



Quarterly

NEWSLETTER



DATES TO REMEMBER

-  **March:**
 14-17 - Water Quality Symposium
 22 - Finger Lakes Graziers Winter Meeting
 25 - CNY Grazing Conference

-  **April:**
 7 - Trees for Tributaries requests due



- May:**
 10 - Buffer Steward Program Funding requests due
 19 - USC Bi-Monthly Meeting, Owego, NY

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2023 Grasstravaganza - Planet Graze:

Growing Resilient Grazing Systems **July 20th – 22nd, 2023** at Morrisville State College, Morrisville New York

Featuring Author-Farmer, Shannon Hayes, Director of Producer Relations at Noble Foundation in Oklahoma, Hugh Aljoe, Agroecologist, Director ECDYSIS Foundation, and CEO for Blue Dasher Farm, Dr. Jonathan Lundgren. There will be a robust agenda with field stations and farmer panels discussing grazing management, grazing technology, agroforestry, adaptive management, marketing, carbon markets and agrotourism.

3 Madison County farms are also being showcased in an afternoon farm tour. Save the Date!!

USC Attends 11th Annual Chesapeake Bay Day on Capitol Hill - Washington, D.C.

By: Emily Dekar, USC Ag Coordinator

On March 1, 2023, the Choose Clean Water Coalition hosted the 11th annual Chesapeake Bay Day on Capitol Hill in Washington DC. After being virtual for the last 2 years due to COVID, we were finally able to be back in person. With more than 280 organizations from across the entire Chesapeake Bay Region in attendance to discuss our Chesapeake Bay priorities and goals with member of Congress. From New York, Emily Dekar from the Upper Susquehanna Coalition, Amy Wyant from Otsego County Conservation Association, as well as Ramsey Adams and his son John from Catskill Mountain Keeper met with all of NY's members of Congress or staff within the Chesapeake Bay Watershed.

Discussion was focused around asking for continued support for key funding programs in the Watershed that include the EPA Chesapeake Bay Program, Clean Water State Revolving Fund, and USDA Farm Bill funding (RCPP, EQIP, CREP). These programs help to support the work that the Upper Susquehanna Coalition and our partners are doing to implement best management practices that will protect and enhance water quality in the Upper Susquehanna Watershed. We met with staff from the offices of Senator Chuck Schumer, Senator Kristen Gillibrand, Congresswoman Elise Stafanik (NY-21) Congressman Brandon Williams (NY-22), Congressman Nick Langworthy (NY-23), and Congresswoman Claudia Tenney (NY-24). We also had a great meeting with Congressman Marcus Molinaro from the 19th District. Special thanks and appreciation also went to Congresswoman Claudia Tenney, and Senators Chuck Schumer and Kristen Gillibrand for their support of the Upper Susquehanna Coalition's Community Project Funding Proposal.

There were 9 members of Congress from across the Chesapeake Bay Watershed from Pennsylvania, Virginia

and Maryland that joined us for a lunch briefing sponsored by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF). Members spoke on their commitment to the great work being done as well restoring full funding for the EPA Chesapeake Bay Program. A poster session was held during lunch, where the USC and others from across all the Chesapeake Bay Watershed displayed their recent accomplishments through funding provided by NFWF. A copy of the USC's poster can be found on our website at <http://www.upperrsusquehanna.org/usc/usc-resources/>.



Left to Right – Harry Huntley (Environmental Policy Innovation Center), Peter Marx (Choose Clean Water Coalition), Amy Wyant (OCCA), Congressman Marcus Molinaro (NY-19), Emily Dekar (USC), Ramsey Adams and son John (Catskill Mountain Keeper).

Steve's Latest Honor

During the 2023 NACD National Association of Conservation Districts Annual meeting on February 14th in New Orleans, District Manager, Steve Lorraine, of the Madison County Soil and Water Conservation District was honored with the Hugh Hammond Bennett Award for Excellence Regional Planner Award from the Northeast region. The award is given to an individual who demonstrates a high standard of conservation planning and implementation for customers as well as sharing his expertise with others. Congratulations Steve!



The Madison County Soil & Water District finished up a pasture fence and gravity watering system for a beef farm within the Tallette Creek watershed just before winter. It includes a buffer with associated tree planting and stream crossing to be done in 2023.

Madison Project Spotlight



Riparian Forest Buffer Establishment along Choconut Creek & Tribs, Vestal, NY

Written by: Bailey Park , Broome SWCD

The Broome County Soil and Water Conservation District's Riparian Forest Buffer Program was a huge success during the Fall 2022 planting season! With help from our partners: the Upper Susquehanna Coalition (USC) Buffer Team, NYS Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) Trees for Tributaries (T4T) Program, Town of Vestal Parks Department, and SUNY Binghamton University students, we were able to establish approximately 4 acres of riparian forest buffer along Choconut Creek and its tributaries. Buffers were planted at three various parks within the Lower and Middle Choconut Creek Watershed including Vestal Center Park, Jones Park, and Richards Ave Park. Over 700 native trees and shrubs were established as part of the buffers to improve the riparian habitat and help with pollution control in the parks.

Choconut Creek and its tributaries are classified as "Class C" waters, aquatic habitat, running for 47 miles and draining into the Susquehanna River. Uses impacted within this waterbody include aquatic life and habitat/hydrology; both are considered to be stressed. Establishing a riparian forested buffer adjacent to this waterbody will help filter excess nutrients/sediment from entering the stream. These buffers in conjunction, will help to reduce stormwater volume and runoff, as well as help stabilize the streambanks.

Students studying Environmental Science at SUNY Binghamton University were given the opportunity to volunteer through their class, Ecology of the Northeast, in an effort to establish a riparian forested buffer at Vestal Center Park. Broome County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) partnered with the USC to host a tree planting event that allowed students to show

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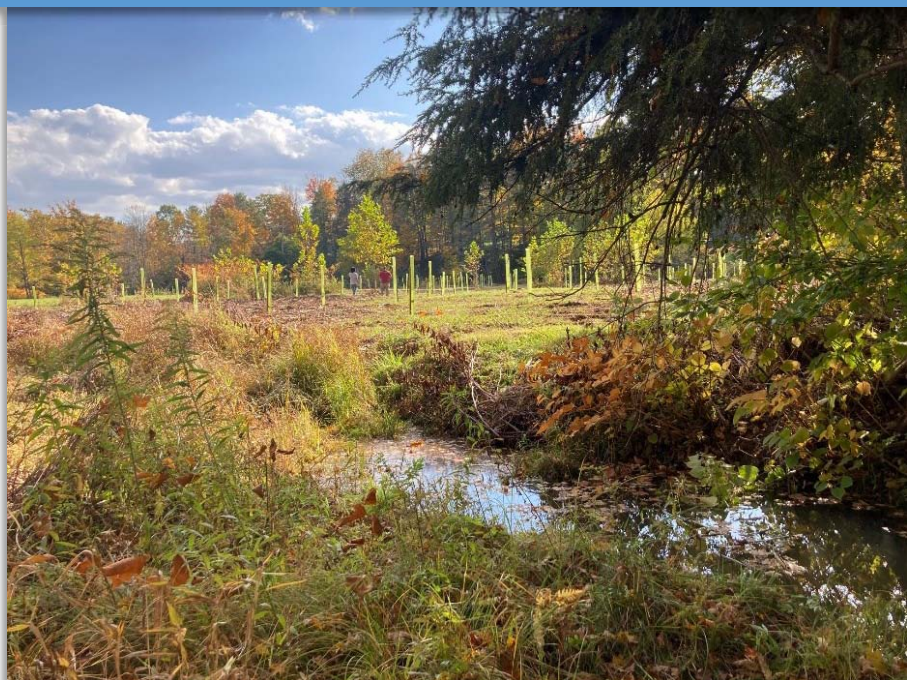
SUNY Binghamton University students proud to be a part of the riparian forest buffer effort along Choconut Creek in Vestal, NY.

Students from SUNY Binghamton University volunteer in a tree planting event at Vestal Center Park, Vestal, NY.



their appreciation for the environment, learn about the importance of buffers, as well as gain hands-on experience outside of a classroom setting. Broome SWCD worked closely with the Vestal Parks Department to ensure all site preparation was complete prior to the event.

This planting also represents a “pilot project” in an attempt to transition the current invasive cover of Japanese knotweed, into a healthy and thriving riparian forested buffer over time. The goal of this project was to plant native, fast-growing species along the waterbody that will establish well and provide shade for the stream, ultimately out-competing the invasives and keeping waters cool for aquatic life. Consistently mowing the knotweed and maintaining growth in between plants will be required for management purposes until the buffer is mature and successfully established.



Riparian Forest Buffer Establishment along Choconut Creek and its tributaries in Vestal Center Park, Vestal, NY.

This project will be a challenge due to the strong population of invasives, but with our Buffer Steward Program and park staff on board with repetitive mowing and continuous management, it may be possible! Thank you to the USC Buffer Team for helping coordinate the planting event and to all the volunteers who helped make a difference in the Choconut Creek Watershed!



Tioga County Soil Health Meeting

By: Danielle Singer, Tioga SWCD

On February 7th Tioga County Soil and Water Conservation District held our first ever Soil Health Meeting! The free event was held from 11am-2pm with lunch included and overall attendance of 39 people. It was exciting to see so many Tioga County farmers spend their day with us to talk about soil health and think about ways to incorporate new practices on their farm.

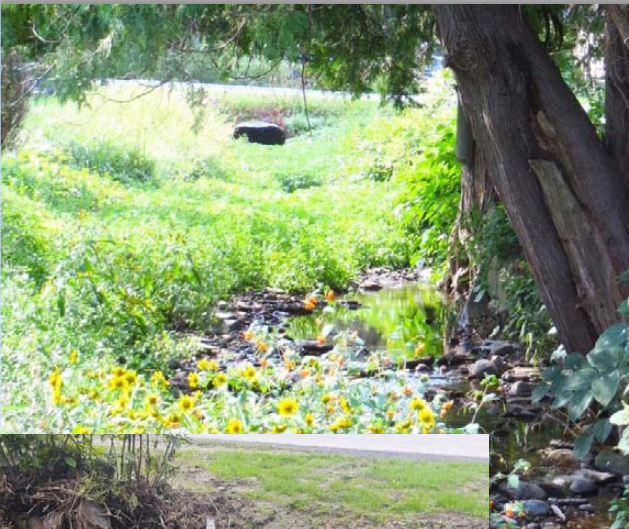
The topics included an introduction to soil health, why soil health is important, ins and outs of cover crop species selection, lessons learned from interseeding cover crops, no-till, reducing tillage on your farm, the USC nutrient management app, soil sampling and district programs for soil health practices. We received great feedback about the event and needs/interests of our farmers in the post-event survey that will guide our future grant applications and district programs. We would like to thank all the wonderful speakers who inspired the attendees – Janice Degni (South Central Dairy and Field Crops CCE Regional Team), Rod Porter (King’s Agriseed), Kevin Brown (Bradford County Conservation District) and Jason Cuddeback (Cayuga County Soil and Water Conservation District).



New to Our Team

USC Buffer Steward Coordinator: Ava Glasser

Ava is the new Buffer Steward Coordinator for the USC. Originally from South Orange, NJ, Ava moved to Binghamton NY after graduating from Binghamton University in 2019 with a bachelor's degree in Environmental Science. During her time at BU, she was proud to participate in several ongoing ecological studies, including invasive species monitoring at the Rocky Mountain Biological Laboratory in Colorado, and a long-term forest dynamics tracking project in the Binghamton University Nature Preserve. Prior to joining the USC, Ava was a certification specialist for the Northeast Organic Farming Association of New York and worked to help farmers obtain and keep their organic certification. In her free time, you can find Ava fishing, hiking, gardening and foraging for wild plants and mushrooms. She is excited to start working with the stewards this summer!



Flood Mitigation Project Spotlight

As part of the Flood Mitigation Program, Madison County SWCD works with municipalities and rural townships to address problem areas that threaten road stability, public safety and homes. This is just one example showing a project finished in 2022 that literally saved 7 homes in Lebanon, NY from flooding issues during storm events.



Culvert Before - severely restricting stream flow

New culvert sized to mitigate road and property flooding issues





Catskill Regional Agricultural Conference Reunites Friends

By: Troy Bishopp - USC Grass Whisperer

DELHI, NY – Nothing beats a live event, especially after a two-year pandemic and being “Zoom-ified” by the virtual world of information sharing. What a difference it makes for farmers and presenters who can make eye contact, share practical ideas and brainstorm solutions on agricultural subjects and enjoy fellowship over a meal again.

The 2023 Catskill Regional Agriculture Conference was once again spearheaded by Cornell Cooperative Extension of Delaware County, in partnership with the Watershed Agricultural Council, and held on the SUNY Delhi Campus. Dairy, livestock, grazing management, vegetables and cut flower production continue to be the mainstay of information requested from area farmers.

The vestibule offered a small trade show featuring services from the Delaware County Soil & Water

Conservation District, Farm Credit East, the Upper Susquehanna Coalition, Kencove Farm Fence and the Watershed Ag Council.

Two early bird sessions were showcased: “Creating an efficient pastured broiler enterprise” from CCE Livestock and Beginning Farm Specialist Amy Barkley and “Standing out at farm stands” with a panel of local farmers. A lunchtime presentation on the potential impacts of climate change policies on New York State agricultural producers was also discussed.

The dairy track featured how the milk price is determined, lowering bulk tank somatic cell counts and innovative approaches to terminating winter rye cover crops. The grazing session featured management tools for grazing success, hayfield grazing considerations and planning a fence project.



Livestock topics included leveraging the stocker cattle enterprise for New York farmers, the basics of breeding selections for beef and sheep operations and an interesting look at the status of dung beetles in New York and their role in the ecosystem.

The vegetable track focused on weed identification and management options, soil health properties and expanding a farm’s offerings to customers with uncommon fruits. The well-attended flower sessions discussed calculating cut flower profitability, considerations for a U-cut flower operation and wedding opportunities for the farmer florist.



USC Annual Retreat Returns

Location: Tioga Downs, Nichols, NY

The two-day retreat was our first in person retreat since February 2020, the month before the pandemic began. Response to this year's retreat was impressive, with 88 participants representing 31 partner and member entities from across the watershed and beyond.

Day 1 focused on partnerships, with an agenda packed with current and future partners highlighting ongoing and potential successes and projects.

Day 2 focused on USC and our members, digging into existing programs, and splitting into breakout groups to help brainstorm ways to improve, expand and focus efforts going forward. With so many indepth and focused discussions, our post-retreat notes number 39 pages, and will be excellent resources moving our organization forward. Retreat resources including presentations and notes are available on our webpage:

www.u-s-c.org/2023retreat

