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CHAMPLAIN WATERSHED IMPROVEMENT COALITION OF NEW YORK

Clinton, Essex, Franklin, Warren and Washington Counties

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2022 Annual Report

Providing a coordinated effort to improve water quality and other natural resources within the New York Lake Champlain counties through project implementation.

North Country Stormwater Conference and Tradeshow



On October 20, 2022, CWICNY successfully held its first in-person North Country Stormwater Conference and Tradeshow (NCSWCT) since 2019. In 2020 the NCSWCT was canceled due to COVID-19 and in 2021 a virtual session held in response to the continuing COVID issue.

Planning for this event began in February 2022, with an idea to diversify presentation topics in regard to nonpoint source pollution and stormwater management. The planning committee was made up of two representatives from Warren County SWCD, one from Washington County SWCD, one from the Warren County Water Quality Strategy Committee, the President of CWICNY (Franklin County SWCD) and an interested private consultant. A call for presentations was submitted to generate any interested respondents and to get the date on calendars well in advance. The committee met in person and virtually throughout the spring, summer, and early fall to quickly establish a host location and develop the agenda and the other aspects of the event. The committee was not sure how successful the event would be based on the past few years; however, a decision was made to host in person, and if necessary, make alterations as needed based on potential health risks.

The conference was kicked off by Assemblyperson Matt Simpson (NY-114) who discussed the need to develop projects, programs, and partnerships to address a changing environment that has seen significant storm events. Assm. Simpson discussed the impacts to his community when he was the Supervisor for the Town of Horicon, and the need to implement resiliency in projects to reduce impacts and future costs. Following Assm. Simpson, the topics focused around water quality and expanded beyond historical presentations of permitting and products in regards to urban runoff, and included: (1) new products and technology for stormwater management, (2) addressing technology utilizing liners and membranes for water quality retention and treatment, (3) program review of new Lake George Commission's stormwater standards, (4) comparing stream flow prediction models (evaluating and understanding the variability), (5) utilizing drones for construction activities and the advancement of the technology, (6) low impact trail designs, focusing on erosion reduction techniques. A total of 4 Practicing Institute of Engineering (PIE) credits were available to engineers and all attendees were provided a certificate of completion for the courses at the conclusion of the event.

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North country Stormwater Conference and Tradeshow continued...

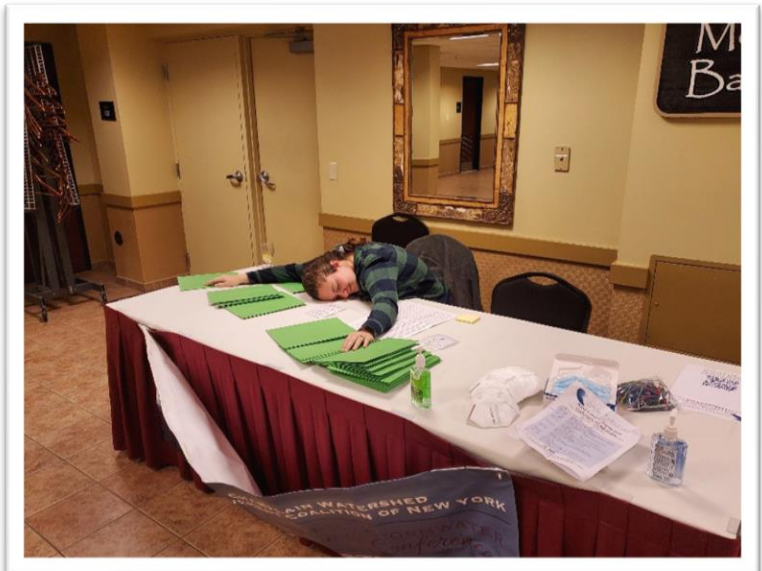
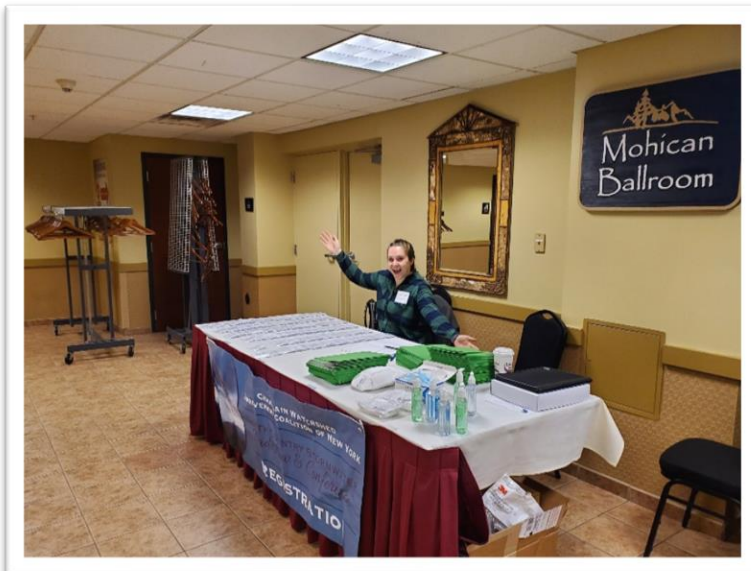
Nearly 100 people were in attendance (registrants and vendors). There were 8 vendors for the event: 1 NFP, 4 product and supply vendors (one did not attend due to COVID), and 3 consulting firms. The event also had its first private sponsor which was a certified Woman and Disadvantaged Business Enterprise produce supply vendor. The sponsor did not appear in person to speak, but remotely welcomed attendees and discussed their enterprise via Zoom, at the conclusion of the lunch break. In the attendee event packet, CWICNY provided the conference agenda, speaker biographies, a page with vendors and sponsors, and the CWICNY 1021 annual report. As part of the vendor/sponsors sheet and speaker biography sheet, a QR code was included for each individual or entity, providing instant access to their respective website.

The event was well coordinated, and duties were assigned to multiple CWICNY members, which helped with the success of the event. Presentations were kept on-time and were pertinent to the topic and audience. Vendors contact time was successful and sufficient and all stayed until nearly the end of the day and were very happy to be at an in-person event. One telling moment of the success was that the last presentation ended on time, but questions from the audience kept everyone in the room for an additional 15 minutes. As you know, that is quite exceptional for an all-day event, especially when you considered the people who have travelled to attend.

This year, CWICNY emailed a short evaluation form for attendees to share feedback with the planning committee. The committee utilized google forms as the platform for the event feedback evaluations. The evaluation form asked the following questions:

- What did you like most about the event?
- Did you like the topics and presentations for this year? If so, which events?
- What, if anything, did you dislike or least like about this event?
- What presentation topics would you like to see next year?

The committee kept the evaluation short in order to encourage attendees to provide as much feedback as they desired. Overall, we had a very positive response from attendees about the courses that were offered and the event itself. Attendees were happy with the location, the variety of topics that were offered, the vendor area, and the vendor contact time. The evaluations showed that attendees enjoyed the networking opportunities with being back in person and provided many topic ideas for planning next year's event. The committee will take the information gathered from the evaluations and use this information for the 2023 planning process and course selection. Some of the take-aways were to adjust the event start time for travelers, increase the outreach for the event at other outlets throughout the year, and to offer a stormwater project showcase. Overall, there was very little feedback on making changes to the event, which was positive as this event is in its 17th year. The courses were selected to show a variety of stormwater design applications in many settings. The broader approach to stormwater design and applications was well received by our audience.



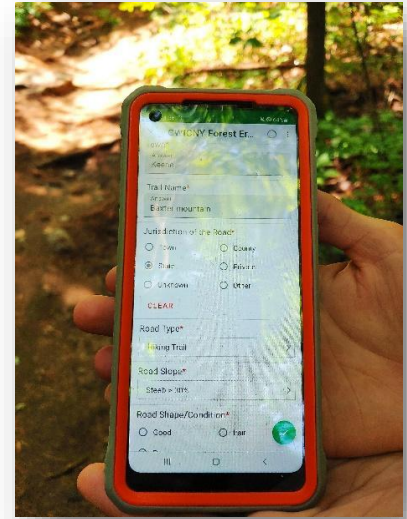
Before and after images of the registration table featuring Lyndsy Hilder, Washington County SWCD.

Forest Roads Assessment and Management Program

Franklin County WQCC

NYSDEC recognizing the importance of assessing, prioritizing and implementing erosion Best Management Practices (BMPs) through the Rural Roads Active Management Program (RRAMP), has attained \$100,000 in funding through the Lake Champlain Basin Program to successfully carry out a Forest Roads Assessment and Management Program (FRAMP). CWICNY has been chosen to take on the contract and will be using its strong connection with the Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCD) of the Lake Champlain watershed to successfully complete the project.

To start, a smart phone application already in development for the collection of field data for the Rural Roads Program was adapted and fine-tuned by Franklin County SWCD for use on this new Forest Roads Program. The app is able to efficiently collect all necessary information for record keeping and ranking of sites surveyed including photos and GPS data, all from a smart phone of any type.



In order to implement this technology and inform district employees of what to look for, two separate trainings were held, one in the summer and one in the fall. These trainings brought veteran district staff with experience working on the app, and roadside or trail erosion management practices to field sites in need of erosion BMP implementation for instruction of those new to the program. District staff were then able to catalog the site in the app with the help of the developers and hear from experienced erosion managers about the proper choice and implementation of erosion products and BMPs.

At the first training located in the Keene Valley area of Essex County, a total of four sites were visited with examples of trails, roadsides and trailheads that were in needs of erosion BMP application. At each location the trainees were able to ask many different questions in addition to the teachings of the trainers, Chastity Miller and Mason Stine of Franklin County SWCD and Jim Lieberum of Warren County SWCD. It is safe to say that everyone involved learned something throughout the day.



The second training was held in Hamilton County. This time led by Lenny Croote of Hamilton County SWCD with help from Doug McClusky of E.J. Prescott and Maren Stoddard of Warren County SWCD presenting on erosion products. This training focused on addressing any further questions about the app and visiting sites where projects had been completed to give district staff an idea of what a site can look like post implementation and what products were able to be applied. A total of four sites were visited and included examples of many different erosion control techniques from hydroseeding to coir logs, to extensive excavation and installation of J-hooks in a local river bed. All provided perfect examples for the district staff to learn from and impressed upon them what possibilities are out there for dealing with actively eroding areas of all sizes.



In addition to the trainings, so far, Franklin County SWCD has started cataloging sites throughout the Lake Champlain watershed portion of their county. Most of the sites with the greatest need for intervention were found to be boat launches. The other SWCD's will be completing their surveys in 2023.

CWICNY Strategic Plan

In recent years CWICNY Board members have realized that more time is required to effectively manage CWICNY's administrative tasks. The organization's active role in upcoming opportunities for watershed protection and improvement is critical, thus planning and the addition of a paid staff member are priorities. CWICNY received an Organizational grant through the Lake Champlain Basin Program and NEIWPCC to develop a strategic plan for the organization. The purpose was to distinctly define the goals and direction of CWICNY and to facilitate the creation of an administrative employee position. Karen Strong of Strong Outcomes, LLC was hired as a consultant to work with the CWICNY Board and partners to develop the strategic plan.

Strong met with the Board and partners on several occasions in 2022 to brainstorm and define strengths, goals, and priorities. Throughout the year, the strategic plan was developed and much was learned during the process. The outcome is a living document that will guide CWICNY in the coming years. It can be revisited to reaffirm priorities and direction, and can be updated as CWICNY continued to evolve.

Professional Engineering Training Session

Clinton County SWCD

The Miner Institute and Clinton County SWCD hosted an engineering training session in late April that focused on agricultural Best Management Practices and the opportunities for state and federal implementation funding for farms. Engineers from many local consulting firms participated, along with several from public agencies. The training was funded by the Lake Champlain Basin Program with staff from Cornell's Pro Dairy providing the training. This was the second of two engineering trainings held in the Lake Champlain watershed and focused on additional agricultural BMP systems such as covered barnyards, silage leachate control systems and vegetated treatment areas.



A long-term goal of this training is to increase private sector engineering capacity within the Lake Champlain Watershed, and beyond. As the demand for more programming continued, Soil & Water Conservation Districts are increasingly in need of engineering assistance for the design and implementation of agricultural Best Management Practices. This training provided the opportunity for networking and discussing these needs, along with a review of funding programs, design criteria with regards to farming operations, and USDA standards and specifications for these practices.

Many thanks to all participants and supporters of this event, including The Miner Institute, Happy Haven Farm, Rusty Creek Farm, Clinton County SWCD, NRCS staff, the Lake Champlain Basin Program, and Pro Dairy.

Selecting a Site for Roadside Stabilization- Rural Roads Active Management Program (RRAMP)

Warren County WQCC

From the last round of grant funding, the Districts identified 321 new actively eroding sites on the New York side of the Lake Champlain Watershed. CWICNY members are identifying sites that cause high amounts of sediment from erosion to reach nearby streams and waterbodies. When looking at a roadside erosion sites, we look at the following criteria:

- The percentage of vegetation cover currently growing in the area.
- Does the site have a high or low level of erodibility? Maybe it's somewhere in between?
- Bank slope (slope steepness)
- Estimated size of the eroding area.



*Summit Drive
(Town of
Hague)-
Stabilized in
2020,
Photograph
from Summer
2022*

This set of criteria provides a ranking system to help guide our decision-making for selecting projects for implementation with municipal highway departments. In 2021, CWICNY was awarded \$100,000 to assess and implement stabilization projects in the watershed. Out of this funding, the Warren County SWCD has \$34,000 to address and stabilize active roadside erosion sites and \$3,000 for assessing roads for new sites. Warren County has been working with multiple highway departments in the watershed to revisit and identify sites for 2023 implementation projects. For instance, the Lake George Highway Department provided a new site for the District on Ellsworth Road. The area is a unique site as it takes drainage from Interstate 87 and eventually outlets into Lake George. The project area is a site that collects runoff and outlets into a stormwater system that has started to fail and caused sinkholes on the road. The other concern is that the system isn't easily accessible for sediment cleanout. The highway department has requested that funds be utilized to upgrade the drainage system to prevent further road safety hazards from sinkholes and to have a system that the highway department can easily be cleaned out with a vacuum truck. The project is estimated to cost around \$10,000 and will also reduce the amount of maintenance time for the highway department. Warren County has also selected sites for hydroseeding such as Bloody Pond Road (Site ID #281), Pickle Hill Road (Site ID #294), and Buckbee Road (Site ID #299). The Lake Champlain Watershed benefits from routine assessments of its roads and working with highway departments to help stabilize areas as new areas may arise after a major weather event. This past spring, Warren County visited past RRAMP project sites and these areas have completely transformed to being well-vegetated and are no longer a maintenance burden for highway departments. That being said, CWICNY's districts will head out again come spring thaw or after a heavy rain as it will be an ideal time to meet with highway departments, assess areas, identify and rate new erosion sites affecting the watershed.



*Aerial view of Ellsworth Road
Project*

Climate Resiliency Training Programs

In 2019, the New York State Soil and Water Conservation Committee (SWCC) in partnership with New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) invited Soil and Water Conservation Districts, working in partnership with regional watershed groups/coalitions, to submit applications for funding under the Community Resiliency Training Programs opportunity. CWICNY and the Upper Hudson River Watershed Coalition jointly applied and received funding to provide guidance and education to engineers, SWCD's, highway departments and the general public for Post Flood Emergency Stream Intervention (ESI), North Atlantic Aquatic Connectivity Collaborative (NAACC) and Roadside Roads Active Management Program (RRAMP) training events. The funding allocated was intended to support the following trainings: one 2 hr. ESI, two 6 hr. ESI, three 1.5 hr. classroom NAACC, one 2-day Field NAACC, two 4 hr. RRAMP and two 6 hr. RRAMP trainings over two years. In 2022, the watershed organizations were able to complete the final training events for this project.



On June 2, 2022 Washington County Soil & Water Conservation District offered a 1.5-hour in-classroom NAACC training to provide background, description and application of NAACC tools to uninitiated audiences. Presentations included demonstrations of NAACC data forms and use of the public database. Attendees developed an understanding of NAACC based functions and capacities with the intention to pursue full NAACC training if desired.

On June 28-29, 2022, Franklin County Soil & Water Conservation District offered a 2-day NAACC training. This training is designed to certify staff to assess crossings using a uniform protocol. This protocol includes observations of the crossing (ex. Road type, flow condition, crossing alignment, tec.) and of the structure itself (ex. Material, shape, dimensions, etc.). This event provided training to six district staff members from 4 Soil & Water Conservation Districts.

On July 19, 2022, Franklin County Soil & Water Conservation District offered a 6-hour RRAMP training. This training was focused on educating District employees and partners on assessing roadside erosion sites and forest road sites. At this training attendees also discussed erosion control products, estimating project costs and potential funding opportunities. This training educated 25 district employees and partners.

On October 7, 2022, Hamilton County Soil & Water conservation District offered a 6-hour RRAMP training. This training featured a tour of sites of concern and sites that were repaired in the past. At these locations staff from Hamilton and Warren County SWCD offered their experience and expertise regarding erosion control practices including success stories. Doug McCluskey, Team E.J. Prescott was also available to discuss erosion control products that would work in different scenarios and how to install them.

On October 20, 2022, Hamilton County Soil & Water Conservation District offered a 4-hour RRAMP training. This training was specific for municipal employees and discussed erosion control products and their applications.

We truly appreciate the opportunity we received to be able to offer these trainings throughout the two watersheds. All events were well attended, and feedback provided indicated that attendees were impressed with the quality of the information and were grateful for the opportunity to receive training on the topics.



2022- 23 Lake Champlain Cover Crop Program

Clinton County SWCD

Thanks to funding from the NYS DEC and the Lake Champlain Basin Program, farms on the New York side of the Lake Champlain Basin were eligible to apply for a cover crop cost share payment. Clinton County SWCD is administering the grant of \$200,000 and farms from all 5 counties are eligible to apply. The project's goal was to implement at least 1,000 acres of cover crops per year for 2 years.

Cover Crops are an effective best management practice to reduce erosion on agricultural fields. Cover crops protect the soil surface from the negative effects of rainfall and erosion during storm events. Cover crops also improve soil health by reducing soil erosion, increasing soil porosity (and subsequently water infiltration and field drainage) and increasing nutrient supply. The improvement of soil health can also enhance climate resiliency by providing protection to agricultural fields due to the ever-increasing number of extreme weather events.

Farms participating in the NYS Agricultural Environmental Management planning process to select fields, cover crop types and rates. District technicians discuss needs, map fields and plan for erosion reduction and soil health improvement. More information and applications are available from the County Soil and Water Conservation District offices in Clinton, Essex, Franklin, Warren and Washington Counties.



CWICNY Inc. is a 501-C (3) Not-for-Profit group originally formed in 2001 with the goal of “Providing a Coordinated Effort to Improve Water Quality and Other Natural Resources Within the Lake Champlain Counties Through Project Implementation.” This coalition is a grass-roots approach that recognizes the importance of local participation and cooperation in addressing the many sources of pollutants in Lake Champlain.

CWICNY is governed by an 11-member Board of Directors that includes representatives from each of the Soil and Water Conservation Districts and each of the Water Quality Coordinating Committees from Clinton, Essex, Franklin, Warren and Washington Counties, and a representative from the Lake Champlain- Lake George Regional Planning Board. Advisors to the group include the New York State Soil and Water Conservation Committee, the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, the USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service and The Greater Adirondack Resource Conservation and Development Council.