

COMMITTEES

- Cornell University's Long Island Horticultural Research & Extension Center - Advisory Council
- Environmental Education Foundation of Soil & Water Districts
- Long Island Agricultural Stewardship Working Group
- Long Island Ag. Forum Planning Committee
- Long Island Commission on Aquifer Protection
- Long Island Regional Envirothon
- New York Association of Conservation Districts
- NYS Conservation District Employees Association
- New York State Envirothon
- North Shore Coastal Erosion Control Taskforce
- Peconic Estuary Technical Advisory Committee
- Suffolk County Ag. Stewardship Program
- Suffolk County Department of Health Services Peconic River Project
- Suffolk County Land & Water Invasive Species Advisory Board
- Suffolk County GIS Users Group
- Suffolk County Vector Control Long Range Planning Committee
- South Shore Estuary Reserve
- Suffolk County Farmland Preservation Committee
- Suffolk County Water Quality Coordinating Committee



Kaitlin R. Shahinian is the new Soil District Technician for Suffolk County's Soil and Water Conservation District. She holds a Master's of Science in Environmental Studies from Adelphi University. While completing her degrees, she camped in Alaska for a month while excavating and surveying archaeological sites. This adventure sparked a passion for hiking and camping. Kaitlin rescued a kitten named Willow after a friend found her extremely sick and injured. Having minimal horticultural experience, Kaitlin has recently found an interest in propagating and growing succulents. She enjoys staying active and volunteering for local Environmental organizations like Seatuck Environmental Association and Sierra Club's Clean Energy Team. Prior to SWCD, Kaitlin worked as a GIS Analyst for Town of Babylon's Department of Environmental Control. She is eager to be working closer with resource conservation and to be learning more about agricultural practices from farms in Suffolk County. She is also delighted to be part of such a dedicated and cohesive team.

Suffolk County Soil Health Initiative Soil Health Equipment Loan Program (Soil H.E.L.P.) - Beginning Spring 2019! By Corey Humphrey

The goal of the Soil H.E.L.P. Program is to assist Suffolk County farms conserve and improve the long-term health of their soils. In conjunction with Cornell Cooperative Extension's Agriculture Stewardship Program, the Suffolk County Soil and Water Conservation District has purchased low impact, conservation oriented agricultural equipment. Several pieces of equipment including compost spreaders, zone-builders, and a no-till drill will be available for loan starting in March 2019. In order to use the equipment you will need to: 1) reserve the equipment online or over the phone, 2) provide proof of insurance, 3) provide an incidental deposit (refunded when equipment is returned), and 4) provide adequate transportation to and from your farm. For the 2019 season all equipment will be housed at the Long Island Horticultural Research and Extension Center (LIHREC) located at 3059 Sound Ave, Riverhead, NY 11901. Please contact Deborah Aller at da352@cornell.edu or 631- 727-7850 x 206 with any questions.



Comprehensive Soil Health Testing Program By Corey Humphrey

In the spring 2018, the District and Cornell Cooperative Extension's Agriculture Stewardship began the Comprehensive Soil Health Testing Program; providing free soil health testing services to local farmers interested in monitoring and managing their farms long-term soil health. The Comprehensive Soil Health Testing goes beyond the basic nutrient testing and evaluates the soils biological, physical, and chemical properties. Our program utilizes Cornell University's Comprehensive Assessment of Soil Health or C.A.S.H. test to provide an overall soil quality score. This score is derived from analyzing 12 different soil indicators to depict your soil's constraints and a table of suggested management options for each indicator. In 2018, 14 farms were sampled with the goal of 15 more farms receiving soil health testing in 2019 (again free of charge!). If you are interested in participating in the Comprehensive Soil Health Testing Program please Deborah Aller at da352@cornell.edu or 631- 727-7850 x 206.



LOOKING BACK ON 2018 Corey Humphrey, District Manager

The Holiday Season is the best time to gather with loved ones, celebrate and reflect on the past year. Looking back on the past twelve months allows us a chance to be thankful for our good fortune and think about our goals for the upcoming year. 2018 kept the Soil and Water Conservation District busy implementing several great programs that preserve Suffolk County's natural resources. These efforts include our Deer Fencing opportunity, Farm Tire Recycling events, Agriculture in the Classroom grants, Stormwater Remediation Design and Construction, Conservation Planning, Comprehensive Soil Health Testing and our Soil Health Equipment Loan Program (H.E.L.P.). Behind every District program there is a team of environmental professionals who work tirelessly to administer these efforts. I would be remiss if I did not take this opportunity to thank the District staff for their hard work throughout the year. Ann Marie Calabro - Agronomist, Sharon Frost - Soil District Technician, Susan Odell-Pepe - Principal Account Clerk and our newest addition to the team Kaitlin Shahinian - Soil District Technician have been the critical to our success. Their hard work and dedication to protecting Suffolk's natural resources are unmatched. In addition to the District staff, we have a network of regional partner organizations that include Cornell Cooperative Extension, National Resource Conservation Service, NYS Agriculture and Markets, Peconic Estuary Program, Peconic Land Trust and the Long Island Farm Bureau who make these programs possible. I take great pride in the excellent work we have done so far for the residents of Suffolk County and look forward to continuing these efforts in 2019.



SUFFOLK COUNTY Soil & Water Conservation District

2018 YEAR IN REVIEW

Board of Directors

Robert Carpenter
Chairperson

Phil Schmitt
Director
Farmer

Al Krupski
Director
Legislator

Brian Culhane
Director
Member At Large

Robert Calarco
Director
Legislator

District Staff
Corey Humphrey
District Manager

Susan Odell-Pepe
Principal Account
Clerk

Sharon Frost
Soil District
Technician

Ann Marie Calabro
Agronomist

Kaitlin R. Shahinian
Soil District
Technician

USDA-NRCS Staff
Liz Camps
District
Conservationist

Allan Connell
Conservation
Specialist



2018 Farm Tire Recycling Project By Sharon Frost

In September 2017 NYS Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) released the final regulations for Part 360 - Solid Waste Management. It includes limits on storage of waste tires on farms. They site increased health concerns about the Zika Virus, West Nile, and other diseases transmitted by mosquitoes. The new law took effect on May 2, 2018.

The farm tire recycling program held this summer by Suffolk County Soil and Water Conservation District was organized similar to the NYS DEC Pesticide Collection or SWEEP. A postcard was mailed to all farms in Suffolk County in April to see if there was interest.

On May 10th, at the District Board meeting, \$10,000 was approved for the Farm Tire Recycling Program with for the initial cost. Additionally, at the July 12, 2018 Board Meeting, the Program received an extra \$4,000.00 for two more trailers.

Thirty-eight farmers registered and gave a tire count. Approximately 5,000 tires of various sizes were itemized. We worked with Casing Inc. in Bay Shore. They sent 5 box trucks to pick up 1,600 small tires on each farm and 5 trailers that were placed at different locations and they were filled with approximately 21.75 tons of large tires. We were not charged a drop off fee by the Southold Town transfer station, Zilnik's Farm or Lewin's

District services provided...

Agriculture

- Engineering Practices
- Irrigation Design
- Agricultural Environment Management
- Ag. Value Assessment
- Agronomic Practices
- Erosion Control
- Conservation Planning
- Cost-Share Programs
- Transition to Organic Farming
- Technical Assistance
- Practice, Design & Installation Supervision
- Drainage Systems
- Agricultural Waste Systems

Landowners

- Bluff Shoreline Erosion Recommendations
- Conservation Information
- Educational Materials
- Invasive Species Management
- Pond Assistance
- Sediment & Erosion Control
- Soils Information
- Habitat and Restoration
- Wildlife Management

Education

- Conservation Materials
- Program Guides

Municipalities

- Nonpoint Source Pollution Remediation
- Site Plan & Subdivision Reviews
- Grant Partnerships
- Watershed Management

Environmental Consultants

- Natural Resource Maps
- Aerial Photos



A bluff erosion site in Suffolk County.



Soil Health Specialist By Ann Marie Calabro

American Farmland Trust announced the selection of twenty participants for "Practical Soil Health Specialists," a program designed for agricultural service providers working with farmers and farmland owners to promote healthy soil. Among them, two from Suffolk County, Ann Marie Calabro SWCD Agronomist and Deb Aller CCE Ag Stewardship Specialist.

The three-year program is coordinated through a collaboration between American Farmland Trust and Cornell University's Comprehensive Assessment of Soil Health Laboratory. The program aims to strengthen the network of agricultural professionals across New York who can assist farmers in making real-world decisions to enhance the health of their soil.

"Healthy soil is a key asset for farmers; it's more resilient to extreme weather and can improve a farmer's bottom line by decreasing input costs

and increasing yields. Fully functioning soil can also sequester carbon and protect water quality – so healthy soil is important to everyone," says David Haight, New York state director for American Farmland Trust.

"However, many farmers struggle with integrating new practices, such as cover crops or reduced tillage, into their management systems. Having a trained specialist who they can turn to for help can make a big difference in the success of these practices."

Program development for the "Practical Soil Health Specialists" program is guided by a steering committee comprised of representatives from American Farmland Trust, Cornell University, Cooperative Extension, Cornell Small Farms Program, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Soil and Water Conservation Districts and representatives from the agribusiness community.



2018 Deer Fence Program... By Ann Marie Calabro

The Suffolk County Soil and Water Conservation District was awarded \$1 million in 2017 to utilize over 5 years in increments of \$200,000 to cost share Deer Exclusion Fencing to farms within the County. With no shortage of participation, we have installed nearly 12 miles of fence on 22 farms and we have posts going in the ground as we speak. Our hope is that this funding continues to be approved through 2022 which is full term for this multi-year contract. The deer fence program does not pride itself on miles or linear feet of fence installed, but on acres of farmland protected and losses recovered from damages.

Both myself and the hard working farmers I have had the pleasure of working with know that fencing is not the solution to the "Long Island Deer Herd" problem, but is the last alternative they have available to protect their crops from destruction by deer. Suffolk County is overrun by the exponentially growing

population. Crop damage due to deer browsing or rubbing can wipe out an entire young crop of newly planted

trees at the local nursery or an entire field of pumpkins just before harvest making it worthless. I have seen severe damage to vegetable, orchard, nursery stock, and ornamentals which equate to considerable loss to the farmers. Participants in the program have taken every measure possible to reduce losses. Permitted hunting helps very little and only for a short time, the following year deer return with greater numbers. As the deer population continues to grow and remain above the carrying capacity for our county, our farmers must be protected and fencing seems to be the least invasive. As the deer herd becomes manageable, less fencing will be installed, and some may even come down.



Agriculture in the Classroom By Kaitlin Shahinian

As part of successfully meeting our annual performance measures, the SWCD received \$6,000 from the state of New York to implement local conservation projects.

The District used these funds for our Ag Education in the Classroom program which awards award funds to schools in order to create or enrich Ag based school projects and clubs. We offered the second round of funding in 2018 and looking forward to round 3 for 2019.

Dawnwood Middle School's Science and Technology Departments will be working together to create a greenhouse and garden in an open courtyard of the school. The entire project provides a learning experience for students to tackle together, starting with the construction of the structures; and ending with the knowledge and satisfaction of successfully growing crops.

Roanoke Ave School received funding to continue expanding their After School Enrichment club to educate students on how fruits and vegetables grow and how to maintain these crops on their own. Efficient tools, such as a portable greenhouse and a composting unit, will help in the germinating of seeds and increase soil health. Similarly, Kreamer Street Elementary wanted to expand their STEM program by purchasing an AeroGraden Farm Plus Hydroponic Garden for students to have "hands on" experience growing food.

Funding was also awarded to Newfield High School and Mattituck High School for their interests in enhancing their garden/growing projects. Newfield High School will be purchasing a greenhouse, composter, and several other supplies to educate their students on the methods of agriculture, as well as the history of agriculture on Long Island. Mattituck High School plans on using the funds to add Tower Gardens to their environmental program's curriculum. The students will learn about different gardening methods and how to manage the Tower Gardens in class.



Ronkonkoma LIRR Bioswale By Corey Humphrey

The New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets' Soil and Water Conservation Committee awarded the District \$92,447.21 in 2017 for exceeding our annual performance measures. One project that was funded through this award was the construction of a demonstrational bioswale at the Ronkonkoma L.I.R.R. Train Station (\$82,422.21) that was completed in the fall of 2018. The Ronkonkoma Train Station is the largest rail hub in Suffolk County and a new 1.5 acre parking lot was constructed to accommodate the increase the parking for the riders. In a partnership with Suffolk County DPW, the District designed and installed the bioswale to capture and infiltrate all of the stormwater runoff from this impervious area. Using only native perennial plants, the bioswale uses its soil to filter contaminants and quickly infiltrate the runoff created by the parking lot's impervious asphalt. By incorporating this green infrastructure into the design of the lot DPW was able to maximize the number of parking spaces because there were no traditional stormwater catch basins to limit the parking areas. This site contains educational signage as a passive outreach tool for the thousands of people who utilize the LIRR Ronkonkoma Hub daily. As an effort to encourage the incorporation of green infrastructure design in stormwater runoff control, the signage describes the design and function the bioswale. The District will continue to design and construct green infrastructure projects at various sites in Suffolk County for the foreseeable future. For more information about green infrastructure or to propose a project, please contact Corey Humphrey, C.P.E.S.C. at the District office.



The 2018 Envirothon team received proclamations from the Suffolk County Legislature on Tuesday for their accomplishments on the state level in May. They were sixth out of 50+ teams representing counties across New York. Way-to-go Sa-chem North!! From left to right: Legislator Krupski 1st District, Legislator Muratore 4th District, Legislator Kennedy 12th District, SC Soil & Water District Board Member Brian Culhane, students: Chris Eagler, Emily Hudak, Emily Gelardi, Miranda Garcia-Cassani, and Anika Banerjee, advisor Monica Saleh, LI Envirothon coordinator Sharon Frost, Legislator Cilmi 10th District, Legislator Calarco 7th District and Legislator Lindsay 8th District.