



Onondaga County Legislature

JAMIE McNAMARA
Clerk

TIMOTHY T. BURTIS
Chairman

TAMMY BARBER
Deputy Clerk

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ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION COMMITTEE MINUTES – APRIL 15, 2025 JULIE ABBOTT, CHAIR

MEMBERS PRESENT: Dr. Kelly, Ms. Cody, Mr. Romeo, Mr. Brown

ALSO ATTENDING: Chairman Burtis; also see attached list

Chair Abbott called the meeting to order at 1:05 p.m. and the previous meeting's minutes were approved.

1. SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT (SWCD): Mark Burger, Executive Director; Teresa Link, Conservation District Technician (Arborist)

a. INFORMATIONAL: Update on Initiatives

2024 Annual Report, Progress Report-Skaneateles Lake Watershed Agricultural Program on file with the clerk

- Working on Oneida Lake report for 2024, as soon as complete will send out

Onondaga County SWCD - 2025 Workload Projections

Water Chestnuts

- 230 ac. goal of chemical application of water chestnuts along Seneca River
- 130+ ac. goal of mechanical harvest of water chestnuts
- 40,000 pound goal of hand pulling of chestnuts
- Work in and around: Seneca River, Oneida Lake, Jamesville Reservoir, DeRuyter Lake
- Oswego County SWCD have been denied any chemical the last 2 years
- Non-wetland areas are the areas Onondaga County SWCD will be targeting with chemical application
- At least 100 ac. of the mechanical harvesting will happen in South Bay on Cross Lake (already permitted with DEC)
- Cayuga County comes in with 2 Harvest Boats that have 11' cutting head
 - A forwarding boat brings Water Chestnuts to shore
 - Every boat fills a 10 wheel dump truck every 2 ½ minutes
- Unfortunately getting all the unmanaged Water Chestnuts from neighbors west of the county on the canal system
- Every year have seasonal crew hand pulling in shallow areas to get ready for harvesters (pull 40,000-65,000 lbs.)
 - Working primarily in the Seneca River
 - Oneida Lake shoreline is Onondaga County, water is Oswego; work jointly with Oswego County on multi-day pull
 - Pull at DeRuyter Reservoir, Jamesville Reservoir – think that is eradicated

Hydroseeding

- 45+ miles of revegetation on municipally cleaned road ditches
 - *Have a NYS DEC grant to cover 75% cost. Municipalities pay 25% (~\$700 / mile or acre)
- For the highway department (DOT), and other towns and villages
- In the city, used a Hydro-seeding program with a 900 gallon Finn Hydroseeder pulled behind a one ton truck
- Spray hydromulch and seed clean roads in ditches, minimal of 45 miles a year, sometimes 65 miles a year

Agriculture

- 2 stream stabilization projects
 - ~200 LF on Limestone Creek
 - ~2,000 LF on Spafford Creek
 - 1 ~900,000 gal. pond for poultry irrigation
 - Multiple erosion & sediment control projects on 3 farms
 - ~10,000 acres of cover crops on 51 farms
- Anywhere there is lush green on farm fields that were originally corn or soy bean have cover crop
 - Cover crops hold soil in place and keep nutrients in place to protect water quality
 - Extra job and costs to farmers doing it
 - Rotational grazing systems on 3 livestock farms
 - 1 manure nutrient storage in Skaneateles Lake Watershed
 - 1 silage leachate treatment system in Skaneateles Lake Watershed
 - Working with City of Syracuse School District to bring Mobile Dairy Experience to the students
<https://nyanimalag.org/mobile-dairy-experience/>
 - 53' long trailer that expands with sliders – as close to farm simulation as possible
 - 10 farms to receive conservation plans for, so they are eligible for NYS grant funding to implement Best Management Practices (BMPs)
 - 75+ Soil Group Worksheets will be generated by SWCD to help agricultural landowners to receive property tax reduction on their agricultural land working to produce food and fiber for residents of CNY
 - Tile line Bio-Reactor nutrient reduction research and monitoring (only project continuing in NYS)

Tree Sale

- Staff packing 114 orders right now at County Parks shop
- ~3,890 trees and shrub packs purchased by residents & businesses
- This is our outreach program to non-ag community in County

Stormwater

- Inspecting minimum of 400 outfalls/year
- Updating 6-month and annual Municipal Separate Storm Sewer (MS4) report for County submittal to NYS DEC
- Construction site inspection services (for Erosion & Sediment Control) on County Projects (currently at Metro)

Erosion Control Training

- Taught 12 NYS DEC 4-Hour Erosion & Sediment Control class to 179 students across CNY
- Taught to contractors and code officials
 - Done over 300 trainings across the state and over 4,500 people since program started 12 years ago

Live-Edge Snowplow Blades

- To reduce salt usage and protect water quality, SWCD has provided 50% cost-share to 11 municipalities to purchase Live-Edge Snowplow Blades - 2024 (scrape snow and ice to the ever- changing contour of the road)
 - In 2025, SWCD will provide another 50% cost-share to municipalities to support the purchase of ~40 sets of Live-Edge Snowplow Blades
- Reimbursement program
 - Snow plows with a 12ft. long blade, spring loaded and will follow the contour of the road without digging it up
 - Highway Departments are seeing 50% reduction in salt and sand use

Forestry

- Treating ~2,000 diameter inches of Hemlocks for Woolly Adelgid for OCWA

- Treating ~10,000 diameter inches of Hemlocks for Wooly Adelgid for County (have a US Forest Service GLRI grant)
- Remove ~4,300 Ash trees
- Plant ~100 1" to 2" caliper trees & ~150 seedlings (@ a fall community planting events)
- Providing Tree Risk Assessment services to Village of Liverpool (other communities welcome)

Onondaga County Ash Tree Management:

2024 Annual Report



Produced by Teresa Link— January 2025
Conservation District Technician
Onondaga County Soil & Water Conservation District

Status of ash tree removals along County highway right-of-ways:



Onondaga County Ash Tree Management Program

Key Points

Ash trees removed	30,477 trees
Non-ash trees planted	3,845 trees
Tree species planted	61
County ash trees injected	391 trees
Ash tree removal contracts	67
Number of grants secured	9 grants
Grant funding secured	\$427,000
Number of MWBE contracts	24
Total spent with MWBE businesses	\$1,629,663
Total spent with Onondaga Earth Corps (OEC)	\$252,265.84
Community outreach tree planting events	10 events
Volunteer participation in planting events	310 volunteers
Value of volunteer participation	\$31,494.45
Value of timber sale at Oneida Shores	\$14,716
Speaking engagements	16
Conservation technical assistance regarding EAB	88

- Impeccable safety record with contractors on our projects. Weekly safety checks by OCSWCD on active jobs
- Supported 5 other counties regarding ash tree management (Chenango, Clinton, Oswego, St. Lawrence, and Tompkins)
- Supported the Towns of Cicero, Clay, DeWitt, Lysander, Marcellus & the Villages of Liverpool and Skaneateles regarding ash tree management
- OCSWCD continues to support OEC, an inner-city job readiness program, by planting 100-300 trees per year

2024 Summary

Item	# Trees	Notes
Planting	575	67 1-2" caliper trees at Jamesville 33 4-6' evergreens at Carpenter's Brook 475 bareroot at Pratt's and Car-
Injections	187	Jamesville, Pratt's, Highland, Carpenter's Brook, Oneida Shores, OCC
Removals	4,895	Lysander, Tully, Fabius, Highland, Pratt's Falls

Proposed Work Agenda 2025 — EAB Phase XI

Budget	\$750,000	Notes
Planting	\$10,000	~100 1-2" trees (Grant pays \$40k) 150 seedlings at Highland, Oneida Shores, and Pratt's
Injections	\$23,000	189 trees at OLP
Removals	\$582,000	~3,900 trees (Beaver Lake, Pratt's Falls, OLP West Shore, Marcellus, Otisco, Highland)
OCSWCD	\$135,000	Administration, implementation, materials, supplies, misc.
Total	\$750,000	

Total cost of project (2012-2024):
\$4,668,449

Ash Tree Removal Progress

Cut Location	Actually Cut (# trees)
Camillus	843
Cicero	798
Clay	281
DeWitt	406
Elbridge	-
Fabius	1,557
Geddes	2
LaFayette	2,295
Lysander	2,132
Manlius	860
Marcellus*	1,978
Onondaga	609
Otisco*	703
Pompey	4,470
Salina	139
Skaneateles	-
Spafford	-
Tully	647
Van Buren	867
Beaver Lake*	342
Carpenter's Brook	60
Highland Forest*	1,859
Hillbrook Detention Center	44
Hopkins Road	559
Jamesville Beach	287
Jordan Level Trail	-
OCC	393
OLP*	1,907
Oneida Shores	3,770
Pratt's Falls	1,625
Pump Stations	-
Waste Water	-
911 Towers	40
Miscellaneous**	1,004
TOTAL	30,477

*Ash tree removals ongoing

**Miscellaneous includes John Glenn Blvd & Risk 3 trees

Questions/Comments from the Committee:

- Why is it so important to not just leave the Ash Trees, even though they look fine?
 - SWCD:
 - Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) burrow the trees
 - EAB grills the tree, which cuts off the vascular tissue so there are no nutrients flowing
 - Kills the tree very quickly
 - Loses outer branches and snaps off from 10 ft. up
 - 11% of the county's trees are Ash; good percentage that could potentially fall on the road
 - 2 years ago seeing dead Ash trees, started in Dewitt and branched out from there
 - Onondaga Lake Park was one of the first parks hit
 - Oneida Shores was started early on, moving along with the risks
 - What could happen if a tree falls and hurts someone
 - Law:
 - Commend everybody in the Office of Environment when it started, Soil & Water, the Legislature, and the County Executive for funding this initiative
 - Part of the big thing with potential liability, is NYS case law
 - Responsible thing to do is to come up with a plan on how to address what could be known issue or liability
 - Gives legal protection when acting in accordance of a thought out plan if something did happen
 - Thought out approach protects residents, guests and the county
- Is there an offset to the Ash and side tree planting?
 - SWCD:
 - The tree planting is within the Ash tree program
 - It is in the same budget
 - Also write federal grants to offset it; every 2 years get \$80K - \$100K
- Is it a planned number of trees taken out from an area, so they plant an X number of trees there?
 - SWCD:
 - Idea to replant 10% of the trees
 - Problem is ½ and ½ split within right-of-ways; lot of it is forested land
 - Planting them in parks, but parks like green space
- How many has SWCD cut down?
 - SWCD:
 - To date, at 30,000; trees removed and 3,800 planted
 - Almost at the end of planting trees
 - Office of Environment:
 - Because of this Management Plan, the Ash trees are growing on their own
 - Not only planting trees, but there is the natural process of seedlings coming up due to open space
 - Not in the numbers, but one of the positives happening in parks and forest areas where trees were removed
- Injecting is also happening to save some
 - Office of Environment:
 - Yes
 - SWCD:
 - Bio controls have been found in the County, ESF has been releasing them actively
 - Population established
 - Hoping by the time the bios are up, that all little trees that are not seed-producing yet, will be, so there is another generation
- Is there a canopy cover that the committee could see?
 - Office of Environment:
 - Tree Canopy Assessment just came to an end, and it was turned into a pilot project for Cicero, Clay, Lysander and Van Buren
 - CNY Regional Planning & Development Board has a federal grant for \$9M for the entire region
 - Will help to understand where the trees have been lost, and where the trees are coming back

- Finding farms that go fallow have trees popping up
- How long will dead Ash trees stand?
 - SWCD:
 - When the trees die, they lose outer branches first, then the top breaks off
 - 35ft. piece that snaps off at 7-10'

SWCD continued their presentation:



Hemlock Woolly Adelgid (*Adelges tsugae*)



Onondaga County SWCD

Hemlock Woolly Adelgid

Originating from Japan, hemlock woolly adelgid (HWA) was first discovered in the Hudson Valley of New York in the 1980's. HWA was first found in Onondaga County in 2014 in the Town of Spafford.

HWA is a small, invasive sap-sucking insect that feeds on Eastern hemlock and Carolina hemlock trees. HWA is asexual and produces two generations a year. This rapid reproduction can lead to population booms during years with warmer winters. Trees typically succumb to HWA's feeding damage within 4-12 years with hemlocks in the NE surviving for upwards of 20 years.



Onondaga County SWCD

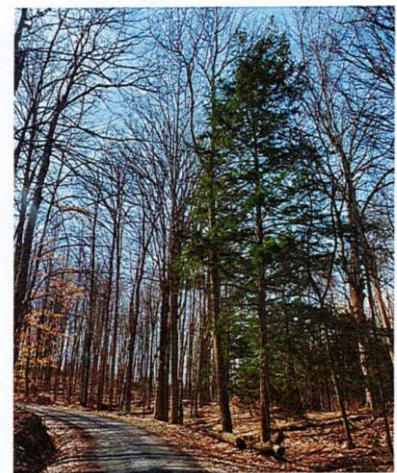


Single woolly mass on downed twig.

HWA Identification

Winter-Early Spring: HWA will appear as white woolly masses at the underside of the base of hemlock needles. These winter months are when HWA is actively growing and can be seen without magnification.

Late Spring-Early Winter: HWA is in its dormancy state where it sheds the white wool and appears as a tiny black nymph. At this stage, HWA is hard to see without magnification.



Hemlock tree.

Onondaga County SWCD

Eastern hemlock (*Tsuga canadensis*)

Eastern hemlocks are conifers found in the Northeast and Canada. They can be found all over NY from wetlands to steep slopes. Trees are pyramidal with feathery branches, flat green needles, and small (3/4") cones. Hemlocks have a dense canopy which creates a unique ecosystem that many species rely on.

Why are hemlock trees important?

In Onondaga County, hemlocks grow on the steep slopes of Skaneateles and Otisco Lake watersheds; both drinking water sources. Hemlocks provide many benefits including soil stabilization, water filtration, stream shading, and wildlife habitat. If we lose the hemlocks we lose all the benefits they provide.



Eastern hemlock bark and underside of branch.

Onondaga County SWCD

Treatment Options

Biological Control

Cornell has released *Laricobius nigrinus* (beetle), *Leucotaraxis argenticollis* (silver fly) and *Leucotaraxis piniperda* (silverfly) in NY.

Chemical Control

Two pesticides, imidacloprid and dinotefuran, are used for control. Imidacloprid takes 1-2 years to be active but lasts 5+ years. Dinotefuran is expensive but provides protection for the first two years. When combined, these pesticides protect the tree from 0-5+ years.

There are multiple methods of treating hemlocks. Basal bark spray is ideal as you can combine both pesticides. Soil applications and direct injections can be used with only imidacloprid.



Basal bark spray of imidacloprid and dinotefuran.

Onondaga County SWCD

Other Resources

NYS Hemlock Initiative



NYS DEC



Help control invasive species!
Check your car, clothing, pets, and gear.



Onondaga County
Soil & Water
Conservation District

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Liverpool, NY 13088
www.ocswcd.org

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All Photos by OCSWCD staff.

Produced April 2024.

- First grant written was for Skaneateles and Otisco water sheds - drinking water sources and lot of Hemlocks
- Grant for treating and scouting
 - Scouted the entire Otisco Lake Watershed in 2022, did not find many
 - Skaneateles had it on almost every Hemlock tree
 - 2023-2024 it has popped up everywhere
- When HWA reproduces, the crawlers (babies) have to go away from the mother; they drop down to different needles
- Once the HWA is seen at the bottom of the tree, the entire tree is infested
- Treating trees at Land Trust Properties in the two watersheds
 - Went around with a backpack and sprayed two different pesticides; fairly inexpensive
 - Spray the outside of the trees (noninvasive) – does not affect the bees
 - Targeted spraying one by one
- In 2024, grant ran out
- Wrote a new grant for entire County to treat County parks and a few CNY Land Trust properties
- Treatment lasts 5+ years
- What tree could replace the Hemlock – idea is the Red Spruce

- Regional Planning wrote a grant to try and replant areas of Skaneateles (have not heard back yet)
- Otisco Lake Preservation Association (OLPA) will be giving away Red Spruce
- Will slowly phase in replanting
- There is Biocontrol: (i.e.) beetles, silver flies that were released in Skaneateles years ago, but it may have been too cold and they died off; have not found any populations

Questions/Comments from the committee:

- What is the relationship with Cornell Cooperative, and what is being looked at to address these issues?
- Is there an ability to breed immunities on top of what is being done as far as injections?
 - SWCD:
 - Blights and fungal diseases are relatively easy
 - Chestnut – about to release it to parks, educational places and soon to public places
 - Small % being released that will repel the EAB
 - HWA is on the west coast, but it has a natural predator; here it does not
- Why is it important to harvest Water Chestnuts at the right time?
 - SWCD:
 - There are very few mechanical harvest contractors out there
 - One of the biggest limiting factors is access
 - If there is not access for miles, no sense in harvesting; it is not cost effective
 - One of the state's initiatives is more access to water for the people
 - Cross Lake – last year was first year in Cayuga County to do a real early harvest in June
 - The first 50 acres harvested, no chestnuts came back all season
 - Working with researchers at St. Lawrence University
 - Earlier to harvest is better; have to get the plant to the surface and have it grow to harvest only once
 - Good winter this year where there was a lot of snow, ice cover and lower temperatures
 - Contractors starting last week in May and ending on July 4th; allows time to deal with any brush fires
 - After that chemical applicators will get started
- When it is not impactful, is that a DEC pesticide application permit?
 - SWCD:
 - Yes
- What is the impact to all vegetation and wildlife?
 - SWCD:
 - The herbicide that is being used is selective and has a low path life of 6-8 hours
 - Sampled minnows and found no negligible amounts in the tissues
 - Very little information published with the water chestnut work; literature is only 7 or 8 pages long
- With everything flowing downstream, have partnerships/relationships with surrounding counties improved, or has the State Canal Corporation stepped in to help?
 - SWCD:
 - Partners downstream in Oswego county are doing a marvelous job;
 - Three Rivers to Lake Ontario outlet – Onondaga County on west and Oswego County on east
 - Have arrangement that Oswego takes care of everything from Three Rivers north to Phoenix
 - Cayuga County is for hire and have them for at least a month to a month and a half with their harvest boats
 - Biggest issue is what is everybody else west of Onondaga County doing, and where is the money coming from
 - Office of Environment:
 - Each region has a PRISMs network (Partnerships for Regional Invasive Species Management) with 2 year plans
 - DEC hosted a Water Chestnut working group, Canal Corporation was there with an Environmental Scientist on board just to deal with invasive species
 - Environmental Scientist and DEC Region 7 Invasive Species Specialist was at a meeting for CNY Waterways at Jacks Reef – core group that is looking at and pushing PRISMs; more coming from regional approach
 - Also taking it back to the state to look at Water Chestnuts
 - Hydrilla is still out there; good working structure for those next aquatic invasive species

- With increased cooperation, is that kind of coordination going to have a significant impact on what the county needs to be do?
 - Office of Environment:
 - Goal is to reduce what the county has to do because of upstream partners
 - Seeing what Oswego County did in 2–3 years on Water Chestnuts
 - If the Water Chestnut mats stop flowing into the county, it gives hope
 - Everybody shared what they were doing in the work group and Onondaga County was doing the most
- What is the cost for the county (average/yearly)?
 - Office of Environment:
 - County Legislature added \$175,000
 - Environmental Protection benefits program is a half million to get through this year and maybe next year
 - SWCD goes out and gets additional money
 - SWCD:
 - Spending \$225,000 last year – local or regional funds
 - Office of Environment:
 - Hudson Valley PRISM deals with water chestnuts differently and have more focus
 - Getting on the 2 year plan is a big deal
- As for grants, for SWCD department, what is your budget and what are you bringing in on annual basis?
 - SWCD: *Reference page 4 on Annual Report (bar graph)*
 - Bring in \$175,000; leveraged that to bring in other state and federal grants
 - Not uncommon to bring in \$3M or \$4M a year
 - Minimum 15 or 30 max grant applications/year are sent out
 - All staff write grants in their areas of expertise
 - Try to give County \$5 return for every dollar county gives to SWCD
 - Work with WEP, OCWA, City of Syracuse, take their funds and leverage them
 - Resources accumulated can be used for any program
 - With the dollars that come in, it is used to support another 179 businesses in the community
 - Annual budget is \$4M-\$6M depending on the projects
- How much money is saved working with local farmers that take the Water Chestnuts for their fields?
 - SWCD:
 - Could not do the project without farmers; work with farmers within 3 miles of the harvest locations
 - If had to haul them to an approved composting facility, it would be cost prohibitive
- What happened to the culvert assessment plan?
 - SWCD:
 - DEC came out with the North Atlantic Aquatic Connectivity Program to assess culverts
 - Typically culverts are undersized based on the weather, extreme weather
 - When called to assess an area, will assess culverts, help to upsize and get best formulation for water flow by protecting resources downstream
 - Have not done all culverts; working with highway departments, but DEC has not put money behind it

The meeting was adjourned at 1:51 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



DEBBIE KAMINSKI, Assistant Clerk
Onondaga County Legislature

ATTENDANCE

COMMITTEE: ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION COMMITTEE

DATE: APRIL 15, 2025

NAME (Please Print)	DEPARTMENT/AGENCY
TERESA Link	ONON Co SWCD
MARK Burger	On cdy SWCD
Isabelle Harris	CE
Dan Krueger	CE
Darcie Lesniak	Leg
Ben Yans	Law
Elizabeth Bough-Martin	Office of Envir.
Joe Frateschi	Counsel
Cyndey Johnson	CE
Ethan LaMontagne	Leg.
Jim Beebe	Leg.