



# 2015 Annual Report

*A brief summary of some of the many projects and programs undertaken by your local Conservation District in 2015.*

*The District's mission is to protect and improve the lakes, rivers, streams, soils and other natural resources of Warren County through locally-led conservation projects and programs.*

**2015 was yet another busy year for the SWCD** and we are constantly amazed at the requests for assistance from landowners and the municipalities in our county. When we provide recommendations, assistance or conduct projects, we do so in an effort to conserve and properly manage our natural resources. Looking at issues critically and developing practical solutions is our goal. If you ever have questions, we invite you to visit our website, call or stop by the office, we are happy to speak with you.

I'd like to share a quote from Professor Emeritus of Agriculture, Jerry Apps of the University Wisconsin-Madison. "And perhaps most importantly, the land taught me to never forget that we are but visitors, temporary stewards, and what we do with the land will dramatically affect those who follow us. Caring for the land is one way to care for the future." (Every Farm Tells a Story). I plan on living in Warren County for the rest of my life, and I want to see the county and our towns successful. We are very dependent on our natural resources and in order to stay successful (tourism, sugaring, recreation, logging, etc.) we need to wisely manage our resources, and that quote sums up my feelings. Thanks for your support — Jim Lieberum

## Warren County Habitat Improvement Grant

In 2015, the Lake Champlain Basin Program and the New England Interstate Water Pollution Control Commission awarded the District a habitat improvement grant. The goals of the program were to **install habitat structures** in and along many of County's ponds and tributaries of the Lake Champlain Watershed.

The purpose of the structures are to improve and enhance habitat in the watershed's aquatic and riparian segments altered by urban and agricultural development, channel straightening and stormwater runoff introduction. Aquatic habitat improvements to Halfway Brook and its tributaries, West Brook, English Brook and ponds in Bolton, Lake George, and Queensbury were accomplished with native bank plantings, amphibian habitat structures, fish habitat and passage augmentation and migratory bird structures. This grant was used to repair and mitigate the damages caused by stormwater and road maintenance practices to ponds and streams within the watershed.

Following the award of the grant, work began with both private and municipal landowners to gain access for work within and along the selected waterways. The proposed work was enthusiastically received by both private landowners and municipal representatives. A total of 57 improvements and structures were installed in the riparian and aquatic habitat of Warren County.



Wood duck boxes in Rush Pond



Osprey nest at West Brook

## ***Purple Loosestrife Management Program***

Purple Loosestrife was introduced into the US over 150 years ago. This pretty plant quickly forms dense monocultures that **change the ecology of the native systems**, specifically wetlands. This invasive alters natural systems enough to drive commonly seen waterfowl away and can dry up wetlands and shallow ponds. In order to combat this pest, for over 25 years, Purple Loosestrife Beetles (*Galerucella* sp.) that feed on this invasive, have been utilized across the country. In 2015 the Purple Loosestrife Management Program, funded by the Lake Champlain Basin Program, was initiated and has been a great success working with numerous volunteers, schools and organizations. The program consisted of collecting Purple Loosestrife root wads in early spring, planting the root wads in miniature wetlands made out of child swimming pools, collecting the beetles that feed on Loosestrife, rearing the beetles in the hatcheries to increase beetle populations, and releasing the beetles into Loosestrife infested wetlands and stream corridors of the Lake Champlain Basin. The Glens Falls 8<sup>th</sup> grade Environmental class



reared beetles and took care of the hatcheries, making sure the plants had water and the beetles had plenty of Loosestrife stalks to feed on. A total of 29 Loosestrife plants were inoculated with 500 beetles and approximately 5,800 beetles were reared and released into two infested wetlands of the Halfway Brook Watershed in Queensbury.

Prior to releasing the beetles, the selected infested wetlands near Halfway Brook were digitally mapped to document the progress the beetles will have on removing this invasive species. Year two of the program will continue into 2016 where volunteers will help to conserve our wetlands in the Lake Champlain Basin.

## ***MS4 Programs: Warren County, Town of Queensbury, Town of Lake George, Village of Lake George***

The Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) Programs are continuing to prove successful. The District is now involved in the MS4 Programs for the Village and Town of Lake George. With the **newly designated MS4 communities**, the District has begun mapping the stormwater conveyances throughout the Town and Village of Lake George. With the expansion of the MS4 boundary into Lake George, additional mapping was completed on all Warren County roads in this designated area. For education, District staff provided stormwater, illicit discharge and spill prevention training for the municipalities.

A unique task in the MS4 Programs is the collection of outfall samples during winter snowmelt. The samples are tested for chloride levels in stormwater runoff from de-icing materials. The Town of Queensbury Highway Department collected five samples this year during an early March snowmelt and the samples were then brought to Darrin Freshwater Institute for analysis.

We continue to assist the Queensbury Highway Department with maintaining the stormwater separator near Halfway Brook in Queensbury. It captures sediment from Route 9 and is cleaned out yearly. In 2015 approximately 20 tons of sediment was removed.

The tasks of training, water quality sampling and stormwater maintenance are only a few of the benefits our community and natural resources receive through this program.





## ***English Brook Stormwater and Sediment Abatement Project***

This past year, the District spent considerable efforts working with the Village of Lake George DPW, Jarrett Engineering and the Fund for Lake George on this bioretention project. Upon completion in 2016, this area will act as a **treatment train** for stormwater that currently flows directly into English Brook.

Since Lake George is a drinking water source and is the economic driver for the region, we must ensure that its water quality remain high for the health and safety of the consumers and our economy.

This system will filter water using stone, vegetation, a forebay structure and an infiltration basin. The water will then be allowed to pool for a short duration allowing for infiltration in the larger section of the site. Ultimately cleaner water will flow from the site to English Brook.

Since this project is located in the Village of Lake George and they are a new Municipal Separate Stormwater System community (MS4), The Village has taken the lead on this project and will be responsible for maintaining the system. Since this was NYSDOT property, the NYSDOT ultimately reviewed, provided comment and feedback and approved the design. This has been a great opportunity to work with them on an important water quality project. Additional partners who have made this project successful include the Warren County DPW, Town of Warrensburg HWD, Town of Chester HWD, Town of Lake George HWD and Town of Queensbury HWD.

This spring, construction will be completed by adding the inlet structure, finalizing the outlet weir and planting additional trees and shrubs on the site.



***As service to our landowners*** and to assist with our goal of encouraging conservation, the District once again provided low cost **tree and shrub seedlings and fish fingerlings** to our community.

Many people in the county know us as the agency that sells bareroot tree seedlings in the spring and this past year we sold over **4,000** seedlings. Although our seedling sale happens just once a year, we generally have wildflower seeds, fertilizers, tree shelters and stakes, wild game plot mixes and bird & bat houses in stock throughout the year. There are a multitude of uses for the specimens we offer, including wind breaks, visual barriers, wildlife enhancement, insect control, bloom, fall foliage, pollination and wildlife food supply.

Several years ago the District started a spring fish sale to go along with the fall sale. Between the spring and fall fish sale, we sold nearly **8,000** fish (brook and rainbow trout, largemouth bass and fathead minnows).

Call our office for more information for both of these programs.



## *The 2015 SWCD Conservationist of the Year*

**The Village of Lake George Department of Public Works.** The District has worked with the DPW on numerous projects, specifically working to reduce impacts from stormwater to Lake George. The DPW was the major reason the English Brook Exit 22 project was moved forward and is ready for a 2016 completion. The DPW is always willing to lend a hand with stormwater abatement and habitat conservation or improvement projects, which benefit the community.

The Conservationist of the Year Award has evolved over the years to recognize an individual, group or municipality that assists with getting conservation on the ground and is willing to go beyond what may be considered the normal work routine. Recent past Conservationists of the Year include:

2009: Marc Migliore, NYSDEC

2010: East Shore Schroon Lake Association

2011: Mike Travis, Queensbury Highway

2012: (a) Bill Lupo, NYSDEC and (b) Warren County

2013: Ed Pennock, Warrensburg Highway

2014: Mark Dutra, Queensbury Highway



*District Chairman Frank Thomas (left), presents the 2015 COY award to Deputy Mayor John Earl (center) and DPW Superintendent, Dave Harrington (right)*

## *Municipal and Landowner Assistance Programs*

The District assists **landowners and municipalities** with natural resource concerns ranging from aquatic or terrestrial invasive species, stormwater management recommendations, to agricultural best management practices (and many more). In 2015 we assisted landowners, logging operations, lake associations, private businesses, and town, village, county and state municipalities.

During site visits, the District provides technical assistance based on the resource concern. Some recommendations require GIS mapping, soils maps, surveying elevations and grant writing for project funding. If you or your community have a resource question or issue, please don't hesitate to contact us!



*Nick Rowell assisting a landowner with a Soil Group Worksheet for an Ag. Value Assessment*

## *The 2015 Warren County Envirothon ...*

was once again a huge success! With the best weather we have had for an Envirothon, nearly **200 students, facilitators and volunteers** helped to make the event happen.

Several school administrators from the competing schools and SWCD District Board members were present at the event. A team from Johnsbury Central High School went on to represent Warren County at the state competition, held at Hobart William Smith College.

A thank you never really seems to be adequate for our volunteers and sponsors, but we'd like you to know that you are helping to install a conservation ethic in the students who are participating.





## ***Schroon Lake Watershed Program:***

### **Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) Program**

The Schroon Lake AIS Program continues through the partnership including the Towns of Chester, Horicon and Schroon, Warren County Soil and Water Conservation District, East Shore Schroon Lake Association and the Schroon Lake Association. The goal of this program is to reduce the amount of AIS found in Schroon Lake.

Currently, two species are of concern—Eurasian Watermilfoil and Curleyleaf Pondweed. Aquatic Invasive Management LLC (AIM) harvested

approximately 715 pounds in 4 weeks of hand harvesting. The volume harvested has shown a significant downward trend over the past 4 years. This is due not only to the actual harvest, but the Milfoil Scout Program that ESSLA coordinates. We currently believe that while additional milfoil patches or plants are found, AIS are at a practical management level. This would not be the case except for the **dedication and cooperation** that the communities and associations have developed.



### **Water Quality Improvements**

The Town of Schroon's stormwater remediation work in the downtown area continues with the completion of two approved stormwater infiltration systems within the Village of Schroon Lake. Work at the **municipal parking lot** on Fairfield Avenue was completed with the

installation of three drywells, the paving of its road side gutter and turnouts to the drop inlets. This new system will capture and treat localized stormwater runoff from

both Route 9 and Fairfield Avenue. The drywell system will aid in the reduction of nonpoint source pollutants and runoff water volumes that use to flow to the lake through the Dock Street Watershed area. A second drywell system was installed at the east end of Leland Avenue with the installation and turnout paving for this location was completed during the summer of 2015. A new draft plan for stormwater treatment at the Schroon Town Hall and parking lot is being developed at this time and new plans for the expansion of the town hall building will require a new set of designs to be developed for this location. Design work for the treatment of Dock Street stormwater runoff continues with the assistance of consulting engineers. A special thanks goes out to Schroon Supervisor Michael Marnell and the Schroon Lake Water Department's Dave Clark and Bill Jenks without whose assistance these projects would not have been completed in such an efficient manner.



### **Town of Horicon**

This year the District was successful in installing two drywells at the intersection of **Eric, Belle and Church Streets** that outlet to a bioretention structure which has taken on the appearance of a tiered rain garden for the maximum amount of stormwater treatment possible. In the past, stormwater from these areas has run unmitigated down the roads to the beach. This has resulted in continual beach erosion and contributed thousands of gallons of stormwater to Schroon Lake with each storm.



## ***Schroon River Habitat Improvement Program***

The District completed **twenty root wad installations** in the 2015 season. The first project locations were upstream of the "County Home Bridge" on the Warrensburg side of the river. Seven structures were installed in the bank of the river and 3 double trunks were installed nearby, just north of an oxbow in the Schroon. These installations supplement fish nursery conditions. The last project location was located on the Bolton side of the river, approximately one mile North of the County Home Bridge. This location was chosen after a site visit for a failing stream bank. Although the root wad installations are point driven, they will certainly curb the amount of material that is being eroded and transported down stream. Seven structures were installed at this location ( picture on the right). The District will fulfill the installation of the last eight structures and looks forward to involvement from the local high school to record observations at these locations.



## ***Agricultural Environmental Management and the Regional Conservation Partnership Program***

This was **a great year** for the District's Agricultural Environmental Management (AEM) Program! The number of farms in the AEM Program has grown, plus we received funding through the Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) to assist in addressing natural resource concerns for Warren County's agricultural producers.

This was the first year of the competitive cost share grant program, through the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS), that is aiding to fund farms with high tunnels and cover crops. High tunnels have been the popular choice among the nine applications received. Currently, the District is assisting the five eligible farms with site layout, sizing, permitting and best management practices for the high tunnels. RCPP is a program that allows farms in Warren County to compete for funding locally, instead of competing for funding statewide. The District would like to thank Scott Fitscher and Kate Teale of the NRCS for their assistance to our office and farmers.



## ***Roadside Stabilization***

A record breaking **1 million square feet** of disturbed surface was covered through our hydromulching program last year. The District closed out a grant with the Lake Champlain Basin Program, and initiated the first of a three year grant with the NYSDEC.

2015 was another tremendous year of working with our local municipalities as well as state and county crews. The value of our program has become well known and is a valuable tool for stabilizing disturbed areas. Two full days of working with the State DOT and traffic crews to shore up 9N shoulder maintenance and working with county crews along Bay Road in the Lake George Watershed and along the Warrensburg Road in Thurman to protect the Hudson River, are just a few examples of the work that gets done throughout the growing season.





## *The District continues to be successful in its grant applications*

Through the **NYSDEC's Water Quality Improvement Project Program**, the District secured 2 grants that will assist communities with (a) stormwater remediation, in the Village of Lake George, Town of Chester and the Town of Warrensburg and (b) stream habitat/stream crossings in the Town of Hague and Chester. We continually apply for grants in partnership or on behalf of our communities.

## *District Notes*

Hazard Mitigation: The new **County Hazard Mitigation Plan** is moving along well and should be completed and approved by FEMA by Fall of 2016. There has been a very good municipal response to this effort. Please visit <http://www.warrencountynyhmp.com/Pages/default.aspx>, to review documents and provide comments to this document.

Champlain Watershed Coalition of New York: Warren County continues to be an active **member of CWICNY** and has assisted in several programs within the last year ranging from implementation of soil stabilization projects to assisting with the 2015 North Country Stormwater Tradeshow. CWICNY is a collaborative watershed effort that includes: Clinton, Essex, Franklin, Warren and Washington Counties. Visit <https://www.cwicny.org/> for more information.

Upper Hudson River Watershed Coalition: In 2015 our interns evaluated nearly every public road in the **Hudson River Watershed in the county**, looking for erosion or sediment concerns. Our project sites will be included in an Upper Hudson River Watershed Management Plan. In addition, we will be collecting information on stream crossings and other natural resource issues that affect our communities water quality.

## *Recognition for the Hard Work*

In March of 2015 the District was awarded the New York State Conservation District Employees' Association's *Special Project Award* for its agricultural series, **The Farm Talks**. This series has been extremely well received. It has been a tremendous tool to get the word out for agricultural and homesteading activities in our area.

Also in March, Nick Rowell, the District's Natural Resource Specialist, was awarded the NYSCDEA **Division 5 Merit Award** for his outstanding work effort in the field of conservation.

In October of 2015, Frank Thomas, Chairman of the District Board was recognized by the New York Association of Conservation Districts for his active support of the Warren County SWCD and the growth of its programs. Frank was awarded the **2015 NYACD Partnership Award**.

The District was recognized for its efforts in providing assistance and support to the local MS4 communities and was presented the **2015 NYACD Commendation Award**.

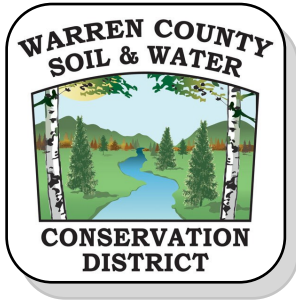
We are pleased that the staff, directors and the District were recognized for their hard work by their peers.



**Nick Rowell—Merit Award**



**NYACD  
Commendation Award**



## *Did you know...*

- The Warren County Soil and Water Conservation District was created by the Warren County Board of Supervisors in 1956 under NYS Soil and Water District Law.
- The District is a ***Non Regulatory*** county-based organization overseen by a seven member Board of Directors for local priorities.
- The District's total 2015 operating expenses were **\$467,400.**
- Our 2015 funding allocation from Warren County was **\$302,152.** The remainder of the budget comes from competitive grants, additional municipal contracts and reimbursement from New York State.
- The District has received or partnered in over **seventy two grants in the past thirteen years, totaling over 5.3 million dollars.** These dollars go directly to conservation projects for Warren County.

### **2016 SWCD Board of Directors**

Frank Thomas - Chairman  
Ron Montesi - Vice Chairman  
Mark Brown                      Tim Costello  
Charlie Maine                  George Ryan  
Evelyn Wood

### **District Staff**

Jim Lieberum, District Manager  
Rhonda Jarvis, Office Manager  
Dean Moore, Sr. District Technician  
Bob Bombard, Water Resource Spec.  
Nick Rowell, Nat. Resource Spec.

Tel: (518)623-3119  
Fax:(518) 623-3519  
[jim99@nycap.rr.com](mailto:jim99@nycap.rr.com)

***Visit us at: 394 Schroon River Road Warrensburg NY 12885***

***online at our website: [www.warrenswcd.org](http://www.warrenswcd.org);  
or "Like Us" on Facebook: [Warren County Soil and Water Conservation District](https://www.facebook.com/WarrenCountySoilandWaterConservationDistrict)***