Seneca County
SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION DISRICT

SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

2025 NEWSLETTER

SWCD Board of Directors:

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-**Jeff Trout**, County Rep

-**Elisabeth Freier**, Farm Bureau Member & Treasurer

-**John Hunt**, Grange Member & Vice Chairperson

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Board of Directors meet the fourth Monday of every month at 9:30am

District Staff:

-**Erin Peruzzini**, District Manager

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-**Christopher Creelman**, District Technician

-**Alex McGraw**, District Technician

-**Curtis Davis**, District Technician

-**Robbie Krieger**, District Technician

USDA/NRCS Staff:

Vacant

Office Hours:

M-F 8:00am-4:30PM
2041 Route 20 Suite 2
Seneca Falls NY 13148
Phone: 315-568-4366

Email: senecacountyswcd@gmail.com

NOTICE

~Annual Tree & Shrub Sale~

Pre-Order Forms Available on 1/1/26
at the SWCD office or online at
www.senecacountyswcd.org




~ Agricultural Value Assessment Program~

Soil Group Worksheets

Prepared: December 30, 2025– February 28th, 2026

By appointment only, call 315-568-4366

** $30 Fee per Soil Group Worksheet **

Follow us on Facebook to learn about Best Management Projects, Program Funding & Educational Events!

This Issue:

Year In Review

Website: www. Senecacountyswcd.org

2025 Agriculture Projects

WATER & SEDIMENT CONTROL BASINS (WASCOBs)

In a proactive move to combat soil erosion and protect local water bodies and bolster resiliency, the Seneca County Soil & Water Conservation District (SWCD) has announced the successful installation of eight new Water & Sediment Control Basins (WASCOBs) in 2025. These critical agricultural Best Management Practice (BMP) strategically placed within both the Seneca Lake and Cayuga Lake watersheds are a result of strong partnerships and diverse funding streams aimed at preserving the health of Cayuga and Seneca Lakes while promoting sustainable agricultural practices.

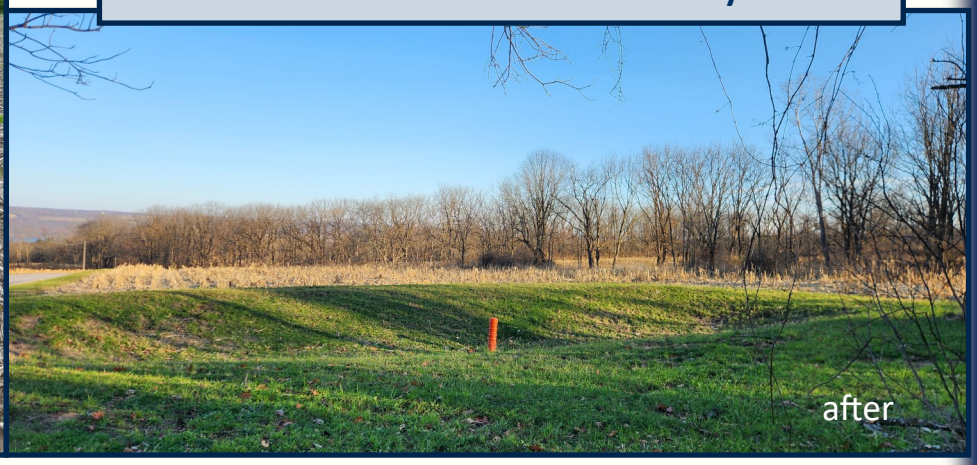
2 WASCOBs in the **Town of Ovid**. Collectively, these WASCOBs capture water from an **11 acre watershed** from direct drainage from the Interlaken Area sub-watershed of **Cayuga Lake** and reduce **8 tons of soil loss annually**.

2 WASCOBs overlooking Cayuga Lake

2025 Agriculture Projects Continued...

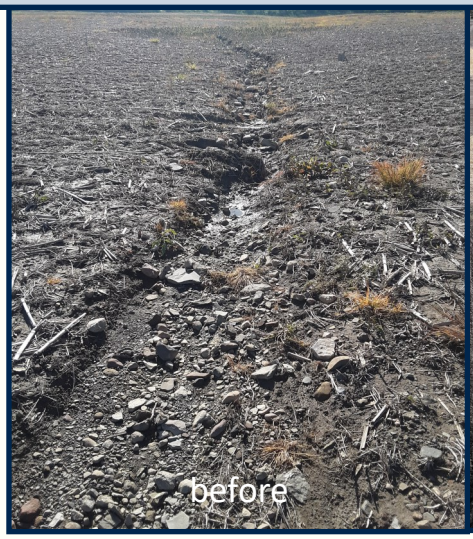
WASCOBs - continued...

This small WASCOB in the **Town of Covert** is in the Salmon Creek sub-watershed of **Cayuga Lake**. It captures water from an **2 acre watershed** and reduces **1 ton of soil loss annually**.



A WASCOB is an engineered earth embankment or small dam constructed across the slope of a minor concentrated water flow path in a field. These structures are designed to be integrated into the existing field topography and are often small enough to be farmed over when dry. They function by capturing and slowing down surface runoff from storm events and temporarily storing the water while slowly releasing it through a stable underground outlet.

This WASCOB in the **Town of Ovid** is in the Mack Creek sub-watershed a tributary of **Cayuga Lake**. It captures water from an **24 acre watershed** and reduces **6 tons of soil loss annually**.



2025 Agriculture Projects Continued...

WASCOBs - continued...

A Water & Sediment Control Basin (WASCOB) provides a range of environmental and practical benefits for agriculture, flood management, and overall water quality. For agricultural practices, WASCOBs eliminate gully erosion, allowing farmers to use equipment more safely and efficiently while keeping valuable topsoil and nutrients in the field where they belong. In terms of flood mitigation, these basins intercept and temporarily store large volumes of runoff during heavy rain events, reducing water velocity and delaying peak flows to protect infrastructure and increase community resiliency. The primary water quality improvement function of a WASCOB is acting as a settling pond; as water is detained, soil particles and pollutants settle out before the cleaner water is slowly released through the underground outlet, preventing sediment from entering nearby streams and lakes and often removing up to 80% of suspended solids.

This WASCOB in the **Town of Lodi** is the second phase of WASCOBs installed last year and is a direct drainage of the Lodi Point Area sub-watershed of **Seneca Lake**. It captures water from a **14 acre watershed** and reduce **229 tons of soil loss annually.**

2025 Agriculture Projects Continued...

WASCOBs - continued...

The 2025 projects were made possible through a collaborative effort, leveraging financial and technical assistance from a variety of sources. The Agricultural Environmental Management (AEM) program provided technical assistance and planning support to identify conservation needs. Additionally, the Finger Lakes Lake Ontario Watershed Protection Alliance (FLLOWPA) offered essential funding to support projects that protect and enhance water quality throughout the region.

Three WASCOBs in the **Town of Ovid** are in the Sixteen Falls Creek sub-watershed a tributary of **Seneca Lake**. In total they capture water from a **37 acre watershed** and reduce **77 tons of soil loss annually.**

Luckily, we beat the weather and got all 3 WASCOBs installed before the weather changed. All will be seeded and mulched in preparation for spring germination.

The Seneca County SWCD is committed to working hand-in-hand with landowners to identify and implement sustainable conservation practices that benefit both agricultural productivity and the environment. Farmers and residents interested in learning more about available programs and technical assistance are encouraged to contact the Seneca County Soil & Water Conservation District office.

2025 Agriculture Projects Continued...

STORMWATER & IRRIGATION BASIN

The Seneca County Soil & Water Conservation District (SWCD) has successfully partnered with a local orchard and cidery, the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), and the County Highway Department to address a critical local issue, demonstrating how conservation practices can yield multiple community benefits. Through this collaborative effort, a new stormwater basin has been installed that will mitigate downstream flooding and erosion issues while also providing a sustainable irrigation source for the farm.

Intensifying storm events have been a growing concern across the region, contributing to frequent flooding and significant erosion of County Road 138 in the ***Town of Ovid***. These events perpetually jeopardized the integrity and safety of the road, repeatedly taxing local financial and labor resources with the need for emergency repairs.

While working through the Agricultural Environmental Management (AEM) Program with the farm, the District identified a separate need for a reliable irrigation system. Recognizing an opportunity to solve both the county's erosion and flooding problem and the farm's water needs simultaneously, the SWCD leaned on their partnership with NRCS to address the farms irrigation needs.

This project stands as a testament to the power of strong partnerships and valued funding sources, allowing the District to accomplish a multitude of goals: ensuring public safety by eliminating road hazards and reducing the burden on the County Highway Department through stopping frequent erosion; improving environmental health by mitigating flooding and erosion and ultimately improving Cayuga Lake's water quality through decreased sediment and nutrient loading; and promoting economic sustainability by assisting a family-owned farm with a priority need, which provides sustainable economic benefits for both the farm and the local economy.

By capturing runoff water and putting it to productive use, the project transformed a community liability into an agricultural asset, showcasing innovative solutions for a resilient Seneca County.

Stormwater Basin in the **Town of Ovid**, in the Barnum Creek sub-watershed a tributary of **Cayuga Lake** stores **1 million gallons**.

2025 Agriculture Projects Continued...

DIVERSION

In a continued effort to protect local water bodies and support sustainable agriculture, the Seneca County Soil & Water Conservation District (SWCD) has completed the installation of a 1,550-foot diversion in the ***Town of Fayette*** within the ***Williamson Creek*** subwatershed, a tributary to ***Cayuga Lake***. This new conservation practice is designed to significantly reduce erosion and strategically manage water flow that will improve water quality in Cayuga Lake. A diversion is a constructed channel and ridge system across a slope designed to intercept and redirect concentrated surface runoff at a non-erosive velocity to a stable outlet, preventing water accumulation that causes damage downslope.

This diversion offers substantial benefits for both farming operations and the surrounding environment's health, enabling better farmland management and preserving valuable topsoil and nutrients. By shortening the effective length of the slope and redirecting flow, the practice eliminates gully erosion and makes the land more resilient to intense weather events. The vegetated channel acts as a filter, preventing sediment and pollutants from entering streams and Cayuga Lake, thereby enhancing overall water quality.

ACCESS ROAD

The Seneca County Soil & Water Conservation District (SWCD) is pleased to announce it has assisted a local farmer in constructing a 325-foot access road, providing a safer and more sustainable route to their crop fields. The new road allows farm equipment to bypass a previous crossing point over ***Lively Run Creek***, a tributary of ***Cayuga Lake*** in the ***Town of Interlaken*** that frequently floods during storm events.

The new access road significantly benefits both agricultural efficiency and water quality by providing the farmer reliable, year-round access to fields and preventing equipment from damaging the flood-prone Lively Run Creek crossing. This project drastically reduces sediment and nutrient loading into the waterway, protecting aquatic habitats and improving the overall health and clarity of Cayuga Lake.

2025 Agriculture Projects Continued...

Prescribed Rotational Grazing

Animals Excluded from Stream

50 acre Prescribed Rotational Grazing System for a small beef operation in the **Town of Fayette** in the Burroughs Creek sub-watershed, a tributary of **Cayuga Lake**.

The Seneca County Soil & Water Conservation District (SWCD), utilizing the Agricultural Environmental Management (AEM) program, has assisted two local beef farmers in planning and installing prescribed rotational grazing systems. These systems help farmers manage their grazing land more effectively, fence animals out of sensitive streams and waterbodies, and provide a more reliable water source, ensuring a sustainable future for their operations and local environment.

Prescribed rotational grazing is a sustainable farming practice that provides substantial benefits for farming operations and water quality by moving livestock between pastures at specific intervals. This approach improves pasture health, density, and drought resistance, leading to healthier soil and extended grazing seasons for farmers. Key to water quality protection, the systems include fencing to exclude cattle from streams and ponds, preventing bank erosion and direct manure deposits. By using alternative water sources, the practice drastically reduces bacteria, sediment, and nutrient loading into local waterways and lakes. The AEM program enables the SWCD to work hand-in-hand with landowners to implement these win-win conservation practices.

Paddock Fencing

30 acre Prescribed Rotational Grazing System for a small beef operation in the **Town of Ovid** in is a direct drainage in the Barnum Creek sub-watershed of **Cayuga Lake**.

2025 Agriculture Projects Continued...

BARNYARD HEAVY USE AREA PROTECTION

Barnyard Heavy Use Area Protection project for small beef operation in the **Town of Ovid** is a direct drainage in the Barnum Creek sub-watershed of **Cayuga Lake**.

The Seneca County Soil & Water Conservation District (SWCD), leveraging Agricultural Environmental Management (AEM) Implementation funding, is pleased to announce the successful installation of two barnyard Heavy Use Area Protection (HUAP) best management practice (BMP) projects for small beef farms in the county.

These projects provide a stable, all-weather surface for livestock, effectively managing animal traffic and waste during the crucial winter months when pastures cannot be grazed. A Heavy Use Area Protection is an engineered pad, often constructed of concrete, designed to withstand concentrated animal activity without turning into a muddy, eroded mess. During the winter, a lack of ground cover in confined areas leads to mud and manure accumulation; the new HUAPs solve this by providing a clean surface, improving herd health, simplifying manure collection, and enhancing farm efficiency when animals cannot access the rotational grazing paddocks.

A primary environmental benefit is preventing direct runoff of manure-laden water from muddy barnyards into nearby streams and water bodies. By containing the waste in a manageable area, the SWCD helps farmers better control pollutants, drastically reducing bacteria, sediment, and nutrient loading into Cayuga and Seneca Lake watersheds. These projects highlight how AEM funding directly supports local agriculture and protects our shared natural resources.

Barnyard Heavy Use Area Protection project for small beef operation in the **Town of Lodi** is a direct drainage in the Mill Creek sub-watershed of **Seneca Lake**.

2025 Agriculture Projects Continued...

MANURE COMPOST FACILITY

The Seneca County Soil & Water Conservation District (SWCD) has successfully installed a new manure compost facility for a small beef operation in the ***Town of Covert***, located within the ***Trumansburg Creek*** sub-watershed, a vital tributary of ***Cayuga Lake***. Through the Agricultural Environmental Management (AEM) Program, this project was identified to address a critical farm management need while providing significant water quality benefits to the watershed.


after

Small beef operations require effective methods for managing and storing manure, especially during winter months when animals are confined and fields are often covered in snow or too wet for grazing or manure application. The new facility provides a designated area for actively composting manure, preventing runoff issues associated with traditional barnyard storage.


In progress

The facility's design incorporates essential environmental protections, including a screened filter system to manage any liquid effluent resulting from precipitation events. This filtered effluent is then directed into a vegetated treatment area, which naturally treats the water before it leaves the site.

By composting manure on an impermeable pad with a contained treatment system, the project drastically reduces the potential for nutrient-rich runoff from entering Trumansburg Creek and Cayuga Lake. This prevents the loading of excess nitrogen, phosphorus, and bacteria, which are major contributors to water quality degradation and harmful algal blooms. The facility ensures that nutrients are managed responsibly and available for proper field application when conditions are optimal, supporting both sustainable farming and a healthy lake ecosystem.

2025 Agriculture Projects Continued...

COVER CROPS

Cover Crops: Growing Benefits for Seneca County

Cover crops are more than just green fields in the off-season, they're a powerful tool for soil health, water quality, and climate resilience. By planting species such as rye, clover, or radishes between primary crop rotation, farmers can:

- Improve soil structure: Roots help reduce compaction and increase organic matter.
- Prevent erosion: Vegetative cover protects fields from wind and water loss.
- Enhance nutrient cycling: Cover crops capture excess nitrogen, reducing runoff into waterways.
- Boost biodiversity: They provide habitat for pollinators and beneficial insects.
- Reduce greenhouse gas emissions: Healthy soils store more carbon, contributing to climate solutions.

This year, the District proudly funded the implementation of **5,700 acres** of cover crops, equating to greater than $470,000, across the county. Thanks to this investment, local producers not only strengthened their soils and protected water resources, but also achieved a measurable climate impact: an estimated reduction of **1700 metric tons of greenhouse gas emissions**.

If you are interested in, or are already implementing cover crops, the District offers funding and technical assistance. While the rates and availability of the funding varies, we are always looking for growers to add to our list for when funding does become available.

2025 Agriculture Projects Continued...

MULCHING

The Seneca County Soil & Water Conservation District (SWCD) is collaborating with two local vineyard producers in the **Town of Ovid** in the ***Cayuga Lake*** watershed to implement innovative conservation practices by applying hay mulch in the middle rows of the vineyards. This simple yet highly effective best management practice (BMP) provides numerous on-farm benefits, including retaining crucial soil moisture, suppressing weeds to reduce herbicide use, controlling erosion, and improving general soil health by adding organic matter. The significant reduction in erosion directly contributes to cleaner water in Cayuga Lake by preventing sediment, nutrients, and potential chemical residues from entering tributaries, thus maintaining the lake's clarity and ecological health.

NUTRIENT TESTING FUNDS AVAILABLE

Through the Agricultural Environmental Management (AEM) Program, the district has the opportunity to assist producers with testing services for soil, manure, and other agricultural needs. Soil nutrient testing is a crucial management tool that helps farms obtain important data about the health and fertility of their soil. Any farm participating in the AEM program, excluding those operating under the NY CAFO General Permit, is eligible to take part.

There are six types of tests available:

1. Basic soil nutrient testing through DairyOne
2. Soil heavy metal testing through the Cornell Soil Health Lab
3. Pre-Sidedress Nitrate Test (PSNT)*
4. Corn Stalk Nitrate Test (CSNT)*
5. Manure and compost nutrient testing
6. Cornell Assessment of Soil Health(CASH) “Standard Soil Health Analysis Package”

***** PSNTs and CSNTs are only available for those working on Tier 3A, 3B, or 5B nutrient management planning activities.*

This service is ***FREE*** for producers on a *first-come, first-serve basis* and is funded through AEM.

If interested in either program:
Call our office at (315) 568-4366,
Stop by our office at 2041 US 20 Suite #2 in Seneca Falls,
OR Email Curtis.davis2@usda.gov

2025 Municipal Assistance

STREAMBANK STABILIZATION

Using special project funding from New York State Ag & Markets, the Seneca County Soil & Water Conservation District (SWCD) has successfully stabilized **120 feet** of streambank along ***Pond Brook*** on ***County Road 108 / Ninefoot Road*** in the ***Town of Junius***. The project addresses severe erosion that was threatening the county road, culvert and crop field.

The project successfully achieved multiple goals through the stabilization efforts: it secured the County Road culvert, preventing further damage to critical public infrastructure; improved field management for the landowner by establishing a stable field corner; created a new vegetative buffer along the streambank to filter runoff, provide habitat, and improve stream health; and reduced an estimated **31 tons of soil loss annually,** preventing valuable topsoil from being washed downstream verses benefiting agricultural productivity.

Stabilizing the streambank provides significant water quality improvements in Pond Brook and the broader watershed of Lake Ontario. By stopping the erosion, the project drastically reduces the amount of sediment entering the waterway, which improves water clarity and protects aquatic habitats. Additionally, preventing soil from entering the stream also means that nutrients and other pollutants that are often attached to soil particles are kept out of the water. This helps to maintain a healthier ecosystem and supports the overall water quality goals of the watershed.

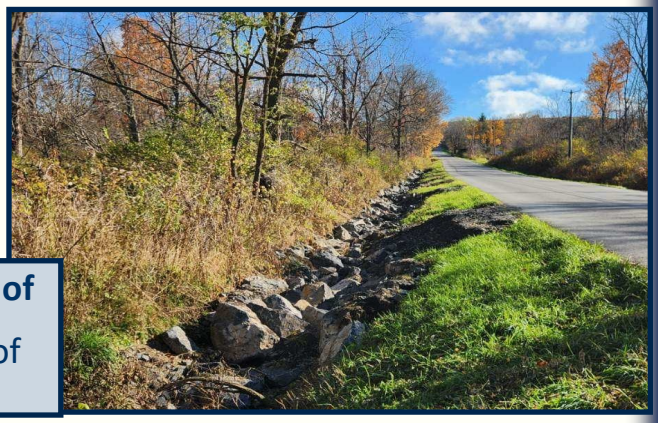
2025 Municipal Assistance Continued...

ROADBANK STABILIZATION

Hayts Corners Road, Town of Romulus, Sheldrake Creek sub-watershed a tributary of **Cayuga Lake**.

The Seneca County Soil & Water Conservation District (SWCD) partnered with the **Towns of Romulus & Lodi** on two roadbank stabilization projects that will alleviate **550 feet** of eroding roadbanks using rock rip-rap.

SWCD technical staff designed the projects and secured grant funding for materials, while town highway departments provided labor for installation. This initiative secures public infrastructure, lowers municipal maintenance costs, and reduces an estimated **16 tons of annual soil loss.** Ultimately, these efforts prevent massive amounts of sediment, along with attached nutrients and pollutants, from entering Cayuga and Seneca Lakes, improving water quality. This collaboration showcases a strong partnership approach to protecting both public infrastructure and the local environment.



Parmenter Road, Town of Lodi, Mill Creek sub-watershed a tributary of **Seneca Lake**.

HYDROSEEDING

The Seneca County Soil & Water Conservation District (SWCD) and local highway departments are collaborating to prevent erosion and runoff from roadside ditches, which can pollute local water bodies. The SWCD utilizes hydroseeding equipment to apply a mixture of seed, mulch, and water to bare soil after ditch maintenance, creating a protective layer that quickly fosters vegetation growth. The resulting robust vegetation acts as a natural filter and barrier, dramatically reducing potential erosion and nutrient and sediment loading. Approximately **3.5 acres** were hydroseeded last season, benefiting both road maintenance and water quality.

2025 Municipal Assistance Continued...

AQUATIC VEGETATION CONTROL PROGRAM

Seneca County Soil and Water Aquatic Vegetation Control Program was originally centered around removing and eliminating the spread of invasive aquatic plants like Eurasian Water Milfoil. The objective has transitioned to address the recreational impairments of the county's waterbodies while leaving them ecologically intact.

Due to the shallow waters and nutrient rich sediment beds in the Northern end of Cayuga Lake and sections of the Cayuga-Seneca Canal, these areas can be highly productive habitats for excessive aquatic plant growth. This can hinder navigation, swimming, and water and air quality issues due to mass die off events. However, it's important to remember that while aquatic vegetation may be a nuisance, not all aquatic vegetation is bad. Native aquatic plant species are vital to a lake's ecology. A careful balance must be struck to meet the demands of human uses as well as the needs of aquatic organisms who rely on the lake's ecosystem for survival.

Harvesting operations typically commence the first week of July and are concluded by Labor Day. One of Seneca SWCD's harvesters operates along the Northwestern shoreline of Cayuga Lake from the train tracks to Canoga Island area. In 2025 Seneca County's harvester was launched and harvested aquatic vegetation around Cayuga Lake State Park area. Due to equipment limitations Cayuga County SWCD was contracted to harvest the areas further North and South of the State Park where our machine couldn't reach. Due to the presence of Hydrilla (extremely invasive non-native aquatic plant) in Cayuga Lake, the District will closely be monitoring future harvesting operations with the possibility that all harvesting will need to be suspended to prevent the further spread of Hydrilla. Harvesting operations in the Canal consist of the area around Oak Island, several Canal marinas, and the Seneca Lake State Park Marina.

Although aquatic plant densities are continuing to trend downward in **Cayuga Lake**, there were a total of **19 harvesting days** contributing to **33 loads / 307 tons** of vegetation removed. This equates to the removal of approx. **865 lbs of Nitrogen** and **74 lbs of Phosphorous** from Cayuga Lake. Additionally, in the **Canal,** there were **19 harvesting days** contributing to **55 loads / 330 tons** of vegetation removed. This equates to the removal of approx. **1,378 lbs of Nitrogen** and **117 lbs of Phosphorous** from the Canal. The harvested plants are collected and transported to an off-site location and allowed to compost and later land applied by farmers as a soil amendment.

2025 Municipal Assistance Continued...

HYDRILLA SAMPLING

District Technician Curtis Davis holding the VanDorn water sampling equipment.

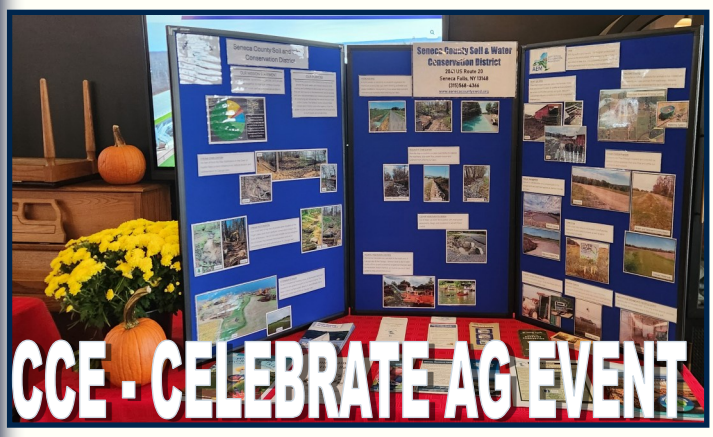
The Seneca County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) aided the NYS DEC in sampling after invasive hydrilla treatments near Sheldrake Point. Hydrilla is an aggressive aquatic plant that negatively impacts the ecosystem and recreation. Due to federal and state funding reductions, the treatment area is expected to decrease from 28.7 acres treated in 2025 to only 7 acres in 2026.

NEW EMPLOYEE

My name is ***Robbie Krieger***, and I started as a District Technician with Seneca County SWCD in May of 2025. After graduating with an Associates degree in Environmental Studies from Cayuga Community College, I began working for Cayuga County Soil and Water Conservation District for almost 3 years aiding their efforts to protect and conserve their natural resources. I then made the decision to further my education and I am currently a student at SUNY ESF and working towards an Environmental Science Bachelor's degree. I am grateful for the opportunity and look forward to utilizing my skillset and experience to help protect the natural resources of Seneca County.

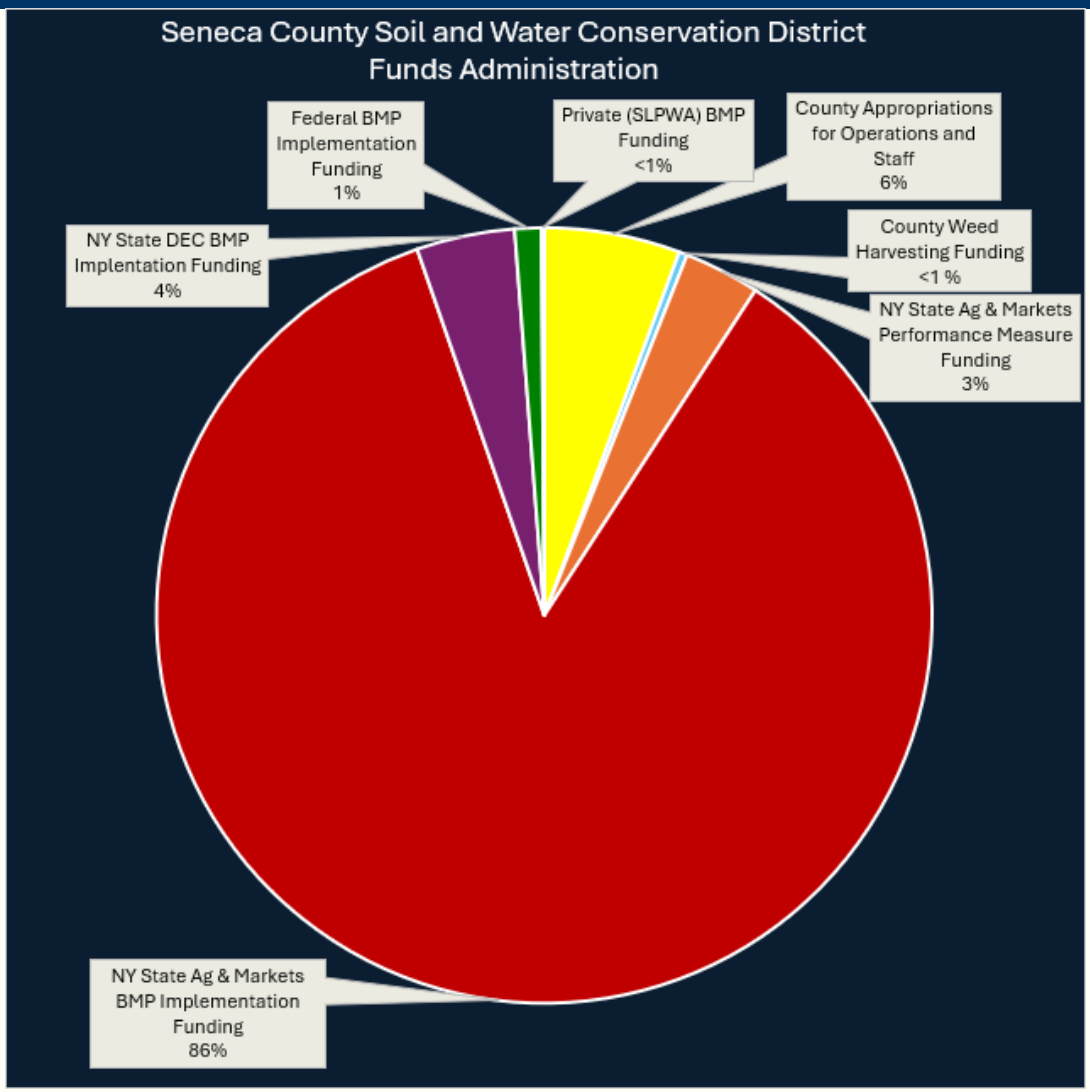
2025 Educational Events

Throughout 2025, Seneca County Soil and Water partnered with various agencies and watershed groups to deliver a variety of educational events geared towards educating the public on how to conserve and protect Seneca County's natural resources and the implementation efforts geared at improving water quality.



Follow us on Facebook to learn about upcoming events!

2025 Other News



Funding Summary includes funding used for operations and BMP Implementation Grant funds administered in 2025.

2025 Best Management Practice Implementation Accomplishments

- 8—Water & Sediment Control Basins
- 1—Stormwater/Irrigation Basin
- 1,550 Feet of Diversion
- 325 Feet of Access Road
- 80 Acres of Rotational Grazing Systems
- 2—Heavy Use Area Barnyards
- 1—Manure Compost Facility
- 5,700 Acres of Cover Crops planted
- 25 Acres of Mulch
- 80 Soil Samples on 1,235 Acres
- 120 Feet of Stream Stabilization
- 550 Feet of Roadbank Stabilization
- 3.5 Acres of Hydroseeding
- 637 Tons Aquatic Vegetation removed
- 6—Educational Events & Tours
- 5,839 Trees Sold & Planted