FORESTY

St. Lawrence County Public Ash Tree Replacement Assistance Program

In partnership with the Village of Potsdam Department of Public Works, the SLC SWCD assisted the Village of Potsdam with ash tree replacement this past November.

This tree planting event arose from concerns surrounding ash trees within the village that would be lost to the invasive beetle, the Emerald Ash Borer and would need to be replaced. With the help of Potsdam’s DPW, 25 new trees were planted to replace ash trees that were preemptively removed along streets and parking lots throughout the village. A variety of native tree species were selected to replace the ash trees including Kentucky Coffee tree, Northern Hackberry, Adirondack Crabapple, and Apple Serviceberry. These species were selected for their tolerance to high soil pH, salt spray from roadways, and drought resistance.

These new trees will aid in diversifying the city’s urban tree population, increase local stormwater runoff capacity, and help beautify roadways and parking lots within the village.

Emerald Ash Borer Update

The invasive beetle, the Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) has now been detected in St. Lawrence County in the towns of Hammond, Morris-town, Oswegatchie, Depoeyster, Lisbon, Waddington, Louisville, Norfolk, Massena, and Brasher. These findings are a result of the combined efforts of the St. Lawrence County EAB Taskforce, the NYS DEC Division of Forest Health and Protection, National Grid, the Saint Regis Mohawk Tribe Environment Division, and Franklin and St. Lawrence County SWCD’s through detection methods utilizing green funnel traps and sentinel trees placed across the county. With its presence in St. Lawrence County, woodlot owners, homeowners, and municipalities alike will need to plan and prepare for the destructive force this forest pest presents.

EAB infested ash trees quickly decline within 3 to 5 years and lose almost all of their structural integrity, making them very likely to fall/collapse which makes them extremely hazardous. In many cases, this creates overwhelming costs and liability issues for many homeowners and municipalities in a very short period of time. Planning ahead is critical, conducting tree inventories, surveying for EAB, budgeting for tree removals, insecticide treatments, and replacement plantings all factor into management strategies for EAB.

St. Lawrence County residents and municipalities are encouraged to reach out to the St. Lawrence County Soil and Water Conservation District for guidance on preparing for EAB and the resources that are available. Please contact Aaron Barrigar at (315) 386-3582 for more information.

Known Locations of EAB in St. Lawrence County

In 2020, the St. Lawrence County Soil & Water Conservation District was able to secure funding to help cost-share the implementation of around 250 acres of cover crops in fields that were currently in row crops and will be in row crops in 2021. The fields were successfully planted in September and October with winter rye and showed signs of growth by November.

Planting cover crops is a very beneficial practice for soil health and productivity. Cover Crops help to: improve crop diversity, reduce wind and water erosion, build stable soil aggregates, build or improve organic matter, support beneficial insects and break pest insect cycles, nutrient cycling, nitrogen fixation, adjust carbon/nitrogen ratios, livestock integration, and can also be beneficial to wildlife in winter.

There is potential for funding in 2021 but it is not guaranteed. If you are interested in participating call or email our office and we will add you to the 2021 call list if funding becomes available. Priority will be given to producers that have not previously participated in the cover crop program with us before.

Participation in our Agriculture Environmental Program (AEP) is required.

Below are photos of different stages of cover crops from this fall!
OFFICE UPDATE

The St. Lawrence County SWCD Office is still currently closed to the public at this time. Staff is doing their best to make accommodations and are monitoring voicemails and emails as quickly as possible to continue to meet our mission and help serve the local community. If necessary, appointments may be able to be arranged off-site following county COVID-19 protocols of wearing a mask and keeping a safe distance. We will continue to post updates on our website, Facebook, and voicemail to keep everyone informed about the office status when changes occur. Stay Safe and Enjoy the New Year!

COMMUNITY PROGRAMS

Agricultural Value Assessments - Possible Tax Reductions!

The St. Lawrence County SWCD continues to assist landowners interested in the Ag Value Assessment Program by preparing the soil group worksheets required for the applications. If you own or rent land that is used for agricultural purposes, you may qualify for an agricultural assessment. This program generates a report based on the productivity of the soil types on your property. This report is just part of the full application that will be handed in to your assessor. Your tax assessor then uses the information to determine whether you qualify for a reduction in property taxes. It’s important to remember that only land used in agricultural practices qualifies for the assessment and a reduction in taxes is not guaranteed. It’s suggested to talk to your assessor first to determine whether you qualify for an assessment. More information can be found by going to tax.ny.gov click on ‘Property owners’ and then on ‘Agricultural assessments’.

Applications for the program are due to your assessor by March 1st. It may take the Soil and Water Conservation District some time to do the necessary paperwork and with the office being closed to the public additional time may be needed to work out the logistics of getting the required information to complete and return the worksheets, so please start the process early. There is a fee of $30 for each tax parcel and a late fee of $10 for each parcel submitted after February 15th.

AEM

AEM is a voluntary, incentive-based program that helps farmers make environmentally sound and economically viable decisions. The primary goal is to protect and enhance the environment while maintaining the viability of agriculture in New York. The program coordinates agricultural and environmental conservation agencies and programs as well as consultants to provide the most up to date information and create site-specific plans.

All information collected for this program is confidential, state law protects the confidentiality of AEM plans, on-farm surveys, and assessments.

Common conservation and best management practices planned to address resource concerns include but are not limited to: Barnyard Water Management Systems, Nutrient Management Planning, Waste Storage Facilities, Prescribed Grazing, Soil Management and Erosion Control.

Most recent plans from our office include prescribed grazing plans, nutrient management plans and nutrient management plan up.

How does AEM work?

AEM uses a 5-tiered approach to develop and implement comprehensive, site-specific plans:

- Tier 1: Short questionnaire to identify current activities and future plans
- Tier 2: On-site farm visit to documenting current activities, environmental stewardship and identifying and prioritizing potential environmental concerns
- Tier 3: A site-specific plan is designed with the farm’s mission, goals and objectives in mind to help provide solutions to environmental concerns
- Tier 4: Coordinating with Environmental and Agricultural agencies and consultants to provide technical, educational and financial assistance to implement Best Management Practices (BMP’s)
- Tier 5: Ongoing evaluations to keep plans and farmers updated and help protect both the farm business and the environment.

FORESTY

Trail Maintenance with Boy Scout Troop 41

Trail maintenance was recently completed on county reforestation land in Hopkinton with help from the Boy Scouts of America, Massena Troop 41.

The Boy Scouts assisted with clearing brush and woody debris, pruning branches, and installing foot trail markers and maps. Downed trees were cleared and intermittent stream crossings were repaired to allow passage along the 2.2-mile hiking trail.

This trail leads hikers down to the west branch of the St. Regis River for scenic river views and back up though stands of hemlocks and rock outcrop formations. Thanks to the hard work of Troop 41, the trail is now well marked, cleared, and ready to be hiked and enjoyed by all!

The SLC SWCD would like to thank Boy Scout Troop 41 for all of their time and hard work on this project!