



HAMILTON COUNTY

Soil & Water Conservation District

2025 Annual Report

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

Who We Are

The Hamilton County Soil and Water Conservation District has been working to manage and promote the wise use of natural resources in Hamilton County since 1965. Governed locally by a Board of Directors, our small yet mighty team of 4 employees is committed to getting conservation on the ground to all corners of the county. Frequent training, certifications, and professional development enhance staff expertise.

What We Do

To protect the integrity of Hamilton County's natural resources, the District provides technical assistance, programs, services, and events to landowners, municipalities, schools, and organizations that meets their conservation needs. Core programs include watershed monitoring, sediment and erosion control, invasive species management, and conservation education. Funding sources include the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets / Soil and Water Conservation Committee, the Finger Lakes - Lake Ontario Watershed Protection Alliance, the Hamilton County appropriation, and grants. The District thanks these organizations for their support.

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



Why We're Important

Hamilton County is one of only two in New York State that is located entirely within the Adirondack Park. This area is renowned for its wealth of natural resources, including mountains, forests, and over 500 lakes, ponds, rivers, and streams. The District team is the boots on the ground that manages and promotes these vital soil and water resources.



District Manager
Caitlin Stewart, MS



Senior Technician
Lenny Croote,
CPESC
Certified Pesticide
Applicator



Technician
Katie Whitkovits,
Certified Pesticide
Applicator
Master Forest Owner
Volunteer



Clerk, Secretary
to the Board
Marj Remias

Conservation on the Ground

Town by Town



Arietta

- Tornado emergency response
- Emergency Tower Project
- Pine Brook Bridge Replacement Project
- Moose River Watershed Culvert Replacement Project
- Dry hydrant survey
- Caring Through Conservation Mini Grant Program: Town of Arietta Salt Reduction - \$2,000
- Lake Monitoring Program
- Bank and soil stabilization
- Flood mitigation and climate resiliency
- Invasive plant management
- Mohawk River Watershed Coalition
- Upper Hudson River Watershed Coalition



← *Dry hydrants offer easy access to water from a road, quickly distribute water, and protect public safety during a fire emergency.*

Benson

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

Hope

- Pit survey
- Caring Through Conservation Mini Grant Program: Hiking Trail Bridge - \$1,398.60
- Bank and soil stabilization
- Flood mitigation and climate resiliency
- Invasive plant management
- Upper Hudson River Watershed Coalition

Indian Lake

- Capped Landfill Pollinator Habitat Project
- Erosion and Sediment Control Plan
- Septic system inspection
- Wells Road Runoff Tributary Diversion Project
- Assisted residents with straw bale gardening
- Lake Monitoring Program
- Bank and soil stabilization
- Flood mitigation and climate resiliency
- Invasive plant management
- Hydroseeding
- St. Lawrence River Watershed Project
- Upper Hudson River Watershed Coalition
- 46th Annual Lynn Galusha Conservation Field Day
- Green Infrastructure in Your Own Backyard - Indian Lake Association annual meeting – 80 attendees
- What Bear Goes Where - Blue Mountain Museum Homeschool Day – 120 attendees



↑ *Senior Technician Lenny Croote collects a soil sample at the Capped Landfill Pollinator Habitat project site.*

Conservation on the Ground

Town by Town



Inlet

- Municipal Center site inspection for stormwater control
- Uncus Road Culvert Replacement Project
- Moose River Watershed Culvert Replacement Project
- Aquatic invasive species survey of Eighth Lake
- Erosion and Sediment Control Plan
- Lake Monitoring Program
- Flood mitigation and climate resiliency
- Invasive plant management
- Hydroseeding
- Green Infrastructure in Your Own Backyard - Sixth and Seventh Lake Association annual meeting – 65 attendees
- Aquatic Invasive Species Surveying – Black River Watershed Conference – 80 attendees
- Finger Lakes – Lake Ontario Watershed Protection Alliance
- Black River Watershed Coalition of Conservation Districts



← *Seasonal Technician Alice Bucenec surveys Eighth Lake for aquatic invasive species with the rake toss method.*

Lake Pleasant and Speculator

- County Courthouse Complex Green Infrastructure Feasibility Study grant - \$50,000
- Golf Course Road Stormwater Prevention Project
- Septic system site visit
- Erosion and Sediment Control Plan
- Pit survey
- Caring Through Conservation Mini Grant: Town of Lake Pleasant React Salt Savers - \$2,000
- Lake Monitoring Program
- Bank and soil stabilization
- Flood mitigation and climate resiliency
- Invasive plant management
- Hydroseeding
- 46th Annual Lynn Galusha Conservation Field Day
- H2O Olympics - Lake Pleasant Central School – 7 attendees
- Erosion in Your Neighborhood – Lake Pleasant Central School 4th, 5th, and 6th grades – 27 attendees
- Vernal Pools - Lake Pleasant Library – 5 attendees
- Invasive Species Walk - APIPP & Hamilton County Residents – 3 attendees
- Upper Hudson River Watershed Coalition

Students → learn about the Beaver Fur Trade at the 46th annual Conservation Field Day.



Conservation on the Ground

Town by Town



Long Lake

- Sabattis Road Culvert Replacement Project
- Shaw Brook Bridge Replacement Project
- Shaw Brook Stream Restoration Project
- South Pond Outlet Bridge Repair Project
- Forest health site visit
- Caring Through Conservation Mini Grant: Long Lake Central School District Pollinator Paradise - \$2,000; Town of Long Lake Salt and Sand Reduction - \$2,000

“We are so grateful to the District for providing these funds to allow us to grow our outside educational opportunities for our students and community. ~ Dr. Harrelson, LLCSD”

- Perk test
- Lake Monitoring Program
- Bank and soil stabilization
- Flood mitigation and climate resiliency
- Invasive plant management
- 46th Annual Lynn Galusha Conservation Field Day
- 30th annual Hamilton County Envirothon
- Arbor Day Poetry Contest and Gala – 15 attendees
- St. Lawrence River Watershed Project



← This student is ready to plant native Adirondack flowers at the Pollinator Paradise garden that was funded by the District's Caring Through Conservation Mini Grant.

Morehouse

- Rec Center Stormwater Management Project
- Emergency Tower Project
- Dry hydrant repair
- Flood mitigation and climate resiliency
- Invasive plant management
- Mohawk River Watershed Coalition

Wells

- Elbow Creek Protection Project
- Tornado emergency response
- Caring Through Conservation Mini Grant: Friends of Lake Algonquin's Eurasian watermilfoil lake survey - \$2,000
- Lake Monitoring Program
- Bank and soil stabilization
- Flood mitigation and climate resiliency
- Invasive plant management
- Hydroseeding
- 30th annual Hamilton County Envirothon
- Biomonitoring with Macroinvertebrates – Wells Central School 6th Grade – 10 attendees
- Robbs Creek Tree Planting - Wells Central School – 16 attendees
- Elbow Creek Stream Corridor Assessment - Friends of Lake Algonquin annual meeting – 50 attendees
- Pollinators - Wells Youth Rec Program – 20 attendees
- Upper Hudson River Watershed Coalition

Technician → Katie WhitKovits takes a water sample on Lake Algonquin.





Grants, Contracts, and Awards

Hamilton
County
Courthouse
Complex
Green
Infrastructure
Feasibility
Study grant
\$50,000

County Allocation
\$132,756

State Aid
\$297,280

Agricultural
Environmental
Management
\$5,661

Elbow Creek
Comprehensive
Stream Corridor
Assessment grant
\$75,000

Hamilton County
Roadside
Stabilization and
Erosion
Prevention
Program grant
\$148,970

Mohawk River
Basin Action
Agenda
\$4,351

Finger Lakes –
Lake Ontario
Watershed
Protection
Alliance
\$107,200

Upper
Hudson
River
Roadside
Erosion
Remediation
Program
Phase II
grant
\$65,700

The Conservation District **delivers \$5**
in programs and services for every County dollar invested



Top 10 Conservation Accomplishments in 2025

#1. Shaw Brook Restoration Project

On July 10, 2023, a storm event occurred in Hamilton County that adversely impacted Shaw Brook in the Town of Long Lake. Seven inches of rain fell in four hours, and Shaw Brook swelled, causing beaver dams and a manmade impoundment to breach. The flood event transported trees, culverts, and sediment downstream to the lower section of Shaw Brook. As flood waters receded and stream velocity decreased, debris and sediment were deposited, locations of streambank erosion were uncovered, and aquatic life was smothered. In the wake of the flood, the District brought stakeholders together to establish open lines of communication required to begin the stream restoration project.

Luck Brothers Construction Company installed a 30-foot bridge that the District sized to ensure adequate hydrology span. Contractors installed grade control features that were designed and inspected by the District to prevent head cutting into Shaw Pond. Rock clusters were installed to create a step-pool system that allows water to flow to a stable reach and promotes aquatic organism passage. Contractors seeded and mulched the project site to prevent erosion and stabilize streambanks.

In the lower section of Shaw Brook, tree debris and sediment were deposited, causing the channel to shift to the far left bank and threatening private property. Farney Tree and Excavation, LLC, removed and chipped all tree debris that was deposited during the storm.



↑ A Hamilton County DPW operator relocates Shaw Brook's channel away from unstable banks to the center of the valley.



↙ The July 2023 storm event caused severe damage to Shaw Brook, leaving debris and sediment in its wake.

↓ Flood waters breached the impoundment on Water Plant Road.



The Hamilton County Department of Public Works and the Town of Long Lake Highway Department relocated the stream channel away from unstable banks to the center of the valley where the stream can access its flood plain on both sides. Operators installed a bank full bench to act as a flood plain, with toe wood acting as a protective barrier. Grade control structures were installed to decrease stream velocity, prevent erosion, and enrich aquatic habitat. District staff hydroseeded the newly established flood plain with a riparian grass seed mix.

Federal Emergency Management Agency and Natural Resources Conservation Service funds got conservation on the ground, supporting 75% of the \$750,000 project. The Town of Long Lake provided the remaining 25% of the project cost, operators, and equipment. The Hamilton County DPW also provided operators and equipment. District staff obtained permits, drew up project plans that were approved by the United States Fish and Wildlife Service, oversaw best management practice installation, and hydroseeded the project site to prevent streambank erosion. District staff will monitor Shaw Brook during heavy storm events to ensure structures hold up to flood waters, and make adjustments as needed.

This project efficiently and economically got conservation on the ground thanks to the strong partnership between federal and state agencies, the Town of Long Lake, the Hamilton County Department of Public Works, and the Hamilton County Soil and Water Conservation District.

*Grade control structures →
and toe wood prevent erosion,
and enrich aquatic habitat.*

Project Outcomes

- 1 appropriately sized 30-foot bridge
- 16 grade control structures within a 515 foot reach
- 1,030 feet of streambank stabilized
- 23,000 square feet of flood plain created
- \$750,000: 75% FEMA, 25% Town of Long Lake, in kind provided by the Hamilton County DPW, USFWS, and the District



↑ *District staff hydroseed the newly established flood plain.*



↑ *On July 20, 2023, an 8-foot wave of water eroded and transported trees, culverts, and sediment downstream to the lower portion of Shaw Brook.*



← *The newly installed 30-foot bridge and rock clusters.*



#2. Morehouse Rec Center Stormwater Management Project

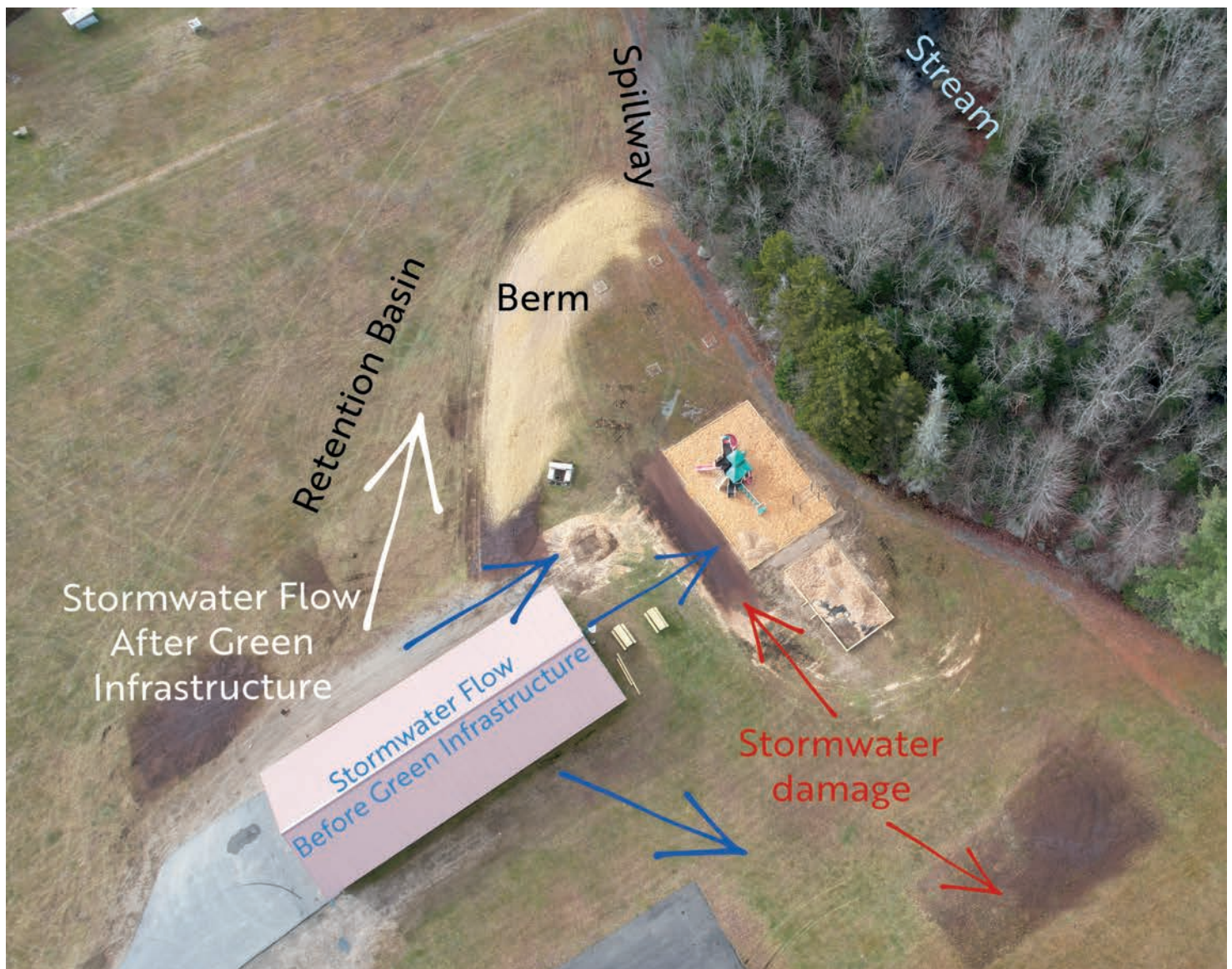
The Town of Morehouse Rec Center experienced frequent flooding and ponding water during rain events and snowmelt runoff. Stormwater runoff flooded the porch area and playground, and transported sand and contaminants into the nearby unnamed stream, degrading water quality. District staff controlled stormwater runoff and protected water quality by installing a stormwater retention basin.

District staff designed a 160-foot berm that the Town of Morehouse Highway Department installed. District staff hydroseeded and straw mulched the newly installed berm, promoting stabilization and preventing sediment and nutrient loading into the stream.

Project Outcomes

- 56,000 gallons of water can be treated by the retention basin before the water overflows into a spillway
- 2,200 gallons of stormwater runoff will be infiltrated during a 1-inch rainstorm

The berm acts as a dam for stormwater, allowing the water to infiltrate into the soil instead of running off into the nearby stream. The Rec Center is protected from flood damage. Project funding was sourced from the District's Part B Conservation Project Financial Assistance award totaling \$6,000.



#3. Septic System Replacement Fund

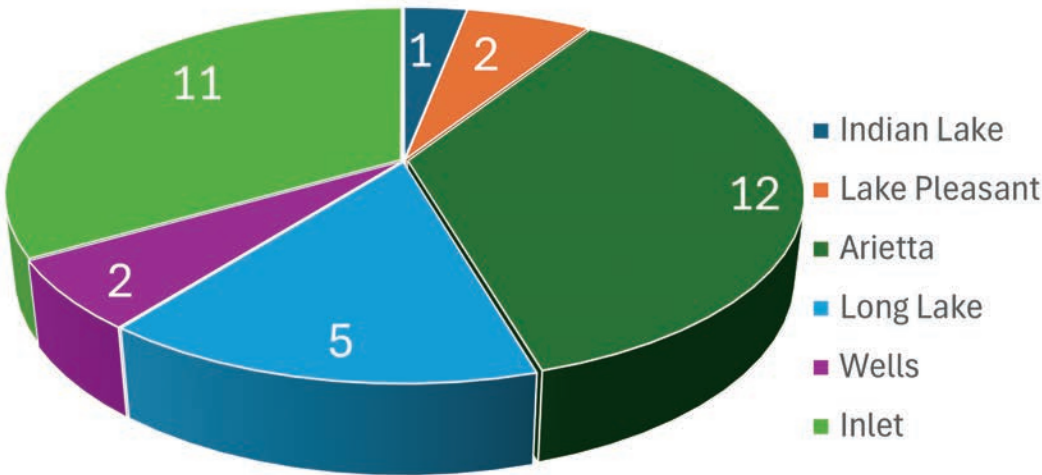
At the request of Hamilton County, the District is administering the Septic System Replacement Fund. Homeowners can apply for a reimbursement grant to replace cesspools and septic systems that are adversely impacting designated waterbodies. The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation and the Department of Health determine priority geographic areas in which property owners are eligible to participate based on the Priority Waterbodies List.

The Program provides grants to reimburse up to 50% of the cost of eligible replacement or repair projects, up to \$10,000 per project.

Round 4 Program Summary

- Mailed applications to 2,016 eligible landowners
- Ranked 102 applications
- Awarded 36 grants totaling \$331,779.55
- Replied to 303 landowner inquiries
- Dedicated 205 hours of District staff time
- Reviewed and approved requests for disbursement
- We thank the Hamilton County Treasurer’s Office for assisting with disbursements and municipalities for covering the mailing expense

Number of SSRF Grant Awards by Town



#4. Tornado Emergency Response

Tornado damage adversely impacted the towns of Arietta and Wells during a severe storm event in June, 2025. The District partnered with the Farm Service Agency to implement their Emergency Forest Restoration Program (EFRP) to mitigate the damage for forest owners.

The EFRP aids the owners of non-industrial, private forests when natural disasters strike by authorizing payments for forest restoration. The local FSA County Committee implements EFRP for all disasters with the exceptions of drought and insect infestations. The District advertised the EFRP on FSA’s behalf, and provided parcel information and GIS support. At least 3 landowners participated in the program.

#5. Compost Filter Sock Program



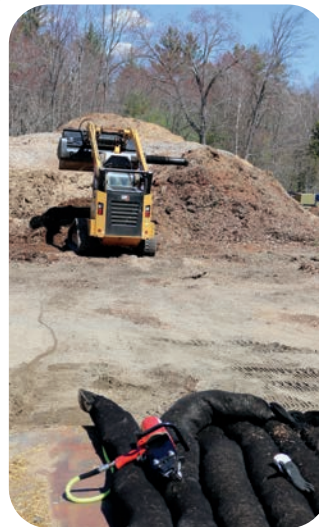
The problem: municipalities stockpile massive amounts of wood chips that they want to put to good use.

The solution: the District purchased a Silt Sock Auger Bucket to fill compost filter socks with wood chips.

Compost socks are used on construction sites to prevent stormwater runoff, and are more effective than silt fences at keeping sediment onsite while allowing water to pass through. Stormwater runoff picks up and carries pollution like salt, oil, and fertilizer into waterbodies. Compost socks should be in place for ditch work, culvert replacements, and shoreline projects. They can be installed as a site perimeter, below areas of runoff and erosion, in ditches as a check dam, or on paved surfaces.

Compost socks are available to landowners and contractors at \$1.00 per foot, and free to municipalities.

Compost filter socks totaling 1,200 feet were used on project sites in Morehouse, Lake Pleasant, and Arietta, protecting water quality and preventing stormwater runoff



↑ *Sr. Technician Lenny Croote fills the hopper bucket attached to a skid-steer with a load of wood chips.*

↗ *Technician Katie WhitKovits holds a compost sock filled with wood chips.*

← *Wood chips are pushed through the hopper with an auger into a compost filter sock.*



#6. 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 watersheds. Decades of consistent 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.

District staff monitor priority Hamilton County lakes once a month from May through October at their deepest point. A YSI multiparameter probe collects profile data at 1-meter increments including pH, conductivity, temperature, turbidity, and dissolved oxygen. Transparency is measured with a secchi disk. Water samples are collected and delivered to an ELAP certified lab for analysis of alkalinity, total phosphorus, chloride, nitrite-N, nitrate-N, ammonia, lab conductivity, total nitrogen, dissolved organic carbon, chlorophyll-a, lab pH, total calcium, and total sodium.

Reports are available on our website, or upon request. Raw data is also available. The New York State Department of Conservation annually reviews and approves the District's Quality Assurance Project Plan and Data Usability Assessment Report, further contributing to data validation and reliability. This program is supported by FLOWPA.



↑ Lake water samples and monitoring equipment.



↗ Technician Katie Whitkovits pours a water sample into the filtering apparatus for chlorophyll a.

➔ Manager Caitlin Stewart collects profile data with a YSI multiparameter probe.

➔ Filter paper after filtering for chlorophyll a.



#7. Hydroseeding

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

District staff hydroseeded 5 acres of roadsides and ditches on West River and Gilmantown roads, Town of Wells; Fish Mountain and Perkins Clearing roads, Town of Lake Pleasant; Uncas Road, Town of Inlet; and Cedar River Road, Town of Indian Lake.

District staff hydroseeded 5 acres of roadside ditches, preventing erosion, protecting driver safety, and assisting municipalities.



← *Hydroseeding stabilizes roadside ditches, protects driver safety, and safeguards watersheds.*

#8. Agricultural Environmental Management

The mission of the Hamilton County Agricultural Environmental Management Program is to maintain the integrity of freshwater resources and cultivate 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 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.

Agricultural Environmental Management

The Hamilton County Soil and Water Conservation District would like to connect with Hamilton County farmers and agricultural producers to inform them about the benefits of participating in our Agricultural Environmental Management (AEM) program.

AEM is a **voluntary**, incentive-based program that helps farmers make common sense, cost effective, and science-based decisions to meet business objectives while protecting and conserving Hamilton County's freshwater resources.

Who is AEM for?

- maple syrup producers
- forestry/agroforestry
 - greenhouses
- fruit, vegetable or tree farms
- horse, dairy or other pastureland
 - riding stables
 - hay fields
 - hobby farms

#9. Perc Test Program

The District is thrilled to announce our new Perc Test Program. Percolation tests determine how long it takes for soil to drain, and are required for the installation of new septic systems. Perc tests are \$150, and include on site deep test hole evaluation, percolation test, and a full report.



← *Sr. Technician Lenny Croote conducts a perc test for a landowner installing a septic system.*

#10. Hamilton County Courthouse Complex Green Infrastructure Feasibility Study

The District received a \$50,000 grant from the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation to complete an engineering feasibility study to evaluate and design green stormwater infrastructure at the Hamilton County Courthouse Complex. The study will determine the best green infrastructure practices to treat stormwater runoff flowing over 5.65 acres of impervious area,

and protect Lake Pleasant from chloride, phosphorus, and nitrogen pollution.

This year, the engineering firm team met with District staff and Hamilton County Department of Public Works Superintendent Tracy Eldridge for a field visit to review and discuss concerns, existing conditions and conveyances, existing stormwater controls, potential future development, and existing site operation and maintenance. The firm also completed field tests for soil pits and infiltration falling-head permeability, and began drafting the report. The report will be completed in 2026.

↓ *Sr. Technician Lenny Croote, Hamilton County DPW Superintendent Tracy Eldridge, and Suozzo, Doty & Associates PE Richard Adams tour the Courthouse Complex and discuss stormwater issues.*



← *Suozzo, Doty & Associates field staff check for soil types, and infiltration falling-head permeability. These tests will determine what types of green infrastructure will work best for the project site.*



HAMILTON COUNTY

Soil & Water Conservation District

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

103 County View Drive
PO Box 166
Lake Pleasant NY 12108
w. hamcoswcd.org t. 518-548-3991



Staff

Caitlin Stewart, MS, District Manager
Lenny Croote, Senior Technician, CPESC
Katie Whitkovits, Technician, Master Forest
Owner Volunteer
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