



Quarterly

NEWSLETTER



DATES TO REMEMBER



May:

- 19 - Online - Stream Grant Launch
- 20 - USC Bi-Monthly Meeting
- 25 - Madison County Riparian Steward Work Day



June:

- 1 - Tioga Riparian Steward Work Day
- 4 - Cortland County Water Festival
- 7 - Otsego Riparian Steward Work Day
- 14 - Broome Riparian Steward Work Day
- 22 - Chenango Riparian Steward Work Day
- 29 - Cortland Riparian Steward Work Day
- 30 - BMP Verification Deadline

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If you haven't already...

Please share our Local Leaders Survey!

We are helping to conduct a survey of local elected leaders. Will you please take 5-8 minutes to answer a few questions for us? You can access the survey online at:

<https://survey.alchemer.com/s3/5735969/UpperSusquehanna>

Results will be used to improve and enhance services for local elected leaders. The survey is being conducted by an independent contractor. Your feedback is confidential. If you have any questions, please contact Christine Brittle, Ph.D., at christine@uncommoninsights.com or 703-254-6515.



Plan-to-Pasture Training Delivers Hands-on Results

By Troy Bishopp - *Grass Whisperer, Madison County SWCD*

Hubbardsville, NY-- The virtual world can only take one so far when applying conservation practices and grazing strategies on farms alongside farmers. Practicality in the field is where it's at. "In the end we retain from our studies only that which we practically apply." ~ Johann Wolfgang Von Goethe

On May 3rd, 2022, thirty-three local NYS Conservation Agency professionals closed their computers for the day and traveled to Madison County New York for a unique grazing training opportunity on Keith and Jody Palmer's organic dairy farm in Hubbardsville, NY. The training opportunity initiated by Madison County Soil and Water Conservation District's resident "Grass Whisperer", Troy Bishopp, was meant for new district employees using the Agriculture Environmental Management (AEM) grazing planning matrix, conservation staff and agriculture professionals honing their technical skills in putting practical grazing on the ground and helping farmers be successful practitioners.

Bishopp teamed up with Dr. Samantha Glaze-Corcoran from the University of Massachusetts-Amherst and the Palmer family, Madison County's 2015 Conservation Farm of the Year, to teach the power of grazing management for profit and improving soil health and animal production systems. Using grazing planning calculation tools and the Palmer's goals as a guide, agency professionals learned specific considerations to guide decision-making and allocate a forage plan for the herd of 52 organic dairy cows.

The large group started with everyone figuring out their "step" (in feet) and heading out to the pasture led by Dr. Sam to measure pasture growth (growing at 1"/day), determining the right time to graze based on how many leaves were present, count how many worms in a shovelful of soil and use a grazing stick or the "Canopeo" smart-phone App to calculate forage production. During this exchange of observation skills, Dr. Sam introduced the concept of being "thought partners" with farmers, "in helping guide decisions but not making them".

This ground-truthing inventory exercise helped as 5 teams, led by an experienced professional, spread out to estimate a daily paddock size to feed the dairy herd to which they would set the portable fence and move the cows to. Interestingly, the friendly competition, yielded a consensus of 2 acres/day for the herd, giving the farm and the people a confidence boost. Volunteers laid out the paddock shift and moved the eager cows while everyone

photos from Troy Bishopp



observed how they grazed and what they grazed.

After a local lunch provided by Bishopp Family Farm and dairy products from Maple Hill Creamery, the now, well-fed group visited the cows again and learned about manure quality (pumpkin pie consistency) while seeing dung beetles and golden dung flies miraculously working a cow patty after just one hour. This led to a discussion of how fence and water tub placement and frequency of movement can positively affect fertility placement and increase forage yield. Dr. Sam, paraphrasing Vermont farmer, Jenn Colby, said; “the first two days of grazing are in the dining room, day 3 and 4 are in the living room and by days 5 and 7 you’re in the bathroom. For many reasons, we strive to stay in the dining room”.

Bishopp led the group into a mob grazing and paddock design exercise by sandwiching people together in a tight rectangular paddock to mimic efficient grazing, manure deposition and the trampling effect while explaining the need for frequent moves in this situation. He then made a square paddock and the relieved group witnessed how the herd behavior changes. “You can create what you want just by moving fences and understanding herd dynamics,” he said.

The group then took a pasture walk to determine a week’s worth of pasture moves and were shown how the Palmers use a grazing planning chart to track their management decisions for organic verification. Ending the training on a positive note, guests were treated to ice-cream and participated in “Grazing Olympics” featuring the portable fence post javelin throw and hay-bale toss for prizes.

“I didn’t know about the 3-4 leaf rule for grazing, and seeing it explained in the field was helpful,” said Watershed Agricultural Council Whole Farm Planner, Tristin Tait. “We learned so much and had a great time doing it. What a breath of fresh air after all those zoom trainings,” said Agronomist Ann Marie Calabro from Suffolk SWCD.

“I heartily endorse this kind of outdoor classroom experience and “hands on” knowledge. From a learning perspective and a networking experience it was a great day of knowledge, continued learning and fellowship in our professional network that share the same passion for farmers, agriculture, and the environment,” emphasized Paul Gier, Natural Resource Program Specialist from Tompkins SWCD. “We need more of these kinds of trainings. This was a fantastic example of putting planning into actionable results on the land. I’m excited to be a part of this professional family and to see how it translates into better service for beginning and experienced farmer customers,” said John Suscovich, Owner of Farm Marketing Solutions.

The training was supported by the Upper Susquehanna Coalition, the NYS Conservation District Employees Association, Madison County Soil and Water Conservation District, Maple Hill Creamery, Corrine Bishopp and Farm Marketing Solutions.



Earth Month Activities

What did you do to celebrate Earth month? The USC partnered with local organizations to support three earth activities last month both expanding on established Riparian Buffers and installing new. Each of these projects was funded in part by the NYS DEC Trees For Tributaries Program.

Hickories Park, Town of Owego

On Saturday the 23rd of April community volunteers joined USC and Tioga County SWCD staff to plant at the confluence of Little Nanticoke Creek and the Susquehanna River expanding on successful buffer plantings completed in the past.



Eldridge Park, City of Elmira

This Volunteer Planting teamed up with Chemung River Friends and Eldridge Park Carousel Preservation Society to plant and clean up along Eldridge Lake and outlet channel to Diven Creek, as a way to promote environmental connection to the citizens of Elmira and surrounding area. Eldridge Park was established in 1879 by Edwin Eldridge to create a beautiful place for exercise, and has since it has turned into a historical amusement park with many people visiting every day. Our goal in this project was to show the interconnectedness of human impacts and the need to protect our surrounding environment.



photos by Michael Ludgate

Oneonta Girl Scouts Planting

This event was brought to our attention by the Girl Scouts of Southern Otsego County after a USC presentation on tree planting initiatives. This event we will helped the Scouts receive their “Tree Promise” patch by working towards goal of 5 Million Trees by 2026. In addition to the patch the scouts learned about the benefits of planting trees as well as further understanding teamwork by planting 250 trees and shrubs together.





Tufts Island photo by Mike Dunham

Finger Lakes Land Trust Acquires Two Islands in the Susquehanna River

By Edie Jodz - Assistant Director of Development, Finger Lakes Land Trust

Location: Town of Tioga, Tioga County, New York

The Finger Lakes Land Trust acquired two islands in the Susquehanna River in the town of Tioga, Tioga County. Totalling 41 acres, the parcels are collectively known as Tufts Island and serve as a destination for paddlers in the Southern Tier.

The undeveloped islands contain a mix of woodlands, open habitat, and floodplain forest, and host a variety of wildlife including Bald Eagles and migratory birds. The FLLT intends to manage the property as a conservation area that will safeguard wildlife habitat and protect water quality in the river.

The Susquehanna River is the largest single source of fresh water to the Chesapeake Bay, which is the largest estuary in North America and one of the most productive in the world. The bay is a focus of multistate and federal efforts to protect and improve water quality, and also an important factor in the FLLT's Southern Tier conservation efforts.

"Acquiring these islands ensures that they continue to provide high-quality habitat for fish and wildlife in the future," said FLLT Executive Director Andrew Zepp. "Areas like this are getting more precious as we continue to lose open space to development along our major rivers."

Partial funding for this project came from the Chesapeake Bay Watershed Grant Program for Riparian Buffer Protection and Restoration, funded by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and administered by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation.

This is the organization's second conservation project in the Susquehanna River. In 1993, the FLLT conserved Hiawatha Island, the largest island on New York's portion of the river. Tufts Island is approximately 5 river miles downstream from Hiawatha Island, which is owned and managed by the Waterman Conservation Education Center and protected with a conservation easement held by the FLLT.

SRBC Project Funding

We're thrilled to be one of two New York projects selected for funding through SRBC's inaugural year of Consumptive Use Mitigation Grant funding. In typical USC fashion, our proposal prioritized partnerships and focuses on three different best Management practices.

Our Chenango River Restoration Partnership project proposes partnership with local and federal entities to pursue restoration of natural resources on a property owned and protected by the Chenango Greenway Conservancy. Project deliverables include the planning and restoration of a 17.5-acre wetland restoration and enhancement site, the restoration of 5.5 acres of riparian forest buffer, streambank restoration along a 700' severely eroding section of the Chenango River, and education and outreach in the form of interpretative trail signage, and educational training sessions related both to wetlands and streambank restoration.



New Staff in the USC Watershed



James Schleppebach was hired by the NRCS in August to serve as a Soil Conservationist in the Cortland field office. James is relocating to the finger lakes region from Bucks County, PA where he spent the last 6 years working at Carversville Farm Foundation growing organic produce and establishing several agroforestry practices such as alley cropping, forest farming, and a multifunctional riparian buffer. James graduated with a B.S. degree in Sustainable Living from Maharishi International University in Iowa in 2013 with concentrations in applied soil microbiology and permaculture design. Born and raised in central NJ, James has spent the past 10 years living, learning, and farming in several states including NJ, PA, VA, IA, and NM. He has always loved the finger lakes region, especially the forests, fields, and streams near Dryden, NY where he grew up visiting with family each summer.

USC Hosts First Virtual ESI Training

Emergency Stream Intervention (ESI) is a method used to assess needs and plan and implement remediation in post-flooding conditions. In 2021, USC Stream Team ESI educators collaborated to develop a seven-module video training series on ESI background and methodology. In February 2022, we hosted our first virtual training. This training was attended by 27 participants, and used a combination of the virtual training videos and instructor-led Q&A and discussion time between each module. Through post-training discussions, our team determined that it would be valuable to host all ESI content live on our webpage for use by interested parties. We have since updated our webpage, and ESI content is available at this link:

www.u-s-c.org/ESI


This webpage includes the seven ESI Training Modules:

- Session 1: ESI Introduction and Stream Mechanics
- Session 2: Stream Instability
- Session 3: Unstable Channels and Flood Response
- Session 4: Channel Sizing and Examples
- Session 5: De-watering and Project Sites
- Session 6: Bioengineering and Hydraulic Structures
- Session 7: Virtual Field Training Session

In addition to the videos, the ESI Page contains online resources including New York stream contacts, the ESI Training Manual and associated resources, Hydraulic Geometry Tables, and Stream Drainage Area Maps for the watershed.



Mike Lovegreen



Mike served as the Manager of the Bradford County Conservation District for 35 years and more recently as the Stream Team leader for the Upper Susquehanna Coalition (22 Counties in NY & PA). Mike has also served as the chair of the PA DER Hydromodification advisory committee for Section 313, President of the PA Lakes Management Society, PA Leadership Development Coordinator for the PA State Conservation Commission, Keystone Stream Team founding advisory board member, PA Volunteer Monitoring Program Advisory Board member, PA Dirt and Gravel Roads Policy and Planning Committee and numerous other state, regional and local boards and advisory committees. Mike has been active in the Chesapeake Bay Program in PA since its beginning in the state as well as assisting to establish the program in NY. Mike is currently on the CBP Citizens Advisory Committee and Stream Health Workgroup and focuses much of his current efforts on training and professional capacity building for member USC Districts.

Jeffrey Parker



Jeff Parker is the District Manager at the Steuben County Soil and Water Conservation District in Bath, NY. And has been with the district for thirty two years, beginning as a District Technician. His background is agronomy and conservation & management of urban recreational lands. Prior to his career with the District, he held several different jobs that involve conservation from dairy farmer, orchard manager and operating a local vegetable & greenhouse. His position at the District allows him to collaborate with private landowners, governmental entities and NGO's on improving and protecting our natural resource.

Mike Jura



Mike Jura has worked at the Iloga County SWCD since 2001, and with 20 years of experience in the local streams he has a deep understanding of the appropriate applications, for the appropriate sites. He has done survey, design, and construction oversight work on stream projects throughout the Upper Susquehanna river basin. Mike has a B.S. in Forest Resources Management from SUNY-ESF in Syracuse, is trained in Roegen Level 1 and 2 training, was mentored by the Upper Susquehanna Coalition Stream Team Program, and attended numerous other trainings and seminars in stream design. He also received a Trainer certification for the Emergency Stream Intervention Training, and has conducted numerous stream training sessions under the ESI program and others for other SWCDs and Highway Departments.



Emergency Stream Intervention is the method of assessing post-flood conditions to decide where to and where not to work, and to determine the correct approach needed to address problems in an emergency response situation. Join USC Stream Team ESI educators for a virtual training, including a series of training modules and question and answer sessions.

For more ESI information and resources visit our Stream Team page: www.u-s-c.org/ESI

When: February 16, 2022 @ 8:30 am
Location: Virtual Training. Login information will be shared with registrants before the training date.
Register: www.u-s-c.org/ESITraining or by email to esi@u-s-c.org

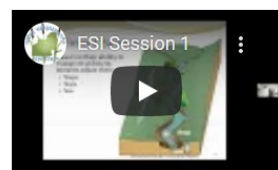
- DRAFT AGENDA**
- 8:30 am: Welcome and Session 1: ESI Introduction and Stream Mechanics
 - Session 2: Stream Instability
 - 10:00 am: Break
 - Session 3: Unstable Channels and Flood Response
 - Session 4: Channel Sizing and Examples
 - 12:00 pm: Lunch Break
 - 12:30 pm: Session 5: De-watering and Project Sites
 - Session 6: Bioengineering and Hydraulic Structures
 - 2:00 pm: Break
 - Session 7: Virtual Field Training Session
 - 3:30 pm: Farewell

Contact esi@u-s-c.org with questions

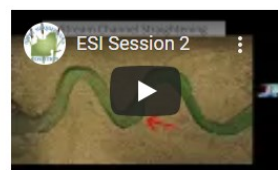
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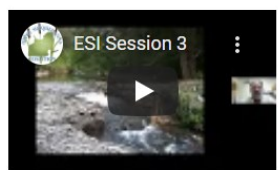
ESI Session 1



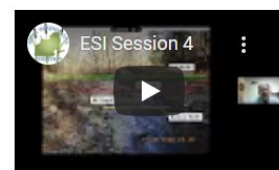
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ESI Session 3



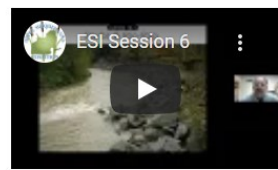
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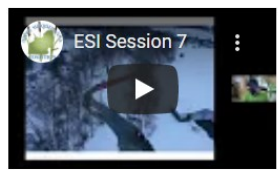
ESI Session 5



ESI Session 6



ESI Session 7



Watershed Approach to Stream Corridor Restoration Project

Funded by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF)

The Upper Susquehanna Coalition submitted a Small Watershed Grant proposal to NFWF in the spring of 2021 to target small subwatersheds for assessments, stream corridor practice implementation, and to provide citizen stewardship opportunities to areas within our watershed area. We just received the contract to begin that work this past month! This will open up some funding for our USC stream team and stream centric projects for the next two years.

More specifically, this project will prioritize watershed assessment work within the Tioughnioga and Cohocton River watersheds. Implementation will be prioritized within areas having Eastern Brook Trout habitat potential as per the NFWF Chesapeake Bay Business Plan, land conservation potential, and having species of special concern, such as hellbender and American eels. This funding can also be utilized to conduct outreach such as stream clean ups and tree plantings. Overall, our deliverables include 3,000' of stream corridor restoration, 15 acres of riparian forest buffer, 5 acres of upland tree planting, reaching 500 people through education and outreach, and engaging with 100 volunteers. Stream corridor restoration encompasses a lot of practices we implement, such as developing in stream habitat, natural channel design, floodplain reconnection, and culvert replacement.

Watershed Approach to Stream Corridor Restoration in the Headwaters of the Chesapeake Bay (NY, PA)

Funding Provided by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation(NFWF)



Deliverables:

- 3 Watershed Assessments
- 400' of Livestock Exclusion Fencing
- 5 acres of Upland Tree Planting
- 15 acres (1.23 miles) of Riparian Forest Buffer
- 3000' of Stream Restoration
- 100 Volunteers
- 500 People Reached through Education & Outreach

Amount: \$500,000.00 End Date: January 1, 2024

The Upper Susquehanna Coalition will address stream corridor restoration within subwatersheds by taking a whole watershed approach to stormwater management and stream channel stability by using our Multiple Barrier Approach (MBA) for planning and implementing restoration projects on a watershed basis. Targeting small subwatersheds within the Upper Susquehanna and Chemung River Basins, the USC will conduct watershed assessments and prioritize practice implementation within the stream corridor to reduce nutrients and sediment reaching surface waters.

Contact:

USC Buffer Coordinator
Lydia Brinkley
lbrinkley@u-s-c.org
(315)525-5872



Best Management Practice Verification for the Chesapeake Bay Program

An important part of the Chesapeake Bay Program data collection procedure is the requirement of Best Management Practice Verification. This verification ensures that the best management practices that NY is reporting to the Chesapeake Bay Model actually exist on the ground, are maintained and functioning as intended. Each year, SWCDs across NY's portion of the watershed are assigned a list of farms that are selected through a random selection process. These farms that are assigned are required to have "whole farm verification" completed by June 30th of the current year. By completing a "whole farm verification" approach, the USC and SWCD staff can ensure that every practice on the farm is captured and accounted for. This also gives the landowners an opportunity to discuss any potential needs or concerns they may have. For the 2022 progress year, the USC was able to continue to offer a reimbursement payment to SWCDs that complete their required verification.

For more information or questions about the USC's BMP Verification Program, please contact Emily Dekar at dekare@tiogacountyny.gov.

Expanding Nutrient Management Across all Landscapes in the Headwaters of the Chesapeake Bay (NY & PA)

Funding Provided by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation



Deliverables:

- 40,000 agricultural acres planned (150 farms)
- 1,000 urban acres planned (15 urban sites)
- 160 people reached through education & outreach
- 3,500 soil tests (50% cost share)
- 500 manure tests (50% cost share)
- 4 Trainings/Workshops
- Development of a "Baseline" Nutrient Management Program for NY
- Identify and document ~200 additional practices
- Pilot USC Record Keeping Tool (~15 landowners)

Funding: \$500,000 Match Required: \$220,000 End Date: January 1, 2024

The Upper Susquehanna Coalition has secured funding through the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation to focus on expanding Nutrient Management Planning efforts to improve water quality across agricultural and urban landscapes within the Headwaters of the Chesapeake Bay watershed in New York and Pennsylvania.

Contact:

USC Ag Coordinator
Emily Dekar
dekare@tiogacountyny.gov
(607)972-7983

