

October 2015



ORLEANS COUNTY SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

Conservation Update

Cornell Soil Health Test Results

In 2014 Orleans County SWCD was awarded a grant to take soil samples from across our County to be sent to the new Cornell Soil Health Lab. The test they have developed emphasizes the integration of soil biological and physical measurements along with the chemical measurements we have been familiar with for all these years.

The test results come back color coded as Green (good to go), Yellow as sub-optimal and Red needing your attention first. In the chart shown, the 4 columns to the right give the results for the chemical tests: pH, Phosphorous, Potassium and Minor Elements. Aside from some variability in pH, we have the Chemical needs of our fields and plants very much in optimum condition.

The first 5 color coded columns are: Aggregate Stability - showing the pore structure and how well the soil holds that structure under wet conditions; Organic Matter - the source of slow release nutrients; Active Carbon - the food for the soil microbes; Soil Protein - a measure of the mineralizable organically bound N; and Soil Respiration - an indication of the biological status of the soil community. Microbial activity influences most of the measurements just described and is directly affected by the type of tillage practiced, manure and/or cover crop use.

The results across our County indicate we have a long way to go to bring the overall health of our soils up to par. The two healthiest fields were a long time pasture and long time no-till field. The one practice that can help improve soil biological health the most according to researchers is the use of cover crops. Keeping the soil with a growing plant and root as close to year-round as possible will keep an active, growing soil biology, which, in turn, will return improved water handling capacity, drought tolerance, improved Organic Matter levels and natural cycling of nutrients for the plant's growth



Orleans County Tire Cleanup Successful

The Orleans County Soil and Water Conservation District held its tenth annual county-wide used tire collection on Saturday, September 26, 2015. Seventeen participants brought their used tires to the county Emergency Management Office on West County House Road, Albion between 9:00 AM and noon, where they were stockpiled for loading. Close to four hundred tires were collected in three hours.



Soil and Water staff assisting in unloading used tires.

they become an unsightly mess and a breeding ground for mosquitoes and vermin. Experts estimate it can take up to 150 years for tires to decompose. When citizens voluntarily participate in an environmental cleanup such as this, they can feel proud that they have improved the quality of life for everyone.

When tires are discarded,

Orleans SWCD Busy Installing Water Quality Projects

The Orleans County SWCD has been busy installing Water Quality (WQ) projects. In the last month, multiple WQ projects were installed.

Two stream crossings were installed for two different farmers. Before the installation of these projects one crossing was very undersized causing flooding problems upstream. The other crossing was collapsing and making the crossing unsafe for equipment. These new stream crossings allow the farmers to safely access their fields without driving through the streams causing water quality concerns as well as reducing flooding potentials upstream.

Also, a Heavy Use Area (HUA) concrete pad

was installed for a dairy farmer. This concrete pad is joined to the existing manure lagoon and sloped towards the lagoon so that if there is a spill the manure will run back into the lagoon instead of running off or leaching into the ground at high rates.

The district was also involved in seeding and mulching several ditches that posed erosion and sedimentation threats to nearby streams and the sizing of multiple highway culverts throughout the county.

We are diligently working on designing the next WQ projects for the spring of 2016. If you think you have a project that we might be interested in feel free to contact the office.



Collapsing Stream Crossing before replacement

Stream Crossing after replacement



Round 22 Ag Non Point Source Grant Opportunities

The New York State Soil and Water Conservation Committee will soon be announcing funding to be available under Round 22 of the Ag Nonpoint Source Abatement and Control Grant Program. An ag non point source of pollution is considered any free flowing source of contaminated water from a farming activity, such as gully erosion or barnyard runoff, that has the potential to contaminate soils or waters they

contact. (The opposite would be point source pollution from a pipeline discharge).

In the past we have been successful in receiving funding (up to 75%) under the Ag Nonpoint Source Abatement Control Grant Program on projects such as agricultural chemical mixing facilities, rotational grazing, barnyard management, and cover crops.

Any farmers interested in being included for implementation of Best Management Practices are urged to contact the Orleans County Soil and Water Conservation District office at (585) 589-5959 to discuss potential projects. Participation in the Agricultural Environmental Management Program is a requirement for any farm applying.



**ORLEANS COUNTY SOIL & WATER
CONSERVATION DISTRICT**

446 West Avenue
Albion, NY 14411

Phone: 585-589-5959
Fax: 855-347-7122
E-mail: judy.bennett@ny.nacdnet.net

**NON-PROFIT
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
PERMIT #200
ALBION, NY**

The Orleans County Soil & Water Conservation District and the Natural Resources Conservation Service prohibit discrimination in all their programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, gender, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, and marital or family status.

Volunteers Clean Up County Shores

On Saturday, September 23 volunteers from Orleans County participated in the American Littoral Society's annual New York State Shoreline and Beach Cleanup. These volunteers collected, recorded and removed more than 2,919 items of trash weighing 489 pounds from our local waterways over the course of three hours. This brings us to a total of over 20,000 pounds of trash that has been collected in the 15 years this effort has been sponsored in Orleans County.

The enthusiastic volunteers convened at 9AM at Albion's Bullard Park for instructions and introductions before dispersing to assigned locations. Groups tackled trash at locations along Glenwood Lake, Butts Park, Lake Alice, Point Breeze and the Erie Canal. At noon



Cleanup crew picking up trash along the Canal Wide-waters in Knowlesville

everyone reconvened back at Bullard Park to weigh the 18 bags of trash collected along with various items such as TV's, fishing gear, and discarded tires. Every item collected, down to the last cigarette butt, was recorded and cate-

gorized on data sheets that were then sent to the American Littoral Society for statistical analysis along with data submitted by all the groups participating across the country. This allows them to observe and track trends in sources of trash. In Orleans County, over half of the items collected were from food and beverage related items.

Along with concerned citizens, volunteers participating in the cleanup represented 4-H clubs and local high school students. This event was sponsored locally by the Orleans County Soil & Water Conservation District in conjunction with the Orleans County Water Quality Coordinating Committee.