



Seneca Trail RC&D Council 2007 Annual Report

January 2008

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John Copeland

Seneca Nation of Indians

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NRCS Office Staff:

JoAnn Kurtis, Coordinator
Lori Snyder, Secretary
Don Wild, Area Resource
Conservationist/ Grazing Lands
Specialist

**Serving the natural
resource needs of the
people living within
Allegheny, Cattaraugus,
Chautauqua, Livingston,
Wyoming Counties and
the Seneca Nation of
Indians since 1968**

Recreational Bridge Project Moves Forward

A few years ago, partners with the RC&D Council had the idea to provide assistance to various trail groups to build or replace inadequate bridges on the region's recreational trail systems. After obtaining a State grant to fund the engineering design of eight bridges in Allegheny, Cattaraugus and Chautauqua Counties, the Franklinville Snowmobile Club took the design for their bridge and put it to good use. The first of the eight bridges was built next to Franklinville Central School and will serve the school and general community by providing safe access from the school ground to the community park on the other side of Saunders Creek.

The park also serves as a trail head for a system of snowmobile trails in and around Franklinville. The snowmobile club put a considerable amount of work into getting this bridge completed.

In 2008, three additional bridges will be constructed to connect over 30 more miles of recreational trails in the area.



The first bridge installed in Franklinville as part of the Recreational Bridge Project

Past President Receives Regional Award

In 2007, the RC&D Council said farewell to outgoing President Frederick Sinclair, who served 26 years with the Council, the last 3 as Council President. In 2007, Fred was nominated for, and was awarded, the Council Member of the Year Award from the Mid-Atlantic Association of Resource and Conservation Development Councils.

The Association recognized Fred's significant leadership contribution and involvement with the RC&D program through his work as Executive Director with the Allegheny County Soil and Water Conservation District. Eight States, from New York to West Virginia to Delaware, containing nearly 30 RC&D Councils make up the Mid-Atlantic Association. To be chosen for this award is truly an achievement.

Congratulations Fred!



Council Develops New Five-Year Area Plan

Council members spent most of the year talking with constituents to find out about their ideas and natural resource concerns so that the RC&D Council could develop a new five-year plan that truly meets the needs of the people in the area. Early in 2007, the Council sent out over 250 surveys to people across the state to gauge their concerns about such topics as ground water protection, soil erosion, natural resource education, community development and rural fire protection. More than 25% of the surveys were returned. The issues of concerns were tabulated and the Council began the task of developing Goals, Objectives and Strategies to address the highest priority concerns.

The five-year plan serves as the basis for an agreement with the US Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service, to provide over \$500,000 in funding for the RC&D program. The Area Plan lays out the course of action to improve the natural resources that the Council will take from 2008 to 2012. Areas addressed in the new plan include improving surface water quality by reducing streambank erosion; improve natural resource based economic development and job retention; improve options for on-farm energy alternatives; continue promoting Agriculture and Environmental Education; and reducing soil loss on agricultural and forest lands.

To obtain a copy of the 2008-2012 Area Plan, either contact the RC&D office or download it from www.senecatrailrcd.org.



A map of the Seneca Trail RC&D Council Area



Participants at a 2007 Council sponsored Grazing Meeting in Livingston County

State-Wide Grassland Evaluation Contest in it's Second Year

In April, students from Penn Yan, Belleville-Henderson, and Fillmore High schools competed at the Second Annual NYS Grassland Evaluation Contest held at the Big Flats Plant Materials Center in Corning. The contest is designed to test the students' knowledge of agriculture, grazing, and managing resources to meet livestock needs, balanced with protecting wildlife habitat.

The teams, made of four students involved in Future Farmers of America or 4-H from across the entire state, took a test at each of four outdoor stations answering questions such as, "If you were managing this site for Bobolinks, which vegetative cover would you eliminate and why"

"The event is a challenge for the students requiring that they use their knowledge in a variety of subjects and apply it to real life conditions for managing a grazing herd of animals," said JoAnn Kurtis, Seneca Trail Resource Conservation & Development Coordinator.

Troy Bishopp, Chairman of the NYS Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative (GLCI) Steering Committee awarded Penn Yan Academy the first place finish. The second place award went to Belleville-Henderson, and Fillmore Central placed third.

The contest was sponsored by Seneca Trail Resource Conservation and Development Council, NYS GLCI Steering Committee, Finger Lakes RC&D Council, R&R Fencing, and USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service.

In 2008 the Grassland Contest will be held in the fall.



Students from across NYS that participated in the 2007 Grassland Evaluation Contest

Conewango Creek Watershed Gets a Curator

Over the last five years there has been a considerable amount of environmental based programs and projects occurring in the Conewango Creek Watershed, with many different agencies involved. While all of these activities are helpful in achieving improved water quality in the Conewango Creek Watershed, they are being done without watershed goals or an overall comprehensive plan in mind. Each agency or group is working alone instead of being part of a conservation partnership.

The Council obtained funds to provide for a Watershed Curator who will establish and coordinate a partnership with these sometime diverse groups for the purpose of assessing the watershed, prioritizing areas of concern, developing baseline data on conditions within the watershed and implementing projects and practices that improve the environment within the watershed. Having a single point of contact for watershed issues can improve the opportunities for funding from environmentally minded funding organizations.

Eventually the Curator's work will lead to the development of a rapid watershed assessment of the watershed to provide the starting point for the development of a comprehensive watershed plan.



Chautauqua Lake is the largest body of water in the Conewango Creek Watershed

In 2008, the Seneca Trail RC&D Council will celebrate it's Fortieth Anniversary. Planning is underway for a celebration event to take place on June 5, 2008 in Olean, NY. Watch the mail for an invitation to attend and come celebrate with us.

Grazing Assistance Continues Across the Council Area

After sixteen years of providing assistance with developing Managed Intensive Grazing (MIG) systems on small and mid-sized family farms in the five Counties, you might think that there's no one left to assist. Helen Terry, the Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative Grazing Advocate for the Council found ten farms that still needed assistance and developed grazing plans to improve their grazing resources.

Ms. Terry works closely with producers and Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) personnel to develop grazing plans that utilize the best potential grazing resources. The plans can then be used by the producer to apply for funding for the installation of the required practices through the Environmental Quality Incentive Program from USDA, NRCS.

Additional assistance is provided by grazing specialists in the Seneca Trail RC&D and Cortland NRCS Offices.

Contact the Seneca Trail RC&D Office for referrals to the GLCI Grazing Advocate.

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Livestock out on Pasture



Dr. Darrell Emmick, NRCS Grazing Specialist, reviews a grazing plan with Kevin Herrington, as Dan Weykman, NRCS looks on



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RC&D- Making Things Happen

The mission of the Seneca Trail Resource Conservation and Development Council is to provide the leadership required to develop and implement projects and programs to protect the environment, provide economic development, create jobs, improve the standard of living, and enrich lives through the conservation, development, and wise use of the Area's human and natural resources.

Council Accomplishments in 2007

During 2007, the Seneca Trail Resource Conservation and Development Council, Inc initiated six new projects and completed seven projects in community development and natural resources conservation. As a result of these projects the following benefits were obtained:

- 789 Acres of Grazing Lands included in developed grazing plans
- 13 livestock farms assisted
- 1700 feet of fencing and 2 watering systems installed
- 6520 tons of materials recycled
- 5 forestry informational seminars held, 151 students instructed
- 6 forestry informational publications produced, 2064 people reached
- 6 students provided educational scholarships
- 21 jobs created or retained
- 2570 pounds of venison donated to local food banks
- Secured \$109,483 in direct funding for active and completed projects
- Provided technical and information service to 27 groups and agencies

The all-volunteer Resource Conservation and Development Council provide more than 350 hours of service to get these projects completed.

The RC&D Council would like to thank the following organizations for their assistance in making the above accomplishments happen: Allegany, Cattaraugus, Chautauqua, Livingston and Wyoming County Soil & Water Conservation Districts, Conewango Creek Watershed Association, Venison Donation Coalition, NY Federation of RC&D Councils, Empire State Chapter of the Soil & Water Conservation Society, NY Grazing Land Conservation Initiative Steering Committee, NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets, NYS Senator Catharine Young, Great Lakes Commission and USDA- Natural Resources Conservation Service.



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