soil & Water and review October’s upcoming activities:

- Tuesday, October 5: **Annual Land Judging** –Lewis & Jefferson County high school students compete to recognize soil variables for optimum crop production.
- Thursday, October 14: **Ag Tour & Local Foods Luncheon** – Visit local farms to observe conservation practices that are protecting the environment and helping farmers reduce costs, improve efficiency and increase productivity. Legislators, elected officials, local farmers, and interested individuals will be invited to attend. The luncheon will feature homegrown/local foods prepared by Delta Keeney.
- Wednesday, October 20: **Cover Crop Demonstration** – Area farmers and conservation partners will see our new 15’ grain drill in action. Purchased with grant funding for the Sandy Creek Ecosystem Based Management (EBM) project, this equipment will help farmers save time, energy and money, while improving soil health, crop productivity and water quality. Lunch will be prepared by the Smithville Fire Department.
- Thursday, October 28: **Conservation Farm of the Year Award** – Dinner honoring the environmental stewardship of David and Lisa Magos, owners of Morning Star Farm in Adams. The dinner will be held at Maggies on the River, Newell Street, Watertown.

Agricultural Environmental Management (AEM) Awards AEM Roadside Signs will be installed on four farms previously awarded our AEM signs for their dedication to conservation efforts.

Ecosystem Based Management (EBM) Project– Signs will be posted on farms that participated in this project by planting trees and vegetative buffers to protect streams in the Sandy Creek Watershed.

For more information contact Brian Wohnsiedler or Christine Watkins (315) 782-2749.

End ###

AEM WEEK Proclamation:

COUNTY BOARD OF Legislators LETTERHEAD

P r o c l a m a t i o n

WHEREAS, Agricultural Environmental Management (AEM) is a voluntary, incentive-based tool that helps Farm operators make environmentally sound, cost-effective and science-based decisions that help meet farm business objectives while protecting and conserving the County's natural resources, and

WHEREAS, the Farmers of Allegany County have long been regarded as stewards of the land and the Farmer's livelihood directly depends on the health and vitality of the soil and water resources, and

WHEREAS, the primary goal of AEM is to protect and enhance the environment while maintaining the economic viability of agriculture in New York State, and

WHEREAS, AEM promotes teamwork between Farmers, agricultural service agencies and agribusiness, and the public, and

WHEREAS, the implementation of best management practices identified through AEM benefits every citizen of Allegany County and surrounding Counties,

NOW, THEREFORE, in recognition of the important role of our farm community in Allegany County, **I, CURTIS W. CRANDALL**, Chairman of the Allegany County Board of Legislators, **DO HEREBY PROCLAIM** the week of July 9th, 2007 as **AGRICULTURAL ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT WEEK** in the county of Allegany and I urge all citizens to support the conservation efforts of our local farms.

GOT PRESS?

Lay the Groundwork for a Follow-up

After your story get in the news, send the reporter a quick 'thank you' and lay the groundwork for a follow-up. Below are a few ideas:

I want to take this opportunity to thank you for running the story ____ [title of story] ____ in/on ____ [name of news outlet] ____ last week. The story was terrific and we have received a great deal of positive feedback from _____. I greatly appreciate your covering this important issue for ____ [farmers and local residents] ____.

Please let me know if I can be of any assistance in the future or if you would like to run a follow-up story on ____ [the conservation efforts to protect water quality and natural resources] ____ in ____ [county/watershed/region] ____.

Thanks again and I hope to have the opportunity to work with you again soon.

Sincerely,

Garnering Press – TV & Newspaper TIMELINE:

Below is a timeline for contacting TV News Stations including contact information for stations in the Albany area. Also follow-up with Newspapers in the same manner:

- **EMAIL** the Press Release &, send a **HARD COPY in the MAIL!**
 - Always put your press release in the BODY of you email –attachments may not make it through.
 - Call ahead to find out where/who to email photo files.
- **PHONE CALLS:**

Call Times: After morning news or noon news broadcasts – between 9 -11:00 or after 1:00 PM.
Sometimes you can reach the assignment editors on the phone during the noon news.

Timeline:

1. Call the 'News Desk' the NEXT DAY after sending email. Ask for assignment editor to see if they received the email and ask if they will cover the event.
2. Call the week before to check that the Press Release got in the ASSIGNMENT File .
3. Call the DAY BEFORE the event to confirm that they are coming.

Prepare Speaking Points for your phone calls:

1. Exciting event to celebrate the 70 year conservation legacy of the 1st Soil and Water District in the State, whose work protecting our land, water and wildlife benefits all your readers/listeners. Name drop politicians expected to attend.
2. Featuring innovative conservation practices that help landowners, farmers and municipalities protect the environment, while supporting the local economy and the local tax base. (Practices help farmers protect environment and remain the backbone of our local economy - improve efficiency, reduce costs, and increase production of our fresh, local food supply - everything from apples to zucchini.)
3. 'Photo Opportunities' on the Tour include:
 - *Conservation Award* to Farm Family - kids, cows and conservation practices;
 - *Rain Garden* to prevent contaminated stormwater runoff from impervious surfaces like parking lots from entering ___ Lake;
 - *Stream project* to protect water quality of ___ River and improve habitat for birds, fish and other wildlife;
 - Join us for the *Local Foods Luncheon* featuring a meal entirely prepared from farm fresh foods produced within the County.

ALBANY TV NEWS CONTACTS:

WRGB - CHANNEL 6 NEWS - Albany

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Shane, Assignment Editor	news@wrgb.com
Greg Floyd, Anchor/Reporter	gfloyd@wrgb.com (call after 2:30 p.m.)
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Mailing Address:	ATT: Assignment Editor WRGB Channel 6 News, 1400 Balltown Rd., Niskayuna, NY 12309

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WNYT - CHANNEL 13 NEWS – Albany

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Capital News 9

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YNN Your News Now
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phone: 518-457-3186
email: barb.silvestri@agmkt.state.ny.us
www.nys-soilandwater.org

PRESS RELEASE



Schoharie County Soil & Water Conservation District

173 S Grand Street, Cobleskill, NY 12043

Contact: Brenda Weaver, Office Manager; Stephen Hoerz, District Manager

Phone: (518) 234-4092

Fax: (518) 234-4093

Email: brenda.weaver@schohariesoilandwater.org

For Release: IMMEDIATE, Tuesday, September 7, 2010

NEW YORK'S FIRST SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT CELEBRATES 70-YEAR LEGACY

COBLESKILL, NY - The Schoharie County Soil and Water Conservation District will celebrate their 70th Anniversary with a tour and local foods luncheon for state and local officials on September 7, 2010.

“Over the years, the Soil and Water District has played a vital role helping farmers, landowners, municipalities and communities to safeguard the County’s precious natural resources,” said Claude Coons, District Chairman. “Bringing together local decision-makers and conservation partners to celebrate the progress that has been made will also help us strengthen our common goals as we move forward to meet tomorrow’s environmental challenges.”

Back in 1940 when the Schoharie County Board of Supervisors created the Soil and Water District, they were at the forefront of the conservation movement, leading to the establishment of Districts in all 58 Counties across the state,” said Harold Vroman, Supervisor Representative to the District.

The celebration will include a bus tour of District projects over the past 70 years that prevent soil erosion and protect water quality on farms, along streams and in the community. A ‘local foods’ luncheon prepared by SUNY Cobleskill Culinary Students will feature products all produced within Schoharie County.

A highlight of the event will be the presentation of the District’s Agricultural Environmental Management (AEM) Sign Award honoring the Prokop family of Crossbrook Farms for their longstanding commitment to conservation.

“The District’s technical expertise and ability to obtain state and federal cost-share funds to help farmers afford costly conservation projects has helped farms like ours to maintain our commitment to the environment and remain the backbone of our local economy,” said Jon Prokop. “The practices that we have installed help protect the stream that flows through our farm, while also helping us to cut costs, improve efficiency and increase production.”

Tour stops will include visits to:

- The District’s Riparian Plant Materials Center, a parcel of land owned by SUNY Cobleskill where special plants are raised and provided free to county landowners for streambank protection.
- Schoharie Valley Farm’s Carrot Barn, whose farm pond provides a water supply for the farm and wildlife habitat. This widely used conservation practice also provides fire protection in many rural areas. The Ball

family's large farm market and farm markets throughout the county exemplify the vital role of local foods to the local economy.

- Wellington's Herbs and Spices, where a new micro irrigation conservation practice is being installed to provide a reliable water supply and protect water quality. With the assistance of several conservation agencies, this small farm is diversifying to remain sustainable and incorporating cutting-edge conservation practices expected to substantially boost their bottom-line.
- One of the District's newest conservation practices, a rain garden near the overlook at Minekill State Park, where the Awards Luncheon will take place.

In addition to celebrating the State's first Soil and Water Conservation District, this event is a tribute to the strong partnership of local, state and federal conservation agencies, whose efforts have helped New York farm families to lead the nation in conservation. The funding that Districts bring together from county, state, federal and private sources for conservation projects on farms and other public and private lands also provides economic stimulus in rural communities by creating or maintaining hundreds of green jobs and supporting an estimated 40,000 local businesses including hardware stores, construction companies and equipment dealers.

For more information about programs and services of the Schoharie County Soil and Water Conservation District call (518) 234-4092 or visit www.schohariesoilandwater.org. To learn more about the Soil and Water Conservation District in your County visit the contacts page at: www.nys-soilandwater.org

###

Press are invited to join at any tour location, as well as for the luncheon.

Schedule:

- 9:30 Guests load tour bus at Cobleskill Fairgrounds, South Grand Street, Cobleskill, NY 12043
- 9:45 SUNY Cobleskill Soil & Water Conservation District Riparian Plant Materials Center
NYS Rt. 7, Cobleskill NY (Plant Nursery).
- 10:15 Schoharie Valley Farms, Carrot Barn
5605 State Route 30, Schoharie, NY 12157
- 10:45-11:30 Wellington's Herbs and Spices
649 Rickard Hill Road, Schoharie, NY 12157
- 11:30 - 12:30 Tour Schoharie Valley
- 12:30 - 2:15 Local Food Luncheon, Awards & Rain Garden Project
Minekill State Park, 161 Minekill State Park, North Blenheim, NY 12131
- Media is encouraged to join us for lunch*
- 2:30 Crossbrook Farm
862 Mill Valley Road, Middleburgh, NY 12122
- 3:15 Bus returns to Cobleskill

END

PRESS RELEASE



_____ County Soil & Water Conservation District

[Address]

Contact: [Name & Title]

Phone:

Fax:

Email:

For Release: IMMEDIATE, [Date]

____ COUNTY SOIL AND WATER DISTRICT CELEBRATES 70-YEAR CONSERVATION LEGACY

COBLESKILL, NY - The _____ County Soil and Water Conservation District will celebrate their 70th Anniversary with a tour and local foods luncheon for state and local officials on _____, 2010.

“Over the years, the Soil and Water District has played a vital role helping farmers, landowners, municipalities and communities to safeguard the County’s precious natural resources,” _____, District Chairman. “Bringing together local decision-makers and conservation partners to celebrate the progress that has been made will also help us strengthen our common goals as we move forward to meet tomorrow’s environmental challenges.”

Back in 1940 when the Schoharie County Board of Supervisors created the Soil and Water District, they were at the forefront of the conservation movement, leading to the establishment of Districts in all 58 Counties across the state,” said _____, Supervisor Representative to the District.

The celebration will include a bus tour of District projects over the past 70 years that prevent soil erosion and protect water quality on farms, along streams and in the community. A ‘local foods’ luncheon prepared by _____ will feature products all produced within _____ County.

A highlight of the event will be the presentation of the District’s Agricultural Environmental Management (AEM) Sign Award honoring the _____ family of _____ Farms for their longstanding commitment to conservation.

“The District’s technical expertise and ability to obtain state and federal cost-share funds to help farmers afford costly conservation projects has helped farms like ours to maintain our commitment to the environment and remain the backbone of our local economy,” said __[farmer]__. “In addition to protecting the nearby stream, the practices we’ve installed have helped to reduce costs, improve efficiency and increase production on the farm.”

Tour stops will include visits to: [EXAMPLES – be sure to connect to what is of public interest]

- The District’s Riparian Plant Materials Center, a parcel of land owned by SUNY Cobleskill where special plants are raised and provided free to county landowners for streambank protection.
- Schoharie Valley Farm’s Carrot Barn, whose farm pond provides a water supply for the farm and wildlife habitat. This widely used conservation practice also provides fire protection in many rural areas of the county. The Ball family’s farm market along with farm markets throughout the county exemplify the vital role of local foods to the local economy.

- Wellington’s Herbs and Spices, where a new micro irrigation conservation practice is being installed to provide a reliable water supply and protect water quality. With the assistance of several conservation agencies, this small farm is diversifying to remain sustainable and incorporating cutting-edge conservation practices expected to substantially boost their bottom-line.
- One of the District’s newest conservation practices, a rain garden designed to prevent stormwater runoff from parking lots and other impervious surfaces from entering nearby waterways, which is located where the Awards Luncheon will take place.

In addition to celebrating one of the State’s first Soil and Water Conservation District, this event is a tribute to the strong partnership of local, state and federal conservation agencies, whose efforts have helped New York farm families to lead the nation in conservation. The funding that Districts bring together from county, state, federal and private sources for conservation projects on farms and other public and private lands also provides economic stimulus in rural communities by creating or maintaining hundreds of green jobs and supporting an estimated 40,000 local businesses including hardware stores, construction companies and equipment dealers.

For more information about programs and services of the _____ County Soil and Water Conservation District call _____ or visit www... To learn more about the Soil and Water Conservation District in your County visit the contacts page at: www.nys-soilandwater.org

###

Press are invited to join at any tour location, as well as for the luncheon.

Schedule:

9:30	Guests load tour bus at Cobleskill Fairgrounds, South Grand Street, Cobleskill, NY 12043
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10:15	Schoharie Valley Farms, Carrot Barn 5605 State Route 30, Schoharie, NY 12157
10:45-11:30	Wellington’s Herbs and Spices 649 Rickard Hill Road, Schoharie, NY 12157
11:30 - 12:30	Tour Schoharie Valley
12:30 - 2:15	Local Food Luncheon, Awards & Rain Garden Project Minekill State Park, 161 Minekill State Park, North Blenheim, NY 12131 <i>Media is encouraged to join us for lunch; please call (518) 234-4092 if you intend to join us.</i>
2:30	Crossbrook Farm 862 Mill Valley Road, Middleburgh, NY 12122
3:15	Bus returns to Cobleskill

---- END ----

PRESS RELEASE

LOGO _____ County Soil & Water Conservation District

FOR RELEASE: Immediate, Monday, April 20, 2011

Contact Info

- Photo visuals include: farm family, cows, kids, environmental sign award -

Clean and Green for the Spring

Greening of America is business as usual for farmers

This is the time of year many homeowners are thinking about cleaning up their yard and heading out to the garden. For farmers, it's no different.

"Farmers have the biggest yards around," said _____, District Manager of the _____ County Soil and Water Conservation District, "and the County's Agricultural Environmental Management, AEM, partnership is helping our farmers develop and implement plans to farm cleaner and greener."

"Once the weather breaks I have the chance to work with AEM professionals to advance our farm's environmental goals," said [John Smith of Smith Farms] in _____. "Our fifth generation family farm has been working to protect natural resources in our community for over six decades. The technical assistance and AEM funding to help cost-share expensive conservation practices helps our farm to provide fresh, healthy products to our community in an environmentally conscious way."

"Over a half-million dollars in state and federal funding has been allocated to assist _____ County farmers implement conservation practices on their farms," reports _____, "and these funds have also supported 70 local businesses such as contractors, equipment dealers and merchants."

"This job takes a lot of work and requires a plan," said _____. "We take time over the winter months to help farmers develop AEM plans that meet their environmental goals and business objectives, and when good weather comes we mobilize to help farmers make improvements on the farm."

"The AEM program helped us install conservation practices that improve water quality, protect our topsoil from erosion and more effectively recycle farm nutrients to grow our crops," said Smith. The recycling of organic nutrients is healthier for the environment, and reduces the use of fuel and commercial fertilizer.

"Springtime also give us a chance to make improvements on the farm such as planting trees and shrubs as buffers along streams to filter any runoff from our fields from entering the water," continued Smith. These practices benefit our farm, our community, and protect our natural resources for our children.

For more information on _____ call _____ or visit the website at: _____

END

###

Ideas to draw local interest:

- Start out with a story on a local farmer implementing an AEM project this spring. Explain how the practice protects water quality and what water bodies are being protected. Incorporate a quote from the farmer expressing how they want to do their best to protect the soil and water resources, and how AEM is helping them do it.
- Talk about a common conservation practice in your county – something specific to the type of local agriculture, whether it's dairy farms, orchards, etc. Highlight a farm using this practice with a quote from the farmer. Submit a photo if you have one.
- Focus on a waterbody targeted for AEM work and what has been done so far in that watershed.

Tips to get your story in print:

- When emailing a press release, place it in the body of your email, as seen below (not as an attachment).
- If submitting a photo, contact the paper to find out how and to whom they would like the JPEG sent.

LOGO PRESS RELEASE
_____ County Soil & Water Conservation District

Press Contact: **Contact Name**
Phone Number
Email Address

FOR RELEASE:
IMMEDIATE, Monday
April 13, 2007

FARMING CLEANER & GREENER IN _____ COUNTY

Spring is here, and many families are getting outside to enjoy the beautiful weather and prepare gardens. Farmers are out too, getting a start on planting this year's crops, and the _____ County Soil and Water Conservation District is assisting them in their continued efforts to protect our area's natural resources.

Conservation Districts works with local farms program to implement Agricultural Environmental Management (AEM) projects that protect the soil from eroding and keep clean water clean. Water quality projects range from those preventing rainwater from carrying soil or other contaminants into waterbodies, to the planting of streamside conservation buffers that also help maintain the rich diversity of fish and wildlife in our state.

By participating in the AEM program, _____ County farm families are helping to keep our streams and lakes clean, and maintaining the status of agriculture as a preferred land use for natural resource protection.

"Just like my father did for his children, I'm doing the right things to keep this land in farming, and to be a good neighbor, said [John Smith of Smith Grove Farms, a 3rd generation dairy in Cobleskill]. "AEM is good for my business and for the environment."

"Through AEM, we have developed a plan to address potential water quality concerns," said farmer Smith. [EXAMPLE: We installed an alternate supply of fresh water for our cows and fencing to protect the nearby stream. The conservation buffer we planted added another level of protection for the stream, and even benefited the fish, birds and other wildlife on our farm!"]

"It is in everyone's best interest to keep farming strong in _____ County to protect our fresh, healthy food supply, preserve our scenic landscapes, safeguard our natural resources, and support our local economy," said _____.

The District also works with farmers to develop customized farm plans that specifically prescribe where, when and how organic nutrients should be used on the farm. Most livestock farms grow crops to feed their animals, and they often recycle nutrients by using livestock manure as a fertilizer and soil conditioner. In certain cases, conservation planning indicates that farms should store manure over the winter and apply it each spring in the process of plowing and planting. By following their individual nutrient management plans, farm families are proactively protecting water quality.

"Farm families work from dawn to dusk to feed our families and protect our environment," said _____. "Today's farmers know that in order to remain economically viable, they need to be vigilant about protecting natural resources. AEM helps them to farm cleaner and greener while keeping their heads above water financially."

For more information about AEM and how farms are working to protect the environment, contact the _____ County Soil and Water Conservation District at _____ or visit the AEM website: www.nys-soilandwater.org

###

PRESS RELEASE

LOGO _____ County Soil & Water Conservation District

FOR RELEASE: Immediate, Monday, May 20, 2011

Contact Info

- Photo visuals include: Kids planting trees, kids stocking fish in ponds, hydroseeder equipment in action -

Breaking out of winter & gearing up for summer activities.

_____ County Conservation District helps residents and communities go greener.

While farmers, homeowners and communities are preparing for the warmer months ahead, the _____ County Soil and Water Conservation District is also gearing up to assist in their efforts to green up the environment. "The Conservation District provides programs and services that are available to everyone," said District Manager _____. Most of them are free, some come at minimal cost, and all benefit the environment."

One of their most popular programs is the District's **Tree and Shrub Seedling Sales**. Tens of thousands of conservation plantings purchased at less than a dollar each will be greening up communities this spring. "These planting will be used for stream bank stabilization, windbreaks, erosion control and even living snow fences, while also creating wildlife habitat," said _____. We also offer advice and maps on soil types, which can help determine what to plant, when to plant and where.

Popular among sportsman and kids alike is their **Fish Sales and Stocking Program**. Local stream and waterways across the county are being stocked with trout, bass and other species, which are also available to purchase at low cost for pond stocking. "Volunteers are important to the success of this program," said ____ (name) ____, __ (title) __. "Everyone is welcome including children who especially love to take part. This program benefits the community, people who enjoy fishing and the local economy."

Farmer and landowners can also benefit from the District's newest addition to their **Pasture Management Program** by renting the Districts 'No Till Drill' to plant their pastures without plowing up the ground. "This practice protects soil from erosion, builds organic matter and decreases nutrient loss," said _____. "For a minimal charge, this practice decreases fuel and fertilizer costs, while also saving time. It's good for the environment and it's good for the bottom line," said ____ (farmer name) _____ of ____ (farm name) ____ in ____ (town) _____.

The District also offers **Hydroseeding** to green up stream and roadsides, which protects water quality and fish habitat. New programs underway include **Agricultural Plastics Recycling**, which transforms what would otherwise be waste material into useful products, and a **Rain Barrel Program** to help homeowner collect and store rainwater for lawn and garden use.

For more information on these programs and the many other services your County Soil and Water Conservation District offers, call ____ (phone #) _____ or visit [www._____](http://www._____.)

END

News Release

LOGO

For more information:

Spokesperson Name, Phone and Email

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE, (Day of Week, Month, Date, Year)

Keeping it Clean and Keeping it Green

Conservation Tour to Showcase Natural Resource Protection Projects in ___ County

YOUR TOWN OR CITY, N.Y. – On _____, 2009 the _____ County Soil and Water Conservation District is hosting a Conservation Bus Tour to help area residents and local legislators to understand how several innovative local projects are protecting clean water and natural resources in _____ County. Expected to attend are _____.

The tour will include a visit to one of the County's dairy farms to view Agricultural Environmental Management (AEM) practices that protect water quality and ecosystems on and around the farm. "Over the years, the _____ family has adopted numerous conservation practices that protect natural resources," said _____. "In addition to their farm business supporting our local economy, their well managed farm also provides the open space, wildlife habitat and scenic landscape vital to maintaining the rural quality of life in _____ County." In recognition of their long-standing commitment to conservation, the _____'s will be awarded an AEM "Partnering to Protect the Environment" sign by the _____ County Soil and Water Conservation District, which will be proudly displayed at the farm entrance.

Another stop on the tour will feature the _____ Demonstration Rain Garden in _____, which is one of four sites managing rainfall in an ecologically sustainable manner. The rain gardens are designed to capture runoff from adjacent parking lots, roofs, and other impervious surfaces, helping to prevent contaminated stormwater runoff from entering nearby waterways. Stormwater runoff picks up contaminants as it washes across impervious surfaces from petroleum products, fertilizers, road salt, litter and more. These gardens were constructed by Conservation District and municipality staff. Demonstration Rain Gardens are also located in the _____.

Also visited will be one of the several Dry Hydrants installed in ponds, lakes and streams around the County that offer fire protection to homeowners in rural areas. The District received funding from Senator _____, Assembly Member _____, and the _____ County Legislature to support the Dry Hydrant Program, which provides financial and operation benefits to fire districts, increasing fire safety and responsiveness. District staff help locate and evaluate potential sites, then provides a field survey, hydrant design, materials and installation assistance.

Projects like these are made possible through the partnership of natural resource professionals from the _____ County Soil and Water Conservation District, Cornell Cooperative Extension, and the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service.

The mission of the ___ County Soil and Water Conservation District is to ___. For more information contact:

- END -



Soil & Water Conservation Districts

Providing Today...

Protecting Tomorrow

- **Protect drinking water quality**
- **Enhance fish & wildlife habitat**
- **Prevent soil erosion to protect farms & communities**
- **Assist local officials with flood prevention projects**
- **Protect property with stream & storm water management**
- **Increase farm profitability with conservation planning**
- **Protect natural resources, cultural heritage & scenic vistas**

Communicating Your Value



***“We can’t afford
NOT TO
fund Districts!”***

District Business Plan

Do You Have a Roadmap
for where your District is going?



Key Components:

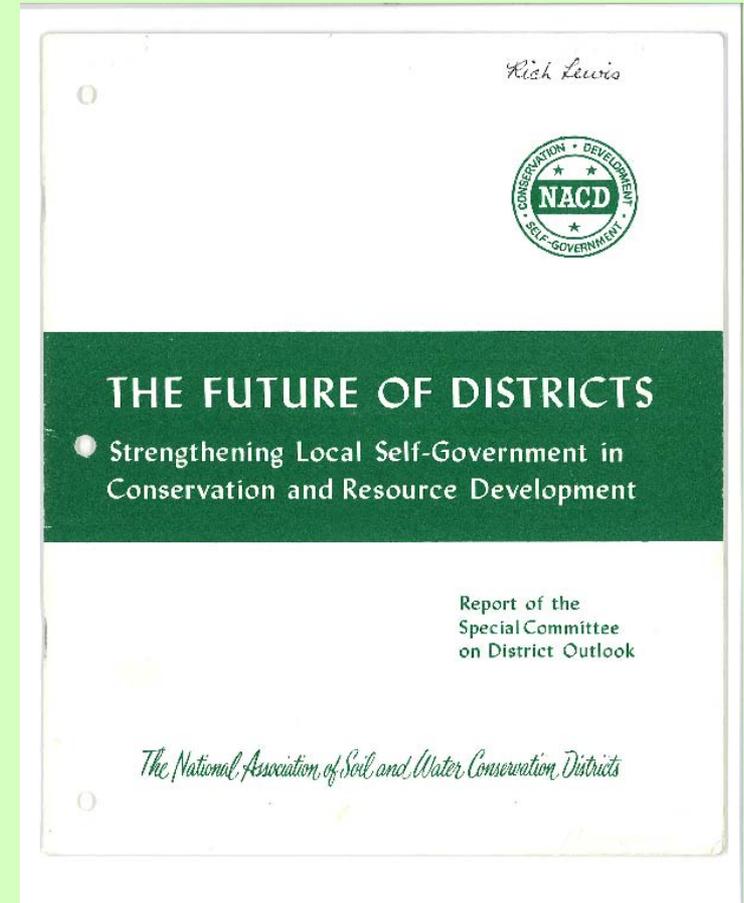
- Evaluation of Effectiveness
 - Internal & External
- 5 Year Strategy
- Communications Plan

Effectiveness

Do Board Members understand the issues & establish effective policies?

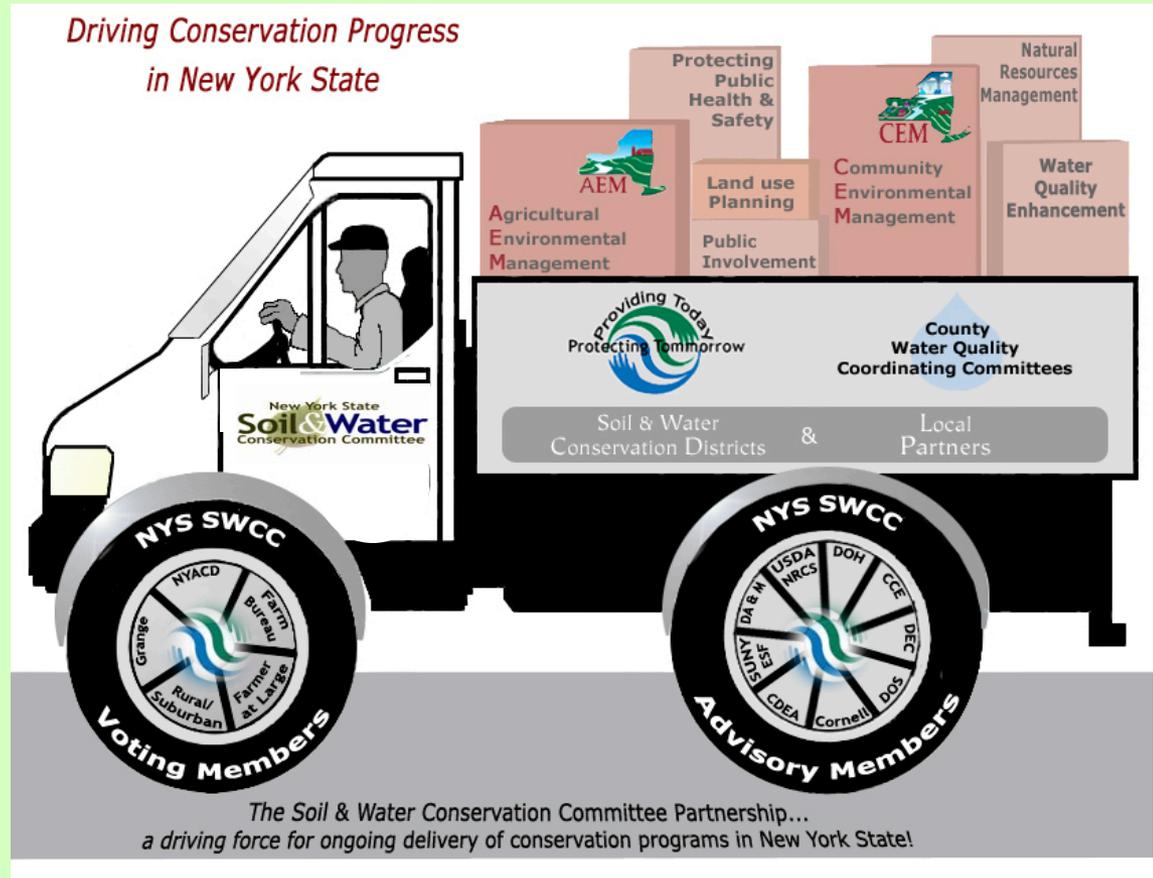
Is your District meeting its full potential?

Are you engaging the public in conservation decisions?



District Strategy

*Maximizing
your
potential to
carry out
your
Mission*



Long Range vs. Strategic

Long range planning:

Assumes the world tomorrow will look much like the world today.

Strategic planning:

Vision of what the world will look like in 3 - 5 years & your place in it.

Strategic Planning is About Choices

- Mission & goals you will pursue.
- Programs, projects & services you will offer.
- How you will attract & utilize needed resources.
 - people, money, expertise, facilities...

Who Are You?



Mission Statement

Reason for the existence of the District:

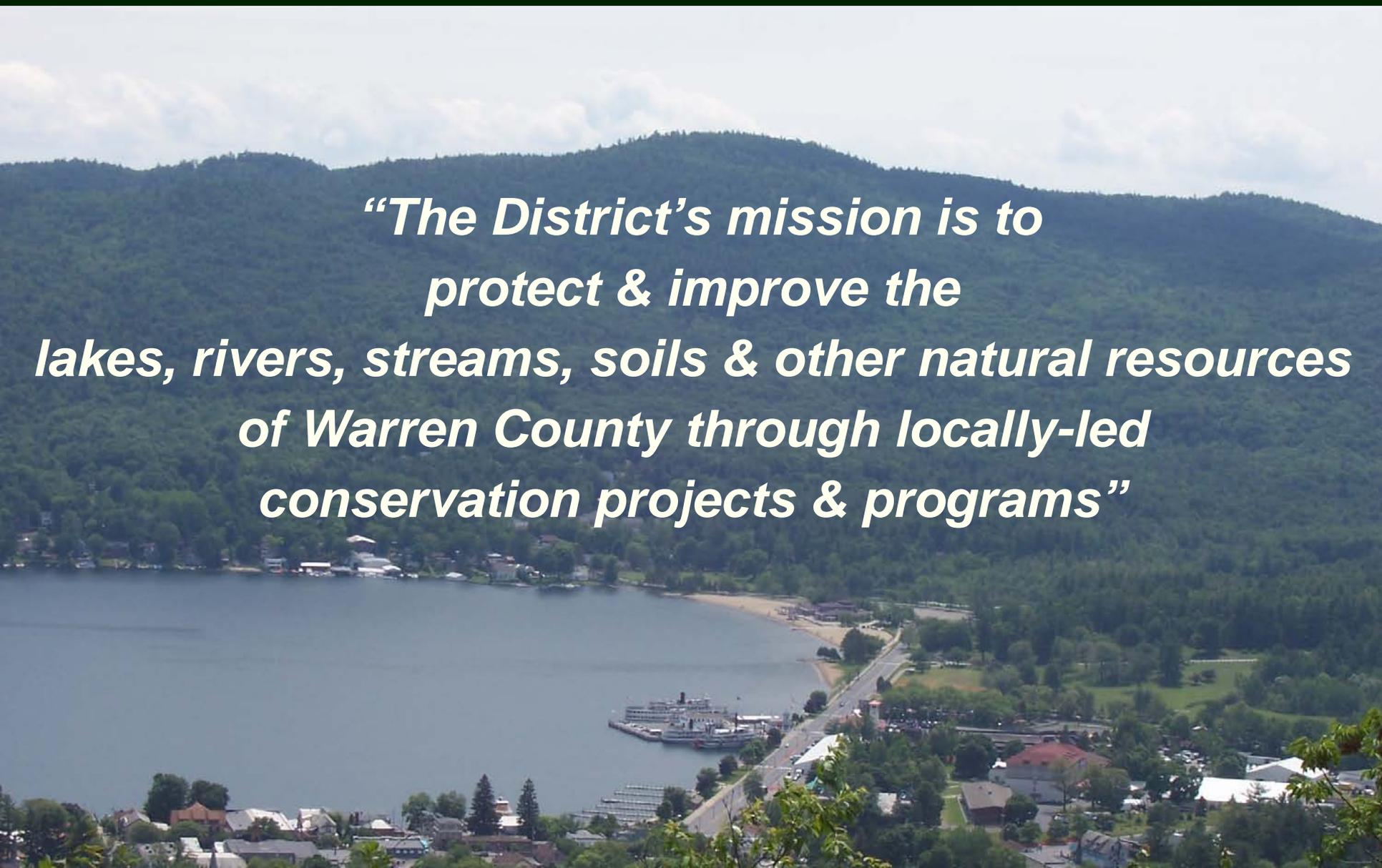
- Business you are in
- What you do
- What is unique

SWCC Mission Statement

The mission of the New York State Soil & Water Conservation Committee is to develop a responsible natural resource conservation program implemented by County Soil & Water Conservation Districts by establishing policy to guide District programs and assist in organizing, developing, and implementing them. The State Committee fosters new partnerships and secures new funding sources to support District efforts on farms and in communities as the statewide focus for water quality protection is addressing both agricultural and non-agricultural pollution sources. The State Committee also serves to advise all agencies of government on matters relating to soil and water conservation, and works in concert with partner agencies to protect and improve the state's water resources.

**Preserve, protect &
enhance New York's
natural resources
by supporting
County Soil & Water
Conservation District
projects & programs.**

Example District Mission



“The District’s mission is to protect & improve the lakes, rivers, streams, soils & other natural resources of Warren County through locally-led conservation projects & programs”



Farmland
Preservation
Open Space

Natural
Resource
Protection &
Enhancement



Regional
Economy

Multifaceted



Benefits

Local Food
Supply



Drinking Water
Supply
Protection



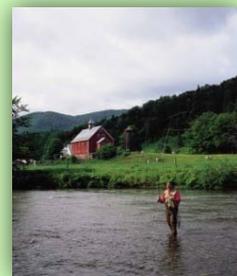
Rural Fire
Protection
Emergency
Assistance



Recreation &
Tourism



Cultural Heritage



Connecting to what Matters

Conservation practices protect drinking water quality & enhance fish & wildlife habitat.

Erosion control practices & improved **drainage** enhance food production.

Stream & stormwater projects help protect public health & safety.

Farm ponds provide rural fire protection & recreational opportunities.

Conservation projects maintain working landscapes, open space & a rural quality of life.

Improving **soil health** & preventing **erosion** protects the local tax base.

Conservation dollars support the local economy!



Newsletters

To: Undisclosed Recipients
From: Genesee.Soil_WaterConservation [mailto:genco.soil_waterconservation@yahoo.com]
Sent: Thursday, March 04, 2010 10:24 AM
Subject: Feb-March "Soil & Water Update"



Genesee County

SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

29 Liberty Street, Suite 3, Batavia, NY 14020
Phone: 585-343-2362 Fax: 585-345-1815

*Conserving Today
Protecting Tomorrow*

February-March Newsletter "Soil & Water Update"

[Click Here to View Newsletter](#)

- Conservation Farm of the Year: *Reyncrest Farms*
- Order Your Tree Seedlings Now! Order deadline April 1st
- Federal & State Agricultural BMP Funding Opportunities
- Bird Corner: Eastern Bluebird
- Pond Management
- County Park Events
- District News



Tree & Shrub Seedlings & Native Plants Order Deadline April 1st

[Download Order Form](#)

[Download Plant Descriptions](#)

"Soils of Genesee County"

presentation by
John Wulforst, NRCS Soil Scientist

Sat., March 20
10:00-11:30 a.m.

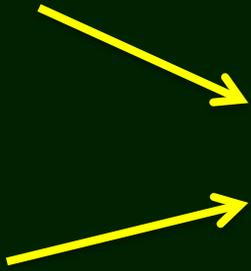
Genesee County Park
Interpretive Nature Center

See page 6 of newsletter for more information



**ORDER NOW FOR SPRING PLANTING!
PLANT PICKUP IN MID-APRIL**

Watch the
Wording



Opportunity to
Plug Programs

To remove your name from our mailing list, please [click here](#).

Questions or comments? E-mail us at genco.soil_waterconservation@yahoo.com or call 585-343-2362

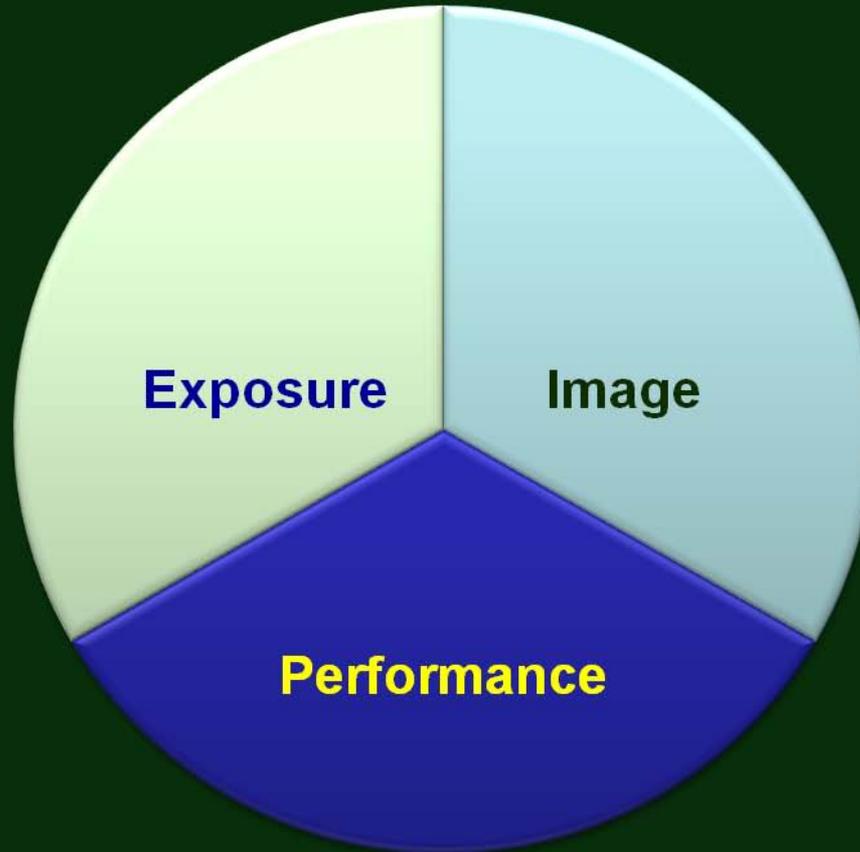
Formula for Funding Success

Ingredients for success with County Legislature:

- Requesting
- Informing
- Involving
- Recognizing



Keys to Success



Conservation Tours



Generating Press



Award Events

Workshops

Tours

Press Conferences



New Media

New opportunities to get your message out!

YouTube - Recycling Plastics from the Agriculture Industry Page 1 of 1

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Recycling Plastics from the Agriculture Industry



Plastic has become an integral part of most agriculture systems. From dairy and beef operations, to all different types of livestock farms. From maple production to vegetable and horticulture produ...

URL <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dcGCIEiBfHU>

Embed 100 views

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Copy and paste this link into an email or instant message:
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dcGCIEiBfHU>

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Join YouTube for a free account or sign in if you are already a member.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dcGCIEiBfHU> 03/05/2010

Managing the Calendar



Board Involvement

From the beginning, a key to success has been Board Member understanding of the District's vital role & their active commitment toward fulfilling it.

1940 Schoharie County Conservation Fledge

*"I give my pledge as an American
to save & faithfully to defend from waste
the natural resources of my country –
its soil & minerals,
its forests, waters, & wildlife."*

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