

2023 Annual Report



Hamilton County



**Soil & Water
Conservation District**

**Working to manage and promote
the wise use of natural resources
in Hamilton County since 1965**

Hamilton County Soil and Water Conservation District History

The Hamilton County Soil and Water Conservation District staff members work to reduce soil erosion, protect water quality and quantity, manage invasive species, and offer diversified programs and educational events to the public. To protect the integrity of Hamilton County's natural resources, the District provides technical assistance to landowners, municipalities, and organizations that meet conservation needs.

In 1937, President Franklin D. Roosevelt combatted the Dust Bowl by passing legislation that supported the establishment of Soil and Water Conservation Districts by local governments to conserve soil and water. New York State adopted Soil and Water Conservation District Law in 1940.



The Hamilton County Board of Supervisors established the District on February 4, 1965. Hamilton County is the third largest in New York State, and the least populated. Sixty-three percent of the land is state owned Forest Preserve and remains unaltered by development. 89% of the county is forested, 5% is water and 6% is open area and hamlets.

Soil and Water Conservation Districts are a sub-division of New York State that are governed locally by a Board of Directors. Funding sources for the Hamilton County SWCD include New York State Agriculture and Markets, the Finger Lakes - Lake Ontario Watershed Protection Alliance, local county appropriation, grant awards, and earned income programs. Thank you to these organizations for their support.



Staff

Cairlin Stewart, MS, District Manager
Lenny Croote, CPESC, Technician
Katie Whitkovits, Technician
Marj Remias, Clerk and Secretary to the Board

Board of Directors

Victoria Buyce, Chairperson
John M. Stortecky, Vice Chairperson
Shawn Hansen, Member at Large
Betsy Bain, Town Supervisor
Chris D. Rhodes, Town Supervisor

Partners

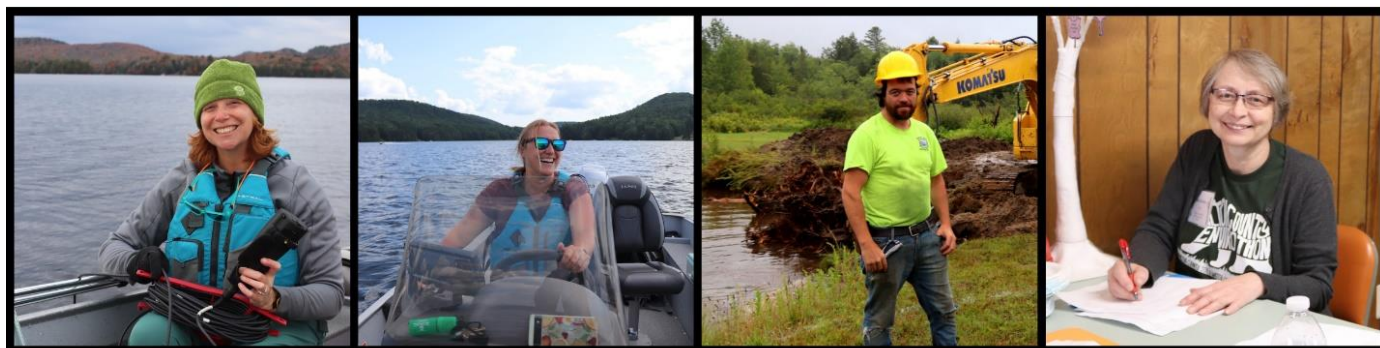
Tom Bielli, District Conservationist,
Natural Resources Conservation Service
Ryan Cunningham,
Associate Environmental Analyst,
Soil and Water Conservation Committee



Conserving Natural Resources 2023 Year in Review



Meet the Team



District Manager

Caitlin Stewart, MS

District Technician

Katie Whitkovits,
Certified Pesticide
Applicator

District Technician

Lenny Croote, CPESC,
Certified Pesticide
Applicator

Clerk

Marj Remias

Conservation on the Ground: Town by Town

Arietta

- Warner Brook Streambank Stabilization and Fish Passage Project – tree plantings
- Cold Stream Bank Stabilization Project
- Surveyed roads for priority culvert, dam, and bridge sites for project implementation funding through NY-LCB+ADK Aquatic Organism Passage initiative
- Flood mitigation and climate resiliency
- Dry hydrant survey
- Lake Monitoring Program
- Upper Hudson River Watershed Coalition – president, hosted meetings, researched funding opportunities for projects listed in the Watershed Management Plan
- Bank and soil stabilization
- Invasive plant management on public and private land
- Met with Piseco Lake Association members to discuss DEC's invasive species grant

Benson

- Van Slyke Road Culvert installation – tree plantings
- Upper Hudson River Watershed Coalition – president, hosted meetings, researched funding opportunities for projects listed in the Watershed Management Plan
- Invasive plant management on public and private land

Hope

- Surveyed roads for priority culvert, dam, and bridge sites for project implementation funding through NY-LCB+ADK Aquatic Organism Passage initiative
- Assisted with minor flooding issues and culvert sizing
- Dry hydrant survey
- East Stony Creek Stabilization Project – APA permit approved
- Bank and soil stabilization
- Upper Hudson River Watershed Coalition – president, hosted meetings, researched funding opportunities for projects listed in the Watershed Management Plan
- Invasive plant management on public and private land

Indian Lake

- Roadside Erosion Remediation Program Phase II grant, \$58,200 – hydroseeded Parkerville and Big Brook Road
- Surveyed roads for priority culvert, dam, and bridge sites for project implementation funding through NY-LCB+ADK Aquatic Organism Passage initiative
- Wells Road Runoff Tributary Diversion Project – relocate 50% of the tributary’s volume into other channels to prevent runoff from jumping streambanks and flowing on the road
- Flood mitigation and climate resiliency
- Lake Monitoring Program
- Assisted residents with straw bale gardening
- Bank and soil stabilization
- Upper Hudson River Watershed Coalition – president, hosted meetings, researched funding opportunities for projects listed in the Watershed Management Plan
- Invasive plant management on public and private land
- Provided water quality recommendations to Lake Adirondack Weed Committee
- Member of the Headwaters Steering Committee
- Aquatic Invasive Species survey on Indian Lake
- “The Great Migration” presentation at the Adirondack Experience: The Museum on Blue Mountain Lake’s Homeschool Day – 200 attendees
- 2 Caring Through Conservation mini grants



Technician Lenny Croote takes survey shots of Shaw Brook.

Inlet

- Snowmobile trail GIS / GPS work for Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation to meet grant reimbursement requirements – 22 trails, 59 miles
- Parkhurst Road Culvert Replacement– replaced a 36 inch culvert with a 9 foot bottomless box culvert
- Inlet Municipal Center site inspection for stormwater control best management practices
- Flood mitigation and climate resiliency
- Black River Adaptive Model - facilitate effective Black River Watershed Management Plan/9 Element plan implementation, leverage state and federal funding, protect drinking water sources, improve impaired waterbodies, and update the Black River 9 Element Watershed Plan with current conditions and watershed management needs
- Finger Lakes – Lake Ontario Watershed Protection Alliance – member, implemented water quality, sediment and erosion control, invasive species, and education projects
- Black River Watershed Conference presentation
- Lake Monitoring Program
- Bank and soil stabilization
- Invasive plant management on public and private land
- Caring Through Conservation mini grant



Lake monitoring field equipment.

Lake Pleasant and Speculator

- Roadside Erosion Remediation Program Phase II grant, \$58,200 – hydroseeded Dugway Road
- Surveyed roads for priority culvert, dam, and bridge sites for project implementation funding through NY-LCB+ADK Aquatic Organism Passage initiative
- Fawn Lake Road Culvert Replacement
- GH Wood Pit mining permit renewal

- 3 stormwater control site visits for landowners
- Lake Monitoring Program
- Upper Hudson River Watershed Coalition – president, hosted meetings, researched funding opportunities for projects listed in the Watershed Management Plan
- Bank and soil stabilization
- Invasive plant management on public and private land
- Assisted Village of Speculator Code Enforcement Officer with septic problems for a landowner.
- Assisted Lake Pleasant Sacandaga Association with their Lake Management Plan
- Warner Brook Stabilization Project and Tree Planting with 33 students and teachers from Lake Pleasant CSD
- Lake Pleasant Youth Recreation participated in Tracks and Scat lesson and activity – 4 attendees
- Bat presentation at the Lake Pleasant Public Library – 15 attendees
- Annual Water Quality Coordinating Committee meeting – 19 attendees
- 2 Caring Through Conservation mini grant

Long Lake

- Snowmobile trail GIS / GPS work for Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation to meet grant reimbursement requirements – 11 trails, 114 miles
- Flood mitigation and climate resiliency
- Septic System Replacement Fund
- Fishing Brook Stream Stabilization Project
- Surveyed roads for priority culvert, dam, and bridge sites for project implementation funding through NY-LCB+ADK Aquatic Organism Passage initiative
- survey – collected data to design the restoration project funded by NRCS EWP
- Students participated in the 28th annual Hamilton County Envirothon
- Lake Monitoring Program
- Lake water sampling for Raquette Lake Preservation Foundation
- St. Lawrence River Watershed Project – member, attended meetings, researched funding opportunities for projects listed in the Watershed Management Plan
- Bank and soil stabilization
- Invasive plant management on public and private land
- Buck Mountain – debris clean up, trail marker installation, grubbed remaining 100 feet of trail
- The annual Arbor Day Poetry Contest Gala was held at the Long Lake Public Library – 25 Seniors submitted poems



Dry hydrants protect public safety and aid fire departments.

- Water Quality presentation for the Long Lake Association annual meeting – 30 attendees

Morehouse

- Bank and soil stabilization
- Mohawk River Watershed Coalition – president, working on the \$1.5 million Action Agenda with DEC, attended Research Priorities Workgroup meeting to ensure Hamilton County recommendations were voiced
- Dry hydrant survey
- Invasive plant management on public and private land

Wells

- Roadside Erosion Remediation Program Phase II grant, \$58,200 – hydroseeded Gilmantown Road Bank Stabilization Project
- Elbow Creek Restoration Plan grant, \$75,000 – hired consultant
- Surveyed roads for priority culvert, dam, and bridge sites for project implementation funding through NY-

LCB+ADK Aquatic Organism Passage initiative

- USACE permit for FEMA reimbursement
- Students participated in the 43rd annual Conservation Field Day
- Students participated in the 28th annual Hamilton County Envirothon
- Designed aquatic invasive species poster for Friends of Lake Algonquin



Manager Caitlin Stewart points out a benthic macroinvertebrate to a 6th grader.

- Lake Monitoring Program
- Upper Hudson River Watershed Coalition – president, hosted meetings, researched funding opportunities for projects listed in the Watershed Management Plan
- Bank and soil stabilization
- Invasive plant management on public and private land
- Biomonitoring with Macroinvertebrates stream sampling with 8 Wells CSD students
- Elbow Creek: The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly presentation at the Friends of Lake Algonquin annual meeting – 50 attendees
- Wells Youth Recreation participated in a Pollination lesson and activity – 36 attendees

Grants, Contracts, and Awards

- Upper Hudson River Roadside Erosion Remediation Program Phase II - \$285,200 total for 4 SWCDs, \$58,200 for Hamilton County, Hamilton County SWCD is overseeing the grant
- Elbow Creek Restoration Plan grant - \$75,000
- Finger Lakes – Lake Ontario Watershed Protection Alliance contract - \$58,200
- Manager Caitlin Stewart received recognition from the New York State Conservation District Employees’ Association for 15 years of service
- New York Association of Conservation District’s 2023 Best Media Educational Outreach Press Release award

Staff Training and Certifications

Continuing education and certifications ensure that District staff have the knowledge and expertise to implement science-based projects and programs.

Annual Accomplishments

- Staff attended 40 trainings focusing on watershed quality, invasive species, sediment and erosion control, safety, and administration
- Technicians Lenny Croote and Katie WhitKovits are Certified Pesticide Applicators
- Technician Lenny Croote is certified in the North Atlantic Aquatic Connectivity Collaborative and Certified Professional in Erosion and Sediment Control



Technician Katie WhitKovits attends a training hosted by the Adirondack Park Invasive Plant Program.

Flood Mitigation and Climate Resiliency

The severity and frequency of flood events is increasing, and District staff have the expertise and equipment to assist municipalities when natural disasters strike.

Annual Accomplishments

- Flood damage assessment to prioritize remediation projects
- Shaw Brook Survey, Long Lake – collected data for the restoration project funded by NRCS EWP
- Wells Road Runoff Tributary Diversion – relocated 50% of the volume of the tributary into other channels to prevent runoff from jumping streambanks and flowing on the road
- Parkhurst Road Culvert Replacement, Inlet – replaced a 36-inch culvert with a 9 foot bottomless box culvert

Septic System Replacement Fund

At the request of Hamilton County, the District is administering this program. Lake Eaton was identified by New York State as being in a priority geographic area where there is critical need to reduce the impact of sewage effluent from cesspools and septic systems on groundwater

and surface water. Homeowners can apply for a grant for reimbursement for portion of the cost of replacing a cesspool, or repairing, replacing, or upgrading a septic system. The Program provides grants to cover up to 50% of the costs of eligible septic system projects, up to \$10,000 per project.

Annual Accomplishments

- Round 2
 - Closed out
 - 11 applicants received grants, expending the entire \$85,000 grant for Lake Eaton
 - Replied to inquiries
 - Tracked program expenses
 - Worked with Treasurer Beth Hunt to administer reimbursement checks
- Round 3
 - \$275,000 available for Lake Eaton
 - 3 applications received, all funded at \$10,000 per project
 - Replied to inquiries
 - Tracked program expenses
 - Worked with Treasurer Beth Hunt to administer reimbursement checks
- Round 4
 - DEC announced this round on December 13, 2023
 - District staff will complete the Priority Waterbodies List
 - District staff will confirm our participation with DEC

Snowmobile Trail GIS Project for Municipalities

The District assisted municipalities with meeting Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation requirements for grant reimbursement.

Annual Accomplishments

- GPS / GIS mapping of 173 miles on 33 snowmobile trails
- Submitted data to OPRHP
- The state was pleased with the data and towns received funding

Gilmantown Road Bank Stabilization Project

The Problem

A decades-old culvert system ran underneath a steep bank on Gilmantown Road and into Elbow Creek. During the December 25, 2020 storm event, the culvert system failed. Water gushed out of the blown culvert, causing severe bank erosion that threatened the integrity of Gilmantown Road and the water quality of Elbow Creek, a classified trout stream.

Partners get Conservation on the Ground

Hamilton County Soil and Water Conservation District partnered with the Hamilton County Department of Public Works to implement a project that protected public safety, stabilized road banks, and improved water quality. Staff removed the culvert system and installed a 150-

foot open-faced channel. Hamilton County DPW operators removed hundreds of yards of material to create the channel. District staff designed the project to ensure the slope of the channel was safe and stable.

Green Armor

Green armor technology was utilized for the project to ensure that critical banks were effectively stabilized, steep slopes were reinforced, and high discharge waterways were protected. GeoWeb stabilized 4,500 square feet of bank slope that flanked the open channel. GeoWeb is constructed of honeycomb-like cells that are infilled with soil to prevent erosion. Tendons were anchored into the ground to hold the GeoWeb in place. Proganics Biotic Soil Media contains organic matter and soil building components. District staff hydroseeded Proganics and grass seed on top of the GeoWeb to promote fast and successful seed germination. Hydroseeding stabilized 0.75 acres of soil. Staff then hydroseeded Flexterra hydraulic mulch on top of the ProGanics layer to hold material in place during grass establishment and armor against erosion.

Funding

Hamilton County DPW provided rock, operators, and equipment. The District provided \$20,166 through a DEC Water Quality Improvement Project grant for the Upper Hudson River Watershed Roadside Erosion Remediation Program Phase II. This grant is overseen by the Lake Champlain Lake George Regional Planning Board.



Technician Lenny Croote hydroseeds ProGanics Biotic Soil Media on top of GeoWeb to stabilize soil and prevent erosion.

Project Outcomes

The Gilmantown Road Bank Stabilization Project protects public safety, infrastructure, and water quality. This project decreased the amount of sediment entering Elbow Creek, improving trout habitat. GeoWeb not only stabilized the steep banks of the open channel, but was less expensive than hard armor, with the additional benefit of a reduction of aquatic thermal

pollution during storm events. This project efficiently and economically got conservation on the ground thanks to the strong partnership between the Hamilton County Department of Public Works and the Hamilton County Soil and Water Conservation District.

Students Help Save a Stream

Students helped save a trout stream with the historic conservation practice of planting trees. Warner Brook, Town of Arietta, has been negatively impacted by bank erosion for years, and the Halloween Storm of 2019 worsened the stream's condition. The Hamilton County Soil and Water Conservation District teamed up with partners and students to get conservation on the ground and stabilize Warner Brook.

Warner Brook has been plagued by erosion for decades. During the 2019 Halloween Storm, fast moving flood waters, rocks, and boulders scoured and undercut the banks. Where Warner Brook enters Piseco Lake, water velocity decreased, and sediment settled out to create a delta. Instead of exhibiting natural steps and pools that are characteristic of steep mountain streams, the down-stream section of Warner Brook was straight and steep with no meanders, steps, and pools. These altered, post-flood conditions resulted in an unstable, highly erosive stream. Warner Brook is classified as a trout stream, but fish were unable to pass through the culvert and safely migrate upstream to spawn. The downstream end of the culvert was perched high above the stream, creating a waterfall that inhibited aquatic passage.



Lake Pleasant Central School students plant native trees along Warner Brook.

In 2022, the District team placed large boulders below the culvert to shorten the distance of the waterfall and create steps and pools. The step-pool system promotes aquatic passage and dissipates stream energy, decreasing erosion. Filter fabric was installed to prevent sub-surface flow, enhancing fish passage, and a cross vein was installed for grade control.

In 2023, District staff gave a presentation to Lake Pleasant Central School's fourth, fifth, and sixth grade classes detailing the Warner Brook streambank stabilization project. The students then took to the field to plant native trees along the streambank. Sand cherry, nine bark, red osier dogwood, silver maple, white cedar, and Streamco willow were selected for this project site because these species are resilient, like wet conditions, and exhibit superior performance in streambank stabilization. Streamco willow has large root biomass, stem resiliency, and grows quickly.

The Lake Pleasant Sacandaga Association contributed to the expense of shovels, and Katherine Weil purchased trees for the project and offered a warming station with hot cocoa for the students.

The trees students planted will shade Warner Brook, enhance trout habitat, and provide food for local wildlife and pollinators. The step-pool system the District installed encourages fish passage, and decreases erosion. Partners came together to successfully save Warner Brook.

Fishing Brook Stream Stabilization Project

The Problem

During the July 10, 2023 flood event in the Town of Long Lake, the county line flow embankment breached. This breach carved an unstable stream channel. Due to head cutting, the flow grounds were shallow enough to pick up sediment across the bottom. The water level dropped 2 feet since July and about 9 feet from traditional water levels (dam spillway).

Project Implementation

The District installed a 46-foot-wide rock structure that raises water level, creates grade control to stabilize streambanks, and prevents headcutting of the stream. Staff also installed two pools to enhance aquatic habitat.

Project outcomes

This project stabilized a 50-foot reach of stream bank and prevents head cutting into flow grounds. The reduction of soil loss from head cutting at the time the breach occurred is approximately 600 cubic yards of material. The reduction of soil loss from head cutting since July 2023 is 30 cubic yards of material. It is estimated that this project prevented 150 cubic yards of material from eroding at the head cut, and an additional 7 cubic yards of material from eroding from the stream bank annually.

Cold Stream Stabilization Project

The Problem

The sandy streambanks of Cold Stream were eroding because the site lacked shrubs and trees with deep roots to hold soil in place. During flood and high-water events, trees and shrubs create roughness that decreases water velocity through resistance.

Partners get Conservation on the Ground

Hamilton County Soil and Water Conservation District partnered with the Hamilton County Department of Public Works, Town of Arietta Highway Department, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, a local landowner, and the Fulton County SWCD to implement a project that stabilized streambanks, created floodplain, and protected a Class C trout stream.



A heavy equipment operator installs root wad toe wood to create roughness and act as a barricade between water and streambank soils.

Before work began, Technician Lenny Croote obtained Department of Environmental Conservation, Adirondack Park Agency and Army Corp of Engineers permits. Staff installed root wad toe wood at the outside bend of the stream (cut bank) to create roughness and act as a

barricade between the water and streambank soils. The machine operator used an excavator to dig trenches for the root balls. Roots balls were installed facing upstream into the current at a 30-degree angle. Staff created corduroy by placing branches across the root balls in a crosshatch pattern. Wood won't break down because it is submerged and buried, and little air interaction prevents decomposition. The project was then graded and hydroseeded. In the spring of 2024, staff will plant native wetland species including willows, dogwoods, winterberry holly, and elderberry to enhance the root system and further prevent erosion.

Hamilton County SWCD designed and oversaw the project, obtained permits, hydroseeded, and will purchase and plant trees; Fulton County SWCD provided an excavator and operator, US FWS reviewed the project design; the landowner provided trees and root wads; Hamilton County DPW provided excavator transportation and equipment; and the Town of Arietta Highway Department provided equipment and fill material.

Project Outcomes

This was a cost-effective project because the bulk of the material was onsite. The project efficiently and economically stabilized 100 feet of streambank, prevents 12 cubic yards of sediment from entering surface water, and protects Cold Stream, a Class C trout stream.

NY-LCB+ADK AOP Survey

Partners including Soil and Water Conservation Districts are working together across the Lake Champlain Basin and Adirondacks to develop a list of top Aquatic Organism Passage (AOP) projects. The goal is to unite organizations working on culvert replacements and dam removals, develop a prioritized list, bring attention to projects' value, and obtain implementation dollars.

Annual Accomplishments

- District staff worked with municipalities to develop a list of priority culvert, dam, and bridge sites
- Conducted 19 North Atlantic Aquatic Connectivity Collaborative surveys on county and town roads in Long Lake, Indian Lake, Wells, Lake Pleasant, Hope, and Arietta
- Entered data into the AOP matrix
- Working with NY-LCB+ADK partners to prioritize regional watershed projects and seek funding for implementation
- Surveyed roads for priority culvert, dam, and bridge sites for project implementation funding through NY-LCB+ADK Aquatic Organism Passage initiative



Technician Lenny Croote takes measurements during a culvert survey.

Hamilton County Trail Stewardship Program

The District is one of many partner agencies working on trail initiatives for the county.

Annual Accomplishments

- Hired seasonal technician for trail and municipal work thanks to generous funding from Hamilton County
- Buck Mountain trail maintenance - debris removal, trail marker installation, grubbed remaining 100 feet of trail
- Adirondack Ecotrail trail maintenance and development to old growth pine tree



Seasonal Technician Jacob Vander Pyl grubs the Buck Mountain Trail.

Lake Monitoring Program

With great foresight, elected officials recognized the need to protect Hamilton County's vital water resources, and the Board of Supervisors contracted with the District in 1993 to conduct a comprehensive lake monitoring program. Our residents, economy, and ecosystem depend on clean water for drinking, recreation, and flourishing flora and fauna. Decades of consistent lake data collection is essential to the effective analysis of long-term trends. Taxpayer dollars are saved when a water quality problem is detected and remediated in its early stages.

We monitor priority Hamilton County lakes once a month from June through October at their deepest point. We lower a YSI multiparameter probe at 1-meter increments to the bottom of each lake, collecting pH, conductivity, temperature, turbidity, and dissolved oxygen data. Transparency is measured with a secchi disk. Water samples are analyzed for chlorophyll-a, conductivity, true color, alkalinity, total phosphorus, nitrate, ammonia, total nitrogen, chloride, sulfate, and dissolved organic carbon. Reports are available on our website.

Annual Accomplishments

- June - October lake monitoring rotations
- The District contracts with an Environmental Laboratory Accreditation Program (ELAP) certified lab at the Adirondack Watershed Institute to complete water sample analysis
- Assisted lake associations with data inquiries
- Quality Assurance Project Plan and Data Usability Assessment Report for DEC
- Shared data with lake associations and state and federal agencies



Technician Katie Whitkovits takes a chlorophyll sample.

Watershed Coalition Update

The District represents Hamilton County in all Watershed Coalitions, ensuring our county's water quality priorities and concerns are voiced.

- **Finger Lakes – Lake Ontario Watershed Protection Alliance**
 - Executed Work Plan program deliverables: installation and implementation of best management practices, watershed monitoring, public education and outreach, and invasive species inventory and control
 - The DEC approved the District's Work Plan, Data Usability Assessment Report, and Quality Assurance Project Plan
 - Attended meetings
 - Attended and provided info for the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative for possible funding
- **Upper Hudson River Watershed Coalition**
 - Manager Caitlin Stewart serves as president
 - Oversaw meetings
 - Administering Water Quality Improvement Project Program grant for the Upper Hudson River Roadside Erosion Remediation Program Phase II - \$285,200
 - Elbow Creek Restoration Plan grant - \$75,000
 - Completed 2023 annual report
- **St. Lawrence River Watershed Partnership**
 - Promoted the St. Lawrence River Watershed Revitalization Plan
 - Working to obtain funding for project implementation
 - Attended meetings
- **Black River Watershed**
 - Black River Watershed Conference
 - Served on planning committee
 - Presented Adirondak Waterfest – 97 attendees
 - Black River Adaptive Model Project
 - Description: facilitate effective Black River Watershed Management Plan/9 Element plan implementation, leverage state and federal funding, protect drinking water sources, improve impaired waterbodies, and update the Black River 9 Element Watershed Plan with current conditions and watershed management needs
 - Staff attended meetings
 - Staff presented lake monitoring and stormwater pollution project during meetings and field trips
 - Attended field sampling training
- **Mohawk River Watershed Coalition**
 - Manager Caitlin Stewart serves as president
 - Oversaw meetings
 - Working to obtain funding for project implementation
 - Attended Mohawk River Steering Committee meetings
 - Attended Mohawk River Basin Research Priorities Workgroup and made recommendations for water quality.

Certified Professional Erosion Sediment Control

Certified Professional Erosion Sediment Control (CPESC) certification affords the District a higher level of credibility to handle erosion and sediment control issues throughout Hamilton County. Conservation Technician Lenny Croote received his CPESC certification and can now assist contractors, municipalities, and landowners with major development projects that require engineer plans. He can also sign off on DEC permits and inspections, and implement large scale erosion control projects. Lenny can aid with State Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (SPDES) permits, land clearings greater than 1 acre, stormwater control, soil stabilization, and erosion control.

Annual Accomplishments

- Permits, stormwater, erosion and sediment control, and major development projects that require engineer plans
- 39 projects focused on erosion control, bank stabilization, and runoff
- Erosion and Sediment Control Plans to 2 landowners

Hydroseeding

Hydroseeding is available to residents and municipalities for erosion control, ditch and bank stabilization, and seeding or reseeding a lawn or disturbed area. We mix mulch, seed, fertilizer, lime, a tackifying agent, and water in a tank then sprayed onto soil. This method is fast, uniform, ***Annual Accomplishments***

- Department of Transportation: 2 acre of ditch stabilized for flood mitigation – Blue Mountain and Long Lake
- Municipalities: 4.5 acres of ditch stabilized along 4 miles on 5 roads
- Landowners: 3.5 acres of soil stabilized, 30 projects

Agricultural Environmental Management

The mission of the Hamilton County Agricultural Environmental Management Program is to maintain the integrity of freshwater resources and cultivating a sense of environmental stewardship among farmers and producers by building connections and inspiring long-lasting freshwater resource protection within the county.

All farmers and producers, large or small, are encouraged to join our AEM program. Being part of the Hamilton County AEM Program qualifies you to receive assistance in developing a plan that is best for your operation and our freshwater resources. AEM is voluntary and confidential. The AEM framework is designed to help farmers/producers make environmentally conscientious decisions about their land and address natural resource concerns. We will help you achieve your business objectives while ensuring that local, state, and federal water quality goals are met.

Annual Accomplishments

- Farm inventory and outreach

- Discussed goals and water quality challenges with farmers
- Program promotion
- Closing out Round 17
- Completed AEM Round 18 Action Plan

Sediment and Erosion Control

Assistance is offered in the planning, design, construction, and management of erosion control structures and practices including diversions, critical area plantings, and stream bank and shoreline protection.

Annual Accomplishments

- Assisted municipalities, landowners and loggers with erosion and sediment control problems, road restoration and stabilization, and critical area seeding
- Assisted landowners with stream stabilization and restoration

Recycling Programs

Assistance is provided to the county for paper recycling. District staff collect recyclable paper from county offices and deliver it to the transfer station. Since 2013, the District has facilitated the Boat Storage Recycling Program, and works with area marinas to recycle these large sheets of plastic.

Annual Accomplishments

- The District partnered with marinas to recycle 3,940 pounds of plastic through the Boat Storage Plastic Recycling Program
- Assisted the county with recycling paper



**Seasonal Technician
Jacob Vander Pyl recycles
boat storage plastic.**

Green Services

- The District's trash pump was utilized to control flood water on the following project sites:
 - Culvert replacement - Town of Lake Pleasant, Fawn Lake Road
 - Gilmantown Road Bank Stabilization Project – Town of Wells
 - South Pond outlet abutment repairs – North Point Road, Town of Long Lake
 - Parkhurst Road culvert replacement project – Town of Inlet
- Soil pH and fertility tests for landowners
- Assisted lake associations with their NYS DEC invasive species grant applications

Invasive Species

Invasive species are introduced beyond the borders of their historic range, reproduce rapidly, and displace native species. They cause economic, ecologic, or societal harm. Spread prevention, early detection, and rapid response are the best methods for combating invasives. The District provides management recommendations, spread prevention information, and presentations. Staff monitor and manage invasive species on our lands and in our waters.

Annual Accomplishments

Staff Certifications and Development

- Technicians Lenny Croote and Katie WhitKovits are Certified Pesticide Applicators
- Staff attended trainings including APIPP's Lake Protectors program, species identification, and biology

Invasive Plant Management

- Purple loosestrife: 13 sites
- Phragmites: 1 site
- Japanese knotweed: 21 sites, 200 canes injected with herbicide, other sites treated with foliar spray
- 40 hours dedicated to management
- *Galerucella* beetle biocontrol of purple loosestrife – raised beetles at the District office and released them at Lake Adirondack and Long Lake.



Technician Katie WhitKovits surveys Indian Lake for aquatic invasive plants.

Invasive Species Monitoring

- Surveyed Indian Lake for aquatic invasive species and found none
- Surveyed the Adirondack EcoTrail and found none
- Deployed and monitored the emerald ash borer funnel trap

Landowner Assistance and Outreach

- Finalized the Japanese knotweed injector tool rental program
- Species identification
- Best management practice recommendations
- Assisted Lake Associations with DEC invasive species grant
- Meetings with Lake Associations to discuss program opportunities
- Many referrals to APIPP, AWI, and DEC for further assistance
- Invasive Species Awareness Week = mosaic contest, Facebook campaign

Committees and Partnerships

- Manager Caitlin Stewart serves as secretary of the New York Invasive Species Advisory Committee and attended meetings to discuss priorities and concerns
- Committee to list new priority invasive species on APIPP's Tier 1 list
- Attended Adirondack Park Invasive Plant Program webinars and meetings
- Participated on APIPP's Aquatic Invasive Species aquatic and terrestrial working groups and Strategic Plan Committee
- Attended Partnership for Regional Invasive Plant Management meetings

Adirondack Tree and Shrub Sale

The District hand selects non-invasive bare root seedlings, shrubs, ground covers, and accessories for the annual sale in April. Plantings get conservation on the ground by reducing soil erosion, improving wildlife habitat and food, providing windbreaks, increasing valuable wood production, and enhancing biodiversity. Other items offered include wildflower seeds, compost, fertilizer tablets, and wildlife houses. Order forms are available in the winter.

Annual Accomplishments

- 1,304 trees, shrubs, and berries were planted

Caring Through Conservation Mini Grant Program

The District piloted the Caring Through Conservation Mini-Grant Program to empower organizations to implement conservation projects that educate the public or students about environmental issues, enhance natural resource management, and protect watershed resources in Hamilton County. Projects aligned with schools, organizations, municipalities, and educational programs, and were implemented on public lands. Project proposals related to conservation projects or conservation education with tangible outcomes. Applications were reviewed by the Board of Directors, and requests for funding could not exceed \$2,000.

Annual Accomplishments

- 5 applications were received and ranked
- Total grant funds awarded: \$6,972.50
- Projects
 - Community Garden Fencing – Town of Lake Pleasant
 - 2023 Monarch and Milkweed Challenge - Town of Indian Lake
 - The Monarch Report - Indian Lake Theater, Inc.
 - Two stage snowplow carbide edges trying to reduce road salt usage - Town of Inlet
 - Salt Reduction Cutting Edges - Town of Lake Pleasant

Conservation Field Day

5th and 6th graders clue into natural resource conservation at the annual Lynn Galusha Memorial Conservation Field Day. Groups of students hike to 6 stations where they learn about exciting topics from the experts. The event wraps up with a final presentation. The essay and poster contests allow students to apply what they learned and detail the topic they feel will best protect Hamilton County's natural resources.

Annual Accomplishments

- The event turned 44 this year!
- 83 students attended from Lake Pleasant, Wells, Long Lake, Indian Lake, and Wheelerville CSDs
- Presentations
 - Keeping Your Groundwater Safe For Drinking - Florence Braunius, New York Rural Water Association
 - Muddy Waters Rainfall Simulator - Matthew Olson, USDA - NRCS
 - Wetlands are Wonderful! - Caitlin Stewart, Hamilton County Soil and Water Conservation District
 - Busy Beavers - Christine Campeau and Elyse Bennett, Adirondack Experience: The Museum on Blue Mountain Lake
 - Agriculture and Me - Jamila Page, Cornell Cooperative Extension of Hamilton County
 - Power of Wind - Matthew Plouffe, Cornell Cooperative Extension of Jefferson County
 - K-9 Demonstration - Matthew LaCroix, New York State Department of Environmental Conservation
- 6th Grade Essay Contest Winners
 - First place: Adeliz Ruiz, Lake Pleasant CSD
 - Second place: Katelyn Comeau, Wheelerville UFS
 - Third place: Braeden Pratt, Long Lake CSD
 - Honorable mention: Shelby Clark, Wells CSD
- 5th Grade Poster Contest Winners
 - First place: Jacob Dorr, Lake Pleasant CSD
 - Second place: Anthony Comeau, Wheelerville UFS
 - Third place: Glenn Chittenden, Wells CSD
 - Honorable mention: Matthew Hosley, Wells CSD



Florence Braunius, New York Rural Water Association, teaches students how to keep groundwater safe for drinking.

Hamilton County Envirothon

Since 1992, the Hamilton County Soil and Water Conservation District has been hosting the Hamilton County Envirothon, an outdoor competition that gives high school students (9th-12th graders) the opportunity to utilize problem solving techniques, teamwork skills, and knowledge gained during study sessions to complete tests in 5 categories: Aquatics, Current Issue, Forestry, Soils, and Wildlife.

Annual Accomplishments

- The event turned 29 this year!
- 8 teams participated
- First place: Bryon and the Baddies, Long Lake CSD
- Second place: Dream Team, Wells CSD
- Third place: Pneumonoultramicroscopicsilicovolcanoconiosis Pals, Long Lake CSD



An Envirothon team completes the Wildlife exam.

Arbor Day Poetry Contest

The Arbor Day Poetry Contest is held annually for senior citizens with a changing theme and poetry style.

Annual Accomplishments

- The 15th annual!
- Theme: Hope Grows Through Trees
- 25 participants
- First place: Camille Cristaldi, Long Lake
- Second place: Patricia Paton, Wells
- Third place: Nancy B. Williams, Lake Pleasant
- Gala held at Long Lake Public Library to honor all participants with certificates and prizes



Arbor Day poets with their certificates during the celebratory gala held at the Long Lake Public Library.

Partnerships and Outreach

Annual Accomplishments

- Staff serve on 16 committees and partnership organizations
 - New York State Conservation District Employees' Association – president
 - Mohawk River Watershed Coalition – president

- Upper Hudson River Watershed Coalition - president
- New York Invasive Species Advisory Committee - Secretary
- Water Quality Symposium – Education Track chairperson
- Environmental Education Foundation member
- St. Lawrence River Watershed Coalition member
- Black River Watershed Conference planning committee
- Black River Adaptive Model Program committee
- Finger Lakes – Lake Ontario Watershed Protection Alliance member
- Adirondack Park Invasive Plant Program partner
- Hamilton County Water Quality Coordinating Committee
- Hamilton County Highway Association
- New York State Envirothon volunteer
- Aquatic Invasive Species partner
- Terrestrial Invasive Species partner
- 1,235 people of all ages attended conservation presentations and events
 - The Great Migratory Challenge – Homeschool Day – Adirondack Experience: The Museum on Blue Mountain Lake
 - Warner Brook Stabilization Project and Tree Planting - Lake Pleasant CSD
 - Biomonitoring with macroinvertebrates - Wells CSDS
 - Adirondack Waterfest - Black River Watershed Conference
 - Warner Brook Stabilization Project - New York State Soil and Water Conservation Committee meeting
 - Maintain the Chain Ecoarts Stream Table
 - Elbow Creek: The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly - Friends of Lake Algonquin annual meeting
 - Tracks and Scat - Lake Pleasant Youth Recreation
 - Pollination - Wells Youth Recreation
 - Water Quality - Long Lake Association annual meeting
 - New York State Fair Conservation District booth
 - New York Invasive Species Expo
 - Social Media and Websites - Administrative Conference
 - Bats - Lake Pleasant Public Library
- 45 people signed the Adirondack Ecotrail trail log



Technician Katie Whitkovits teaches tracks and scat to Lake Pleasant Youth Rec.

Water Testing Program

The certified Water Testing Program is available to area municipalities, residents and businesses each summer to test drinking and swimming water. Samples are analyzed for lead, copper, a water chemistry panel (alkalinity, total hardness, calcium hardness, fluoride, chloride, and conductivity), total coliform and *E. coli*, with certified results.

Annual Accomplishments

- 87 water samples were analyzed with certified results



Clerk Marj Remias runs the Water Testing Program.

GIS Services

GIS services are provided to landowners, businesses, and municipalities including mapping, data querying, and project development. Large format printing is available.

Annual Accomplishments

- Assisted landowners with GIS services
- Assistance is available for permits, stormwater, erosion and sediment control, and major development projects that require engineer plans
- 3 dry hydrants – Morehouse, Hope, and Arietta
- 3 culverts – Inlet, Lake Pleasant, and Indian Lake
- 3 stream restoration projects – Indian Lake, Arietta, and Long Lake

Water Quality Coordinating Committee

The mission of the Hamilton County Water Quality Coordinating Committee is to maintain and restore the quality and quantity of water resources in Hamilton County using a coordinated, comprehensive, and educational interagency approach. As determined by WQCC members, protecting Hamilton County's waters is of the utmost importance. Water quality concerns include invasive species, road salt, faulty septic systems, sedimentation, shoreline development, harmful algal blooms, and public education. Funding is continuously sought to remediate these concerns with appropriate best management practices.

Annual Accomplishments

- Convened meeting
- 22 lake association representatives and partners attended
- Concerns and priorities: green infrastructure, county-wide GIS data, road salt, non-point source pollution, PFAS, invasive species, funding for project implementation



Working to manage and promote
the wise use of natural resources
in Hamilton County since 1965

518-548-3991
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