Bi-monthly

# NEWSLETTER

## DATES TO REMEMBER

**July:**

29 - Watershed Wednesday

**August:**

5 - Watershed Wednesday (Cover Crop Focus)

12 - Watershed Wednesday (Wetland Focus)

28 - USC Call In Meeting

**September:**

Add your event to our calendar by emailing Palmerm@co.tioga.ny.us

## IN THIS ISSUE



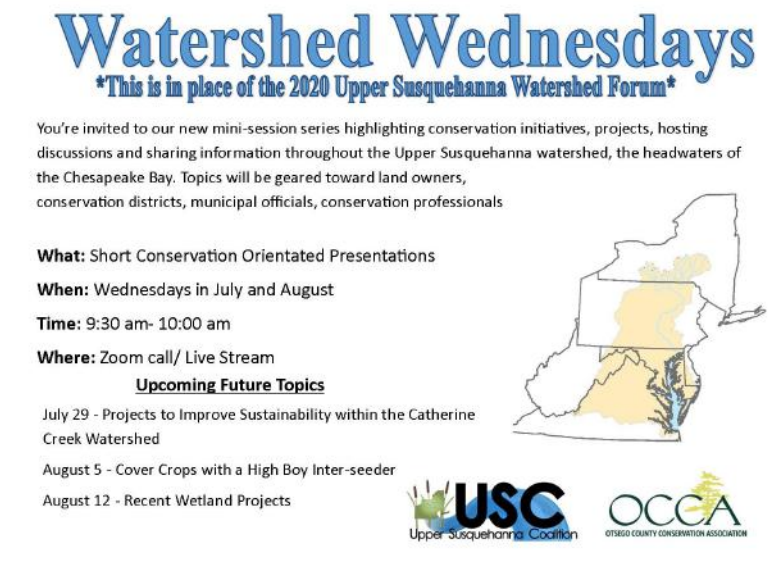
## Don't Miss Watershed Wednesdays!

The link to each weeks Watershed Wednesday can be found here.

Next week, join us for a presentation on a large and diverse project improving stream sustainability in an important trout stream in our region.

Chemung SWCD will discuss ongoing projects to improve floodplain health, protect streamside areas from flooding and protect eroding streambanks.

Visit www.u-s-c.org/watershedwednesdays for past webinar videos and to see what's next.



# Safety Patrols on the Chemung River July 4th Weekend

Submitted By: Jim Pffifer
Chemung River Friends

Law enforcement and Chemung River Friends officials  visited boat launches and fishing spots on the Chemung River in Chemung County over the July 4th holiday weekend to keep the sites clean and safe, enforce boating/fishing rules and to seek public feedback.

Officials from the Chemung County Sheriff's Department, New York State Department of Environmental Conservation and River Friends visited the sites and fishing ponds throughout the long July 4th weekend.

"This is part of a new River Safety and Security campaign to make our waterways and ponds safe and enjoyable for public use," said Chemung River Friends Executive Director Jim Pfiffer. "The team will inspect boats, make sure paddlers have life vests, check fishing licenses, cleanup litter and share water safety tips with the people we meet."

The campaign is an effort to reassure the public that the Chemung River, boat launches and fishing spots are being patrolled by law enforcement, and to hear what the public needs, wants, likes and dislikes about river and pond recreation.

Photo Provided: River fest paddlers

"The river belongs to the public and we need the public's help in keeping the waterway safe, clean and enjoyable for outdoor recreation and a visit with Mother Nature," Pfiffer said. "This safety and security campaign will help educate the public and show the community how to help protect our natural resources."

# Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) Round 3 Announced

Submitted By: Emily Dekar
USC Ag Coordinator

Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) Round 3 is finally here!

The RCPP is a partnership program was developed through the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) to provide funding similar to the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP). The main difference is that RCPP is managed primarily by the USC's Ag Team. Round 3 of this program will focus on farmstead management practices in the Upper Susquehanna Watershed. Funding will be available to agricultural producers to implement practices to treat the runoff from barnyards, bunk silos, milkhouse waste systems, and to store and manage manure. Our local Soil and Waters Conservation Districts and NRCS offices will work together to provide planning and conservation practices implementation assistance to producers in the Upper Susquehanna Watershed in NY.

RCPP Applications must be received by your local NRCS office by **August 21, 2020**. All applicants must also provide a copy of their Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plan (CNMP) by **September 4, 2020** for consideration in this round of funding. All applications are competitive and are ranked based on locally identified resource priorities and the overall benefit to the environment.

For further information regarding RCPP, please contact Emily Dekar at dekare@co.tioga.ny.us.

# Getting Shock Value to the Back Forty

Submitted By: Troy Bishopp
Madison County SWCD / USC Grazing Specialist

Last month, we completed an organic 4 strand high tensile pasture system fence with a stream and pond buffer. The concern was providing enough shock value at this remote location to manage the animals and give the farmer peace of mind. Using the typical recommendation of one joule per mile of fence to maintain an acceptable voltage, (>3000 volts), we settled on a 16 joule battery/plug-in optional unit with solar panels.

Working with the nice folks at Kencove Farm Fence (Kencove.com), on our first off-the-grid fencing project, we designed a system that was semi-portable, in-budget and would work consistently. Design criteria included locating a due-south, sunny spot away from public view, having enough solar panel (10 watts per joule) to keep batteries charged, putting in 6 ground rods, installing fence switches and building a practical, water-proof, “fencer station” where fence components can be disassembled and put away for the winter.

Our basic system to power 15,000 feet of 4 strand fence was around $1500 (Fencer-$360, 2-200 watt portable solar panels-$792, 2-Marine batteries-$230, Grounding system-$100, Wood-$50 plus labor). So far the system is delivering over 8000 volts of animal control but will likely diminish as weed load progresses. It has been a positive experience and we will continue to monitor the installation for ruggedness and sustainability. The solar panels have a 5 year warranty and the fencer has a 2 year warranty. If you have a fence/fencer question, we’re happy to share our experiences.

## Project Photo Album

Check out the "Watershed Wendesday" video featuring this project here!

# 70% of Our Drinking Water Comes From The River

Submitted by: Jim Pffifer
Chemung River Friends

More than 70 percent of Elmira's drinking water comes from the Chemung River. It's vital that the water withdrawal system is well maintained.

That's why Elmira Water Board employees were cleaning the water intake screens last week, just upstream from the Walnut Street Bridge in Elmira.

You can see the intake site from the bridge, about 1,000 yards away. It's marked by six yellow columns protruding from the river. The site is owned by the Elmira Water Board.

This photo shows workers using compressed air shooting out of a long and hollow metal wand to clear debris from the intake screens. The wand is connected to a hose that is connected to an industrial-size air compressor on the Southside shore of the river along Hudson Street.

The yellow columns act as deflectors to protect the underwater pipes from damage or clogging by debris flowing downstream, especially during high water events. Paddlers should avoid paddling between the columns as it can be hazardous in a fast current.

River water is pulled through the screens and into two 24-inch pipes that run to the nearby pump house on the northside of the river on Windsor Avenue. The pump house sends the water to the filtration plant at the north end of Hoffman Street, where the water is filtered and chlorine and fluoride are added. The water is then distributed to more than 54,000 people in homes and businesses in the city of Elmira and portions of the towns of Elmira, Southport, Horseheads and Elmira Heights. The Water Board pumps more than 2 billion gallons of water a year through various iron, copper, cement, and plastic pipes. Wells and reservoirs provide the rest of the water used by Water board customers.

Downstream from the intake site is the Chase-Hibbard Dam, also owned by the Elmira Water Board. The dam keeps the water high enough to maintain a constant water level high enough to be safely withdrawn from the river.
The present dam, built in the mid-1990s, is V-shaped, six feet high and nearly 1,000 feet wide. It has a 50-year lifespan. Several dams have been built at the site since the original dam, called the Record Dam, was built in the 1820s. It was only 18-inches tall and used to turn a water wheel to grind grain at a long-gone riverside grist mill.

Later dams were built by the Chase-Hibbard grist mill on the river.

The dam is dangerous for paddlers and anglers. If a boat goes over the dam, the strong back current can easily trap the boat and paddlers in a hydraulic that cycles the boat and paddlers underwater and back to the surface over and over. In the mid-1970s, a fire chief and a firefighter drowned in a hydraulic in the similar Rock Bottom Dam on the Susquehanna River in Binghamton.

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Anglers can frequently be seen walking across or fishing from the lip of the Elmira dam. The lip is covered with algae and seaweed that makes it easy to slip and fall into the hydraulic.

The Don Hall Portage around the dam features concrete steps and a paved trail that lets paddlers take their boats out of the river, above the dam, carry them along the trail to safely put them back in the river below the dam.


The 1,000-foot long Chase-Hibbard Dam across the Chemung River in downtown Elmira

Paddlers use the steps, above the dam on the Don Hall Portage, to safely get by the dam

# Cortland SWCD Pilots Stone Mulch Project

By: Lydia Brinkley
USC Buffer Coordinator

From the 2020 Stroud Buffer Training, Upper Susquehanna Coalition folks were introduced to a new method of weed management: stone mulch. As described by Stroud, this could potentially be an alternative method of weed control as compared to weed mats and herbicide. The stone mulch, they hypothesize, could provide sustainable weed management in comparison to hiring herbicide applicators multiple times per year. Coordinating herbicide applications can be cumbersome for stretched staff, and this could also be a potential solution to not always having long term, flexible funding to spend on herbicide applications year after year.

On July 22, the Cortland Soil and Water Conservation District implemented stone mulch around 200 seedlings near the Tioughnioga River. The Town of Homer Highway Department brought stone mulch to the project site and drove between the rows as staff placed 2-3 shovelfuls of the material around each tube (Picture 1). All plants were tubed, so the method of placing the stone mulch was the same throughout the site. The stoned area was approximately 18" in diameter by 2" in height once tamped down with your foot (Picture 2). Stone used by Stroud was "2A" material that is composed of angular rock, 2" at most with fines included. For this project, similar material was used. Having a loader, tractor, or other piece of equipment to be able to drive through the site is essential for practice implementation. A good-sized crew made really short work of this project too. We'll keep you posted with how stone mulch turns out!

Amanda Barber and Kathy McGrath take shovelfuls of gravel from the town truck.

Stone Mulch pad around ninebark shrub.