



# HAMILTON COUNTY

Soil & Water Conservation District



## 2024 Annual Report

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. 63% 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 Department of Agriculture and Markets, the Finger Lakes - Lake Ontario Watershed Protection Alliance, the Environmental Protection Fund, Hamilton County, grant awards, and earned income programs. Thank you to these organizations for their support.



### Staff

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

### Board of Directors

**Victoria Buyce, Chairperson**  
**John M. Stortecky, Vice Chairperson**  
**Betsy Bain, Town Supervisor**  
**Shawn Hansen, Member at Large**  
**Beth Hunt, Town Supervisor**



### Partners

**Ryan Cunningham,**  
**Associate Environmental Analyst,**  
**Soil and Water Conservation Committee**  
**Katherine Girard, District Conservationist,**  
**Natural Resources Conservation Service**

## Meet the Team

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**District Manager**

Caitlin Stewart, MS

**Sr. District Technician**

Lenny Croote, CPESC,  
Certified Pesticide  
Applicator

**District Technician**

Katie Whitkovits,  
Certified Pesticide  
Applicator

**Clerk**

Marj Remias

## Conservation on the Ground: Town by Town

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### **Arietta**

- Lake Monitoring Program
- Bank and soil stabilization
- Flood mitigation and climate resiliency
- Invasive plant management on public and private land
- Snowmobile trail GIS / GPS work for Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation to meet grant reimbursement requirements – 71.8 miles on 18 trails
- Warner Brook adjacent logging sediment reduction project
- Moose River Watershed Culvert Replacement Project
- Cold Stream buffer planting protected 3,000 sq ft of bank
- Dry hydrant survey
- Upper Hudson River Watershed Coalition
- NPT 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary: Invasives – Hikers of All Ages – 75 attendees

### **Benson**

- Bank and soil stabilization
- Flood mitigation and climate resiliency
- Invasive plant management on public and private land
- Upper Hudson River Watershed Coalition

### **Hope**

- Bank and soil stabilization
- Flood mitigation and climate resiliency
- Invasive plant management on public and private land
- Bear Creek Culvert Replacement Project
- Upper Hudson River Watershed Coalition

### **Indian Lake**

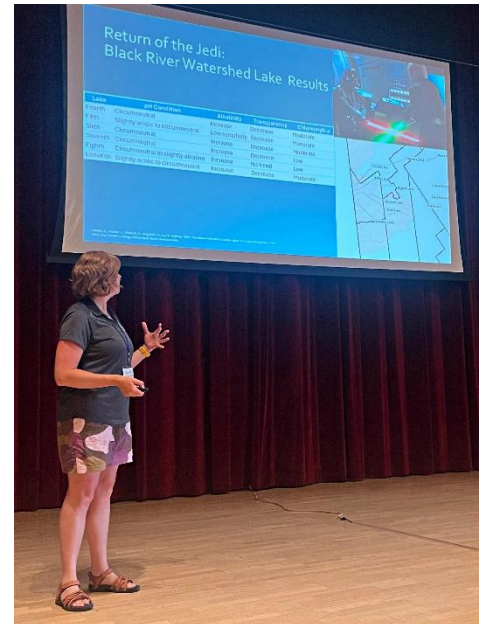
- Lake Monitoring Program
- Bank and soil stabilization
- Flood mitigation and climate resiliency
- Invasive plant management on public and private land
- Capped landfill site visit - provided recommendations for ADK Action's grant
- Erosion and Sediment Control Plan for a landowner
- Wells Road Runoff Tributary Diversion Project – installed modifications
- Caring Through Conservation Mini Grant: Monarch & Milkweed Challenge - \$1,627.56
- Assisted residents with straw bale gardening
- Upper Hudson River Watershed Coalition
- Students participated in the 45th Annual Lynn Galusha Conservation Field Day
- Invasive Species for Trailblazers Hiking Groups – 10 attendees
- Macroinvertebrate Mayhem – ADKX Homeschool Day – 460 attendees
- Water Quality, Septic Systems, HABs, and SWCD Services presentation – Blue Mountain Lake Water Watch – 35 attendees
- Lake Water Quality presentation – Indian Lake Association Annual Meeting – 89 attendees

### **Inlet**

- Lake Monitoring Program
- Flood mitigation and climate resiliency
- Invasive plant management on public and private land
- Inlet Municipal Center site inspection for stormwater control best management practices
- Moose River Watershed Culvert Replacement Project
- Uncus Road Culvert Replacement Project
- Aquatic Invasive Species survey of Limekiln Lake
- Erosion and Sediment Control Plan for a landowner
- Finger Lakes – Lake Ontario Watershed Protection Alliance
- Black River Watershed Coalition of Conservation Districts
- Lake Monitoring the Hyperdrive Version presentation and MC for the Black River Watershed Conference – 90 attendees

### **Lake Pleasant and Speculator**

- Lake Monitoring Program
- Bank and soil stabilization
- Flood mitigation and climate resiliency
- Invasive plant management on public and private land
- Assisted Village of Speculator Code Enforcement Officer with septic problems for a landowner
- Caring Through Conservation Mini Grant

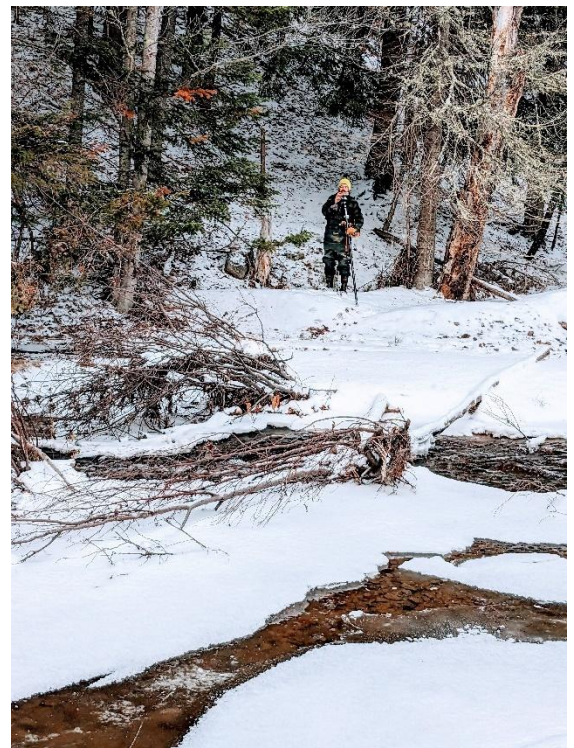


**Manager Caitlin Stewart presents a Star Wars themed presentation about Lake Monitoring at the Black River Watershed Conference**

- Town of Lake Pleasant’s Community Garden Greenhouse - \$1,975.96
- Town of Lake Pleasant Highway Department’s React Blade System - \$2,000
- Lake Pleasant Sacandaga Association’s Triangle Garden Pollinator Enhancement - \$1,000
- Erosion and Sediment Control Plan for landowner
- Adirondack Waterfest – Speculator – 475 attendees
- Students participated in the 45th Annual Lynn Galusha Conservation Field Day
- Erosion in Your Neighborhood – Lake Pleasant Central School 4th, 5th, and 6th grades – 24 attendees
- Trout are Made of Trees – Lake Pleasant Public Library – 6 attendees
- 3 Years of Erosion Presentations and Place Based Field Trips Report – LPSA Annual Meeting – 67 attendees
- Septic Systems – Village of Speculator – 12 attendees
- Animals in Their Ecosystems – Lake Pleasant Library – 8 attendees

**Long Lake**

- Lake Monitoring Program
- Bank and soil stabilization
- Flood mitigation and climate resiliency
- Invasive plant management on public and private land
- Shaw Brook Culvert Replacement Project
- Shaw Brook Stream Restoration Project
- Pine Brook Bridge Replacement Project
- Septic System Replacement Fund Round 3
- Survey – collected data to design the restoration project funded by NRCS EWP
- Buck Mountain trail work
- St. Lawrence River Watershed Project
- Students participated in the 45th Annual Lynn Galusha Conservation Field Day
- Trout are Made of Trees – CVW Long Lake Public Library – 2 attendees
- Arbor Day Poetry Contest and Gala – Hamilton County Senior Citizens – 21 attendees



**Senior Technician Lenny Croote surveys Shaw Brook, Town of Long Lake**

**Morehouse**

- Flood mitigation and climate resiliency
- Invasive plant management on public and private land
- Emergency Tower Stream Crossing Project
- Dry hydrant survey and repair
- Mohawk River Watershed Coalition

## Wells

- Lake Monitoring Program
- Bank and soil stabilization
- Flood mitigation and climate resiliency
- Invasive plant management on public and private land
- Snowmobile trail GIS / GPS work for Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation to meet grant reimbursement requirements – 54.6 miles on 7 trails
- Elbow Creek Restoration Plan grant - \$75,000 – consultant completed field work
- Elbow Creek Protection Project
- Robb’s Creek Bridge Repair Project
- Army Corps of Engineers permit for FEMA reimbursement supporting 3 projects
- Upper Hudson River Watershed Coalition
- Caring Through Conservation Mini Grant
  - Friends of Lake Algonquin’s Eurasian watermilfoil lake survey - \$2,000
  - Town of Wells’ Community Garden - \$313.65
- Students participated in the 45th Annual Lynn Galusha Conservation Field Day
- Biomonitoring with Macroinvertebrates – Wells Central School 6th Grade – 13 attendees
- Invasive Species for Trailblazers Hiking Groups – 10 attendees
- Adirondack Invertebrates – Wells Youth Rec – 40 attendees



**Technician Katie Whitkovits shows Wells Youth Rec kids a benthic macroinvertebrate**

## Grants, Contracts, and Awards

- DEC contract for the Mohawk River Watershed to improve habitat health and connectivity, reduce point and nonpoint source pollution, understand and manage fisheries and invasive species, and manage stream sediment and debris - \$1,500,000
- Hamilton County Courthouse Complex Green Infrastructure Feasibility Study - \$50,000
- Upper Hudson River Roadside Erosion Remediation Program Phase II - \$285,200 total for 4 SWCDs, \$65,700 for Hamilton County, Hamilton County SWCD is overseeing the grant
- Elbow Creek Comprehensive Stream Corridor Assessment grant - \$75,000
- Finger Lakes – Lake Ontario Watershed Protection Alliance contract - \$97,200
- New York Association of Conservation District’s 2024 Best Media Educational Outreach and Core Mission awards

## Staff Training and Certifications

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

### ***Annual Accomplishments***

- Staff attended over 47 trainings focusing on technology, watershed resiliency, invasive species, sediment and erosion control, safety, and administration
- Senior Technician Lenny Croote and Technician Katie WhitKovits are Certified Pesticide Applicators
- Senior Technician Lenny Croote is certified in Onsite Wastewater Treatment Network, the North Atlantic Aquatic Connectivity Collaborative and Certified Professional in Erosion and Sediment Control

## Hazard Mitigation

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At the request of Hamilton County, the District is administering the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program. \$157,500 was applied for to update the Hamilton County Hazard Mitigation Plan (HMP) that will expire in October 2026. Hamilton County must have a current, approved, and maintained HMP as a condition to receive funding from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). The goal is to profile existing conditions to update municipal priority actions, improve the usability of the plan, make it a living document, and note any changes to risk.

### ***Annual Accomplishments***

- Applied for \$157,500 for the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program
- District staff met with Hamilton County Emergency Management to discuss the grant
- District staff responded to the Homeland Security and Emergency Services' Request for Information, and assembled new supporting documentation, aligned the scope of work to the budget, and completed forms to ensure the grant application's full eligibility
- With special thanks to Timothy O'Neill and Don Purdy!

## Flood Mitigation and Climate Resiliency

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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
- Upper Hudson River Roadside Erosion Remediation Program Phase II grant - \$65,700
- Moose River Watershed Culvert Replacement Project - Arietta and Inlet



**Senior Technician Lenny Croote and Seasonal Tech Jacob Vander Pyl survey Shaw Brook, Town of Long Lake**

- Cold Stream buffer planting protected 3,000 sq ft of bank - Arietta
- Bear Creek Culvert Replacement Project - Hope
- Wells Road Runoff Tributary Diversion Project – installed modifications – Indian Lake
- Municipal Center site inspection for stormwater control best management practices - Inlet
- Uncus Road Culvert Replacement Project - Inlet
- Shaw Brook Culvert Replacement Project – Long Lake
- Shaw Brook Stream Restoration Project – Long Lake
- Pine Brook Bridge Replacement Project – Long Lake
- Emergency Tower Stream Crossing Project
- Elbow Creek Restoration Plan grant – Wells
- Elbow Creek Protection Project - Wells
- Robb’s Creek Bridge Repair Project – Wells

## Septic System Replacement Fund

At the request of Hamilton County, the District is administering this program. Homeowners can apply for a grant for reimbursement for a 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 4
  - \$200,000 available for Big Moose Lake, Fulton Chain of Lakes (First through Seventh lakes), Limekiln Lake and tributaries, Raquette Lake, minor tributaries to Long Lake, Blue Mountain Lake, Lower and Upper Browns Tract Pond, minor lakes in the upper West Branch Sacandaga Watershed, Indian Lake, Piseco Lake, Sacandaga Lake, Lake Pleasant, Murphy Lake, Willis Lake, Lake Algonquin, minor lakes in the upper Sacandaga River Watershed, Cedar River (upper and tributaries), and Fourmile Brook and tributaries



**Clerk Marj Remias and Technician Katie WhitKovits prepare a septic system survey mailing**



- Replied to 91 landowner inquiries
- 122 hours of staff time
- Updated notification, award, and denial letters
- Preparing to mail grant applications to all eligible landowners
- Round 3
  - \$275,000 available for Lake Eaton
  - 3 applications received, all funded at \$10,000 per project
  - 2 projects have been closed out, 1 is pending
  - Replied to inquiries
  - Tracked program expenses
  - Worked with the Hamilton County Treasurer’s Office to administer reimbursement checks

## Snowmobile Trail GIS Project for Municipalities

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

### **Annual Accomplishments**

- GPS / GIS mapping of 126.4 miles on 25 snowmobile trails in Arietta and Wells
- Submitted data to OPRHP
- The state was pleased with the data and towns received funding

## Robb’s Creek Bridge Repair Project

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The Robb’s Creek Bridge, Town of Wells, failed the New York State Department of Transportation’s inspection due to scoured abutments. During the process of removing the old superstructure of the bridge, the right abutment collapsed due to scouring.

### **Annual Accomplishments**

- District staff obtained DEC and Army Corps of Engineers permits to replace and repair the abutments, worked with the County Engineer to size the new superstructure, and set grade control downstream of the bridge to create pool habitat that lessens the likelihood of future scouring



**Robb’s Creek Bridge Repair Project,  
Town of Wells**

- The District’s trash pump was used to dewater the project area, and our turbidity curtain was employed to reduce sediment disbursement downstream
- Hamilton County DPW provided heavy equipment operators, removed the collapsed abutment, placed rock to meet the appropriate stream channel width and bank full height, installed the new bridge, and supplied construction materials
- Large rocks were placed 31 feet from the left abutment to bank full height, forming the right stream bank and new 8-foot floodplain
- Grade control was installed downstream from the outlet of the new bridged to create a pool underneath the bridge to help prevent scouring and allow for aquatic organism passage
- The new bridge protects infrastructure, public safety, and the environment

## Bear Creek Culvert Replacement Project

A culvert on Bear Creek in the Town of Hope was undersized and caused public safety and infrastructure integrity issues. Bear Creek Road washed out multiple times because the culvert was undersized and could not channel high magnitude flood waters. Additionally, the undersized culvert has resulted in natural resource issues, including unstable banks downstream that inhibit aquatic passage and threaten the aquatic ecosystem.

### ***Annual Accomplishments***

- This project prevents 400 cu yds of streambank soil and road fill material from washing out per storm event
- The District partnered with the Town of Hope Highway Department to replace a 3-foot squash culvert with an 11-foot span bridge that meets the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers regulations for crossing sizing
- With the support of State Aid funding, the District provided \$8,000 towards project supplies, with the remaining expenses being covered by the Town of Hope



**Bear Creek Culvert Replacement Project,  
Town of Hope**

- The Town of Hope Highway Department provided additional funding, materials, labor, and equipment
- District staff obtained all necessary permits, properly sized the crossing, and assisted with and oversaw installation, and our turbidity curtain was employed to reduce sediment disbursement downstream
- The new short span crossing has an opening of 11 feet from face to face of the abutments

## Elbow Creek Protection Project

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As a result of the 2019 Halloween Storm, sediment, rock, and road material were deposited along a 250-foot stretch of Elbow Creek, Town of Wells. Landowners are now experiencing bank erosion and frequent flooding due to deposition.

### ***Annual Accomplishments***

- District staff obtained DEC, APA, and Army Corps of Engineers permits, removed 900 cu yds of deposited material from the channel, and sized Elbow Creek to the proper width depth ratio
- District staff reformed the channel, resulting in streambank stabilization, and returned flooding frequency to a normal level

## Warner Brook Adjacent Logging Sediment Reduction Project

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A logging project adjacent to Warner Brook had sediment and erosion issues related to logging practices, slope, soil composition, and rainfall. Logger operation methodology plays a tremendous role in how the site runoff is controlled. The District became involved after receiving a request from DEC for remediation.

### ***Annual Accomplishments***

- The District worked with a second logging company that was contracted to complete and remediate the operation. Upon District recommendations, several erosion and sediment control best management practices including check dams, diversions, sediment ponds, water bars, compost filter socks, and silt fencing were installed to help minimize the amount of erosion and runoff leaving the site
- The disturbed areas are becoming revegetated, and the site is becoming more stable
- This site is not expected to have any further major sediment and erosion control issues

## Shaw Brook Stream Restoration Project

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As a result of the July 2023 flood event, a massive amount of material was deposited in Shaw Brook, Town of Long Lake. This material rerouted the stream channel and is currently causing bank erosion and head cutting.

### ***Annual Accomplishments***

- The District partnered with the Town of Long Lake and the Natural Resources Conservation Service to enter into the Emergency Watershed Protection Program, resulting in funding
- The District completed a stream survey, designed and planned the restoration project, and completed and submitted DEC, APA, and Army Corps of Engineers permits
- Work will continue in 2025



**NRCS and SWCD partners survey Shaw Brook, Town of Long Lake**

## Shaw Brook Culvert Replacement Project

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As a result of the July 2023 flood event, the culvert system failed. The access road for the Town of Long Lake's Water Treatment Plant was washed out. 170 cubic yards of sediment washed downstream and was deposited.

### ***Annual Accomplishments***

- The District assisted with DEC, APA, and Army Corps of Engineers permits, and oversaw the installation of a temporary 84-inch squash culvert was installed
- DEC and Army Corps of Engineers have approved the restoration plans for 2025, and project installation is pending APA approval
- Senior District Technician and the County Engineer wrote the restoration plans to include a 40-foot-wide bridge, reconstructing Shaw Brook to its proper width depth ration, installing several grade control structures, and stabilizing a new flood plane to include hydroseeding and riparian buffer plantings
- Funding will be partially supported by the Federal Emergency Management Agency

## Uncus Road Culvert Replacement Project

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An undersized culvert on Uncus Road, Town of Inlet, washed out the road in January 2024.

### ***Annual Accomplishments***

- The District completed a culvert assessment, and a Hydraulic and Hydrology study
- Work will continue in 2025

## Pine Brook Bridge Replacement Project

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The Pine Brook Bridge, Town of Long Lake, is undersized, causing abutment scouring which threatens public and infrastructure safety.

### **Annual Accomplishments**

- The District submitted permits to DEC
- Work will continue in 2025

## Moose River Watershed Culvert Replacement Project

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The District partnered with Trout Unlimited (TU) to reconnect passage through the Moose River Watershed, in the towns of Arietta and Inlet. Culverts will be right sized or replaced with bottomless arches and bridges. TU has some funds from the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative, and applied for more through DEC Water Quality Improvement Project. Part of TU's prioritization is measuring the length of stream that will be reconnected if the passage is replaced, showing project benefit. They are also conducting eDNA testing to verify fish species at some sites.

### **Annual Accomplishments**

- The District is acting as a liaison between Trout Unlimited and Hamilton County, with the goal of installing new passages
- The District will oversee project installation

## Emergency Tower Stream Crossing Project

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Hamilton County is working to install an emergency tower in the Town of Moorehouse. An old access road will be utilized to access the tower. The current stream crossing will be removed and replaced with a small bridge.

### **Annual Accomplishments**

- The District submitted permits to APA for the stream crossing
- In 2025, the District will install grade control and other erosion prevention best management practices as construction begins

## Compost Sock Program

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Through a chat with Town of Lake Pleasant Supervisor Betsy Bain and Highway Superintendent Randy Lavarney, Senior Technician Lenny Croote learned that municipalities stockpile massive amounts of wood chips that they want to put to good use. The District, with board support, purchased a Silt Sock Auger Bucket that attaches to a standard skid. Wood chips collected by municipalities will be used to fill compost socks for erosion control and runoff best management practices. Compost socks should be in place with any type of ditch work, culvert replacements, and shoreline, stream or wetland stabilization projects. The purpose of compost

socks is to keep soil onsite, prevent erosion and deposition, while allowing water to pass through. This brand-new program is available free of cost to all municipalities.

## Finn T90 Hydroseeder

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The District, with board support, purchased a new Finn T90 hydroseeder. The District upgraded the model, and the new machine applies mulch and seed at greater distances, resulting in improved application methods. The new machine was delivered in September, the team has already utilized it for road bank stabilization projects, and is very impressed.



**The new hydroseeder**

## Hemisphere S631 GNSS Receiver System

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The District, with board support, purchased a Hemisphere S631 Global Navigation Satellite System Receiver System. The new system provides greatly increased accuracy that will improve the team's ability to survey and collect field data. The District will use the new system for invasive species monitoring, mined land plan surveys, snowmobile trail mapping, bridge and culvert replacement projects, stream restoration projects, and shoreline stabilization projects. It is our hope that the municipalities will be able to utilize this cutting-edge technology as a cost savings. Instead of contracting with land surveyors, municipalities now have the option to keep this service in-house thanks to the District.

## Lake Monitoring Program

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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 May through October at their deepest point. We lower a YSI multiparameter probe at 1-meter increments to the bottom of each lake, collecting pH, Total Algae - Phycocyanin conductivity, temperature, turbidity, and dissolved oxygen data. Transparency is measured with a secchi disk. Water samples are analyzed for lake pH, chlorophyll-*a*, lab conductivity, true color, colored dissolved organic matter, sulfate alkalinity, total phosphorus, nitrate-nitrite as N, total nitrogen, ammonia as N, chloride, total calcium, total sodium, and dissolved organic carbon. Reports are available on our website, or upon request.

## ***Annual Accomplishments***

- Completed lake monitoring rotations May through October
- DEC conducted an audit with positive feedback and helpful suggestions to enhance the program
- 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

## **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
- **Upper Hudson River Watershed Coalition**
  - Manager Caitlin Stewart serves as president
  - Oversaw 7 meetings
  - Administering Water Quality Improvement Project Program grant for the Upper Hudson River Roadside Erosion Remediation Program Phase II - \$285,200 total, \$65,700 for Hamilton County
- **St. Lawrence River Watershed Partnership**
  - Manager Caitlin Stewart serves as president
  - Oversaw 3 meetings
  - Attended Great Lakes Action Agenda sub-basin work group meeting
  - Press release for the St. Lawrence River Watershed Revitalization Plan
  - Working to obtain Ecosystem Based Management funding for project implementation
- **Black River Watershed**
  - Black River Watershed Conference
    - Manager Caitlin Stewart served on planning committee
    - Manager Caitlin Stewart served as Master of Ceremonies
    - Presented on our Lake Monitoring Program – 78 attendees



**Technician Katie Whitkovits bundles up for the October lake monitoring rotation**

- Black River Watershed Coalition of Conservation Districts
  - Conservation Districts are in the preliminary stages of forming this new watershed coalition
  - Signed MOU
  - Technician Katie WhitKovits will serve as Secretary
- **Mohawk River Watershed Coalition**
  - Manager Caitlin Stewart serves as president
  - Wrote and the DEC approved a \$1,500,000 capacity contract for targeted actions including improving habitat health and connectivity, reducing point and nonpoint source pollution, understanding and managing fisheries and invasive species, and managing stream sediment and debris
  - Oversaw 6 meetings
  - Attended 2 Mohawk River Basin Steering Committee meetings

## Certified Professional Erosion Sediment Control

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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 engineering 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 engineering plans
- Erosion and Sediment Control Plans for 3 landowners

## Hydroseeding

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Hydroseeding is available to municipalities for erosion control, ditch and bank stabilization, and seeding or reseeding a lawn or disturbed area. Mulch, seed, fertilizer, lime, a tackifying agent, and water are mixed in a tank then sprayed onto soil. This method is fast, uniform, and promotes fast seed germination.

### ***Annual Accomplishments***

- Municipalities: 7.2 acres of ditch stabilized along 6 miles on 6 roads: Fish Mountain Road, Lake Pleasant; Dugway Road, Lake Pleasant; Chamberlain Road, Indian Lake; Cedar River Road, Indian Lake; Benson Road, Benson; Gilmantown Road, Wells



**Hydroseeding the steep banks of Gilmantown Road, Town of Wells**



- The District, with board support, purchased a new Finn T90 hydroseeder

## Agricultural Environmental Management

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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 challenges with farmers
- Program promotion

## Sediment and Erosion Control

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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 and shoreline stabilization and restoration

## Recycling Programs

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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 4,880 pounds of plastic through the Boat Storage Plastic Recycling Program



**District staff hydroseeded Cold Stream and planted shoreline buffer trees to prevent streambank erosion**

## Green Services

- The District's trash pump was utilized to control flood water on the following project sites:
  - Robb's Creek, Town of Wells
  - Dry hydrant project, towns of Morehouse and Arietta
- Soil pH and fertility tests for landowners



**The SWCD's trash pump is available for municipal projects**

## 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: 43 sites
- Japanese knotweed: 6 sites, 1,122 canes injected with herbicide, other sites treated with foliar spray
- Japanese barberry: 1 site
- 60 hours dedicated to management
- *Galerucella* beetle biocontrol of purple loosestrife – raised beetles at the District office and released them at Lake Adirondack, in Long Lake, and in Speculator

#### Invasive Species Monitoring

- Surveyed the Sacandaga Pathways for hemlock woolly adelgid and found no signs or symptoms
- Surveyed Limekiln Lake for aquatic invasive species and found none
- Deployed and monitored the emerald ash borer funnel trap



**Seasonal Tech Jacob Vander Pyl uses an aspirator to collect *Galerucella* beetles for biocontrol of purple loosestrife**

### Landowner Assistance and Outreach

- Launched the Japanese knotweed injector tool rental program
- Species identification
- Best management practice recommendations
- 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
- Attended Adirondack Park Invasive Plant Program webinars and meetings
- Participated on APIPP's Aquatic Invasive Species aquatic and terrestrial working groups
- Attended Partnership for Regional Invasive Plant Management meetings

## Adirondack Tree and Shrub Sale

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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.



**The Dacre family on their way home with their native seedlings to plant**

### *Annual Accomplishments*

- 1,452 trees, shrubs, and berries were planted

## Caring Through Conservation Mini Grant Program

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The District conducted our 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 are encouraged. Mini grant proposals submitted were related to conservation and education with tangible outcomes and applications were reviewed by the Board of Directors. Requests for funding could not exceed \$2,000.

### **Annual Accomplishments**

- 8 applications were received and ranked
- Total grant funds awarded: \$8,899.65
- Projects
  - Lake Algonquin Eurasian watermilfoil survey – Friends of Lake Algonquin
  - Community Garden Greenhouse - Town of Lake Pleasant
  - React Blade System - Town of Lake Pleasant
  - Triangle Garden Pollinator Enhancement – Lake Pleasant Sacandaga Association
  - Monarch & Milkweed Challenge - Town of Indian Lake
  - Community Garden – Town of Wells

## Adirondack Waterfest

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Over 425 visitors splashed into Adirondack Waterfest on August 2. The District organized the day-long celebration of water with support from the Finger Lakes – Lake Ontario Watershed Protection Alliance.

The weather was hot and humid, perfect for running through the sprinkler park and paddling on the Sacandaga River while learning about the importance of healthy watersheds. People of all ages enjoyed water fun and education at Adirondack Waterfest.

### **Water Fun for Everyone**

Ronny Raindrop delighted the crowd and spread the word about keeping water clean. Waterfest goers learned about the Japanese art of Gyotaku, and made a fish print on rice paper. Kids made a clay newt craft and enjoyed story times with the Lake Pleasant Public Library. Victor the Clown and Bumble Dee were on hand for face painting, balloon art, and a puppet show.

### **Wildlife Demos**

Kids got up close and personal with the Utica Zoomobile's snakes and tortoises. Magnificent reptiles and amphibians wowed the crowd, and Zowie Auger of Her●petology taught why water quality is important to cold-blooded creatures. The team from Adirondack Raptors educated visitors about burrowing and great horned owls.



**Kids loved making Gyotaku fish print on rice paper at Adirondack Waterfest**

### ***Trivia Challenge on the Kunjamuck***

CampStore! hosted a kayak experience on the Sacandaga River. Giant wildlife floats displayed tricky watershed questions, and paddlers who completed the Trivia Challenge won a prize.

### ***Exhibitor Fair***

The Herkimer County SWCD team taught about erosion with a stream table. Oak Mountain provided snow making demos. The Piseco Lake Association hosted a water quality display. Hands on activities and a watershed model were available at Paul Smith's College Adirondack Watershed Institute's booth. People learned about flood resiliency with the Oneida County SWCD. The Natural Resources Conservation Service gave away water cycle posters and displayed a ground water simulator. The Adirondack Park Invasive Plant Program, Hamilton County Tourism and Economic Development, Hamilton County Sheriff's Department, and Cornell Cooperative Extension of Hamilton County also exhibited.

## **Conservation Field Day**

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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 45 this year!
- 69 students attended from Lake Pleasant, Wells, Long Lake, Indian Lake, and Wheelerville CSDs
- Presentations
  - Water Quality in Our Watershed - Tom Collins, Paul Smith's College Adirondack Watershed Institute
  - Moose History Mystery - Christine Campeau, Meg McGee, and Lydia Stauffer - Adirondack Experience (ADKX)
  - Terrestrial Invasive Species - Ari Giller-Leinwohl, Terrestrial Invasive Species Manager, Adirondack Park Invasive Plant Program
  - Only Unwanted Plants are Weeds - Marty Zegstroo, The Wild Pharm
  - Backcountry Outfitting - Abraham Gadway, Adirondack Mountain Outfitters
  - The Role of Equines in Modern Forest Management - Jamila Page, Cornell Cooperative Extension Hamilton County
  - Conservation Trivia - Keith Tidball, Cornell Cooperative Extension Scientist

**Not all weeds are bad was the message of Marty Zegstroo of The Wild Pharm, and some can be used to soothe insect bites**

- 6<sup>th</sup> Grade Essay Contest Winners
  - First place: Declan Farr, Long Lake CSD
  - Second place: Jacob Dorr, Lake Pleasant CSD
  - Third place: McKenna Geraghty, Wheelerville UFS
- 5<sup>th</sup> Grade Poster Contest Winners
  - First place: Tessa Crouse, Lake Pleasant CSD
  - Second place: McKenna Hine, Wheelerville UFS
  - Third place: Kylee Scott, Indian Lake CSD

## Arbor Day Poetry Contest

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

### **Annual Accomplishments**

- The 16<sup>th</sup> annual!
- Theme: Trees are beautiful and essential
- 13 participants
- First place: Sue Kunzmann, Long Lake
- Second place: Rosemary Carey, Long Lake
- Third place: Jim Hutt, Blue Mountain Lake
- 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

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### **Annual Accomplishments**

- Staff serve on 19 committees and partnership organizations
  - Black River Watershed Coalition of Conservation Districts - secretary
  - Mohawk River Watershed Coalition – president
  - Mohawk River Basin Program Steering Committee
  - St. Lawrence River Watershed Project - president
  - Upper Hudson River Watershed Coalition – president
  - Finger Lakes – Lake Ontario Watershed Protection Alliance member
  - Black River Watershed Conference planning committee
  - New York State Conservation District Employees’ Association – president
  - Water Quality Symposium – Education Track chairperson
  - New York State Envirothon volunteer
  - NCF Envirothon volunteer
  - New York Invasive Species Advisory Committee – secretary

- Adirondack Park Invasive Plant Program partner
- Aquatic Invasive Species partner
- Terrestrial Invasive Species partner
- Environmental Education Foundation member
- Hamilton County Water Quality Coordinating Committee
- Hamilton County Hazard Mitigation Committee
- Hamilton County Highway Association
- 2,251 people of all ages attended conservation presentations and events
  - Erosion in Your Neighborhood – Lake Pleasant Central School 4th, 5th, and 6th grades – 24 attendees



**Technician Katie Whitkovits demos stream erosion during a field trip for 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, and 6<sup>th</sup> graders**

- New Employee Orientation – Water Quality Symposium – 22 attendees
- Trout are Made of Trees – CVW Long Lake Public Library – 2 attendees
- Trout are Made of Trees – Lake Pleasant Public Library – 6 Attendees
- Biomonitoring with Macroinvertebrates – Wells Central School 6th Grade – 13 attendees
- Arbor Day Poetry Contest and Gala – Hamilton County Senior Citizens – 21 attendees
- Lake Monitoring: the Hyperdrive Version – Black River Watershed Conference – 90 attendees
- Invasive Species and Journaling for Trailblazers Hiking Groups – Lake Pleasant, Wells, Long Lake, Indian Lake elementary students – 20 attendees
- Adirondack Waterfest – Speculator of All Ages – 475 attendees
- EcoArts Festival: Stream Dynamics and Erosion – Old Forge of All Ages – 200 attendees
- NPT 100th Anniversary: Invasives – Hikers of All Ages – 75 attendees

- 45th Annual Lynn Galusha Conservation Field Day – Lake Pleasant, Wells, Wheelerville, Long Lake, and Indian Lake 5th and 6th graders – 69 attendees
- Macroinvertebrate Mayhem – Homeschool Day All Ages – 46 Attendees
- Water Quality, Septic Systems, HABS, and SWCD Servies – Blue Mountain Lake Water Watch – 35 attendees
- Town Board Meetings: 2023 Report and Summer Programs – Towns of Arietta, Hope, Long Lake, Indian Lake, Morehouse, Lake Pleasant, Benson, Wells, and Village of Speculator – 127 attendees
- Summer Update – Hamilton County Board of Supervisors – 18 attendees
- Lake Water Quality – Indian Lake Association Annual Meeting – 89 attendees
- 3 Years of Erosion Presentations and Place Based Field Trips Report – LPSA Annual Meeting – 67 attendees
- Septic Systems – Village of Speculator – 12 attendees
- CDEA Booth – The Great New York State Fair – 309 attendees
- Animals in Their Ecosystems – Lake Pleasant Library – 8 attendees
- Water Testing, Invasive Species Management, Water Quality and SWCD Services – Hamilton County Benefits Day – 25 attendees
- Adirondack Invertebrates – Wells Youth Rec – 40 attendees
- The Great Migratory Challenge – Northville 7th grade – 43 attendees
- Water Week Facebook campaign – 13 interaction
- 50 people signed the Adirondack Ecotrail registration log

## Water Testing Program

The certified Water Testing Program is available to area municipalities, residents and businesses each summer to test drinking and swimming water. 3 sample options with certified results include testing for 1. total coliform and *E. coli*, 2. lead and copper, or 3. water chemistry panel which includes alkalinity, total hardness, calcium hardness, fluoride, chloride, and conductivity.

### **Annual Accomplishments**

- 95 water samples were analyzed with certified results



**Clerk Marj Remias assists a customer during the Water Testing Program**



## GIS Services

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GIS services are provided to landowners, businesses, and municipalities including mapping, data querying, and project development.

### ***Annual Accomplishments***

- The District, with board support, purchased a Hemisphere S631 GNSS Receiver System
- Assisted landowners with GIS services
- Assistance is available for permits, stormwater, erosion and sediment control, and major development projects that require engineer plans
- 2 dry hydrant surveys – Morehouse and Arietta
- 3 aquatic passages – Long Lake, Wells and Hope
- 2 stream restoration projects – Arietta and Wells

## Dry Hydrants

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The District designs and installs dry hydrants at the request of any fire district or municipality. A dry hydrant is a non-pressurized, low-cost pipe system that extends into a lake or stream that provides fire departments a suction supply of water. A hose is attached to the end fitting, and water is drawn into the fire truck's tank. Dry hydrants are important as a water source for rural communities that do not have access to a charged hydrant system. Roadside dry hydrants provide access to water sources in winter conditions when lakes, ponds, and streams are frozen or access is blocked by deep snow. Not only do dry hydrants provide public safety, but they also save taxpayer dollars. Materials and installation are inexpensive compared to the cost of installing fire hydrants. These structures reduce the number of water tank trucks needed for fire response in our rural towns.

### ***Annual Accomplishments***

- 2 plans developed for Morehouse and Indian Lake
- 4 surveys for Morehouse Lake Pleasant, Indian Lake, and Long Lake
- 1 repair for Morehouse
- 4 municipalities and 1 landowner assisted



**Dry hydrant repair project**

## Water Quality Coordinating Committee

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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. Our next meeting to be held in 2025



# HAMILTON COUNTY

## Soil & Water Conservation District

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

518-548-3991  
[hamcoswcd.org](http://hamcoswcd.org)

