



www.slcswcd.org

St. Lawrence County Soil & Water Conservation District

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District Technician

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2025 Newsletter

STAFF

New Staff:

Allycia Foote, District Technician: Allycia joined the St. Lawrence County Soil and Water Conservation District in July of 2025. She holds a Bachelors Degree in Environmental Studies with a minor in Geology from SUNY Potsdam. Allycia brings a wealth of experience in farmland conservation and assistance. She brings a wonderful balance of technical experience in the field, and the behind the scenes knowledge to support farmers and landowners with resource concerns, education, and conservation in action.



Existing Staff:

Alivia Bleau, District Manager— Oversees the daily operations of the District, manages grants and programs, supports staff and the Board, and works with landowners, municipalities, and partners to advance soil and water conservation across St. Lawrence County.

Aaron Barrigar, District Forester – A Forester and Certified Arborist with an extensive knowledge of trees and tree diseases. He manages the county forests, creates forest management plans for landowners, works with local governments on urban forest management, and helps with most tree related questions.

Heidi Knafelc, District Technician – Our in-house pro at creating soil maps for Agricultural Assessments. She assists residents in completing applications for Agricultural Assessments and will be heading up new outreach opportunities.

And **Melissa Woods, Secretary/Assistant Treasurer –** Our expert switchboard technician (Secretary/Treasurer). For all the calls we receive that we cannot answer – she aids in directing a question to where it needs to go.

Summer Intern:

Sarah Manning, Wetland Reserve Program (WRP) Intern— Sarah worked for our office from April to August as our Wetland Reserve Program Intern. Her main focus was monitoring wetland easements throughout St. Lawrence County. This is her second year returning as our intern and continues to bring great knowledge and work to the program!



AGRICULTURE

Agricultural Environmental Management



The Agricultural Environmental Management (AEM) program is a **voluntary**, completely **FREE, confidential** program through Soil and Water Conservation Districts that help farmers meet business objectives while protecting and conserving the state's natural resources.

AEM is designed to help farmers further protect the soil and water resources that their livelihood directly depends on. By working with your Soil and Water Conservation District, farmers can document their environmental practices, assess vulnerable areas of the farm that may provide an environmental risk, as well as document the benefits the farm provides to your community. Within the AEM program farmers can acquire information for long-term business planning, qualify for state and federal cost-share grants to address high risk issues, even earn "green" payments or participate in farmland protection programs.

If a potential environmental concern is identified through the AEM assessment process, farmers can then take steps to plan for and even implement an appropriate course of action. The farmer is ALWAYS the ultimate decision maker in cooperation with the AEM team. Technical assistance could include but is not limited to prescribed rotational grazing plans, farmstead plans, soil health plans, even assistance with New York State Grown and Certified.

Contact Allycia Foote for more information on planning and cost-share funding opportunities at Allycia@slcswcd.org.

Climate Resilient Farming

The CRF grant program provides cost-share assistance to farmers to mitigate the impact of agriculture on climate change while enhancing the farms adaptations and resiliency to projected climate conditions such as intense storm events, heavy rain fall, and drought. It is competitive funding awarded through Soil and Water Conservation District for waste storage, water management, and soil health systems. SLC SWCD was awarded a total of \$411,129 to implement three different projects and 2024, and a lot of work started in 2025! We applied for two farms for the next round of funding, and hope to hear back soon if we will receive them!

Cover Crop Program

The SLC SWCD was able to secure funding from two different sources to help cost-share the implementation of approximately 450 acres, an increase of 150 acres from 2024! Funds were secured through the NYS Part-C funds and the NYS Agricultural Environmental Management Base Program Technical Assistance Track.

Planting cover crops is an important practice for soil health and crop productivity. There are many benefits to planting them such as improving crop diversity, reducing wind and water erosion, building stable soil aggregates, improving soil organic matter, supporting beneficial insects and breaking pest-insect cycles, and can also be beneficial to wildlife in winter.

After trying cover crops through cost-share funding opportunities, producers realize the benefits firsthand and they continue to implement this best management practice on their fields when rotations and weather allow.

If you are interested in our cover crop program please contact Allycia Foote as soon as possible to be added to our list.



FORESTRY

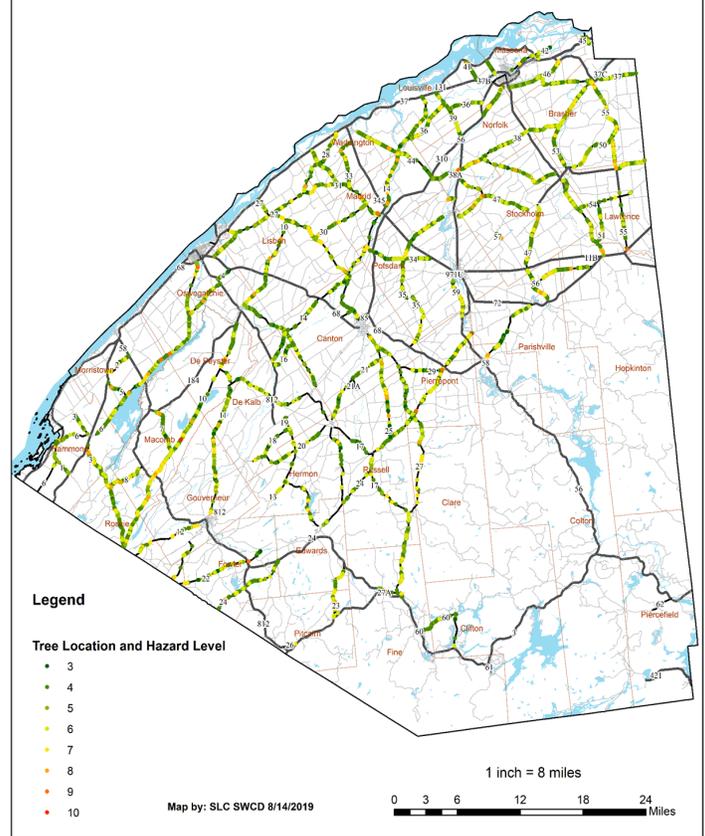
Emerald Ash Borer Mitigation Along County Roadways

The Emerald Ash Borer (EAB), a destructive insect that infests and kills ash trees, has been found throughout St. Lawrence County, creating significant challenges for both the environment and public safety. Unfortunately, there is no large scale, cost-effective treatment available to prevent the infestation from destroying the region's ash trees. EAB feeds on the living tissues beneath the bark, which damages the tree's ability to transport nutrients, eventually leading to its death, typically within 3 to 5 years. This widespread loss of ash trees poses an increasing hazard, as dead and dying trees become prone to branch and trunk failures, endangering travelers, road crews, and homeowners.

Given the large number of affected trees and the high cost of insecticide treatments, treating all trees is not a feasible solution. As a result, the County is focusing on removing ash trees before they die and become a hazard. While the loss of ash trees is unfortunate, these efforts aim to mitigate the dangers posed by dead and dying trees, ensuring a safer environment for the community as the infestation continues to progress.

In 2025, we have finished marking the remainder of the 574 miles of county routes to be cleared of ash and other hazard trees within the county roadway bounds. The project will be successfully completed when the last of 15,216 trees are removed in early 2026.

St. Lawrence County Right of Way
Ash and Hazard Tree Inventory



Forest Management Plans

For landowners interested in knowing more about their forest, how to manage it, or would like to apply for incentive programs, SWCD offers forest inventory and management plan services to landowners with private forestlands between 5-500 acres. After a consultation and site visit, SWCD staff will conduct a forest inventory assessing tree species, timber quality, wildlife habitat, and other resources. Using this data and the landowner's goals and objectives, a customized forest management plan is created to promote sustainable practices, enhance forest stewardship, and address resource concerns surrounding streams, wetlands, invasive species and endangered species.

After completion, landowners will have access to various incentive programs such as US Forest Service's Forest Stewardship Program, the American Forest Foundation's American Tree Farm System, Forest Carbon Programs, 480a Forest Tax Law, Regenerate NY, and the Natural Resources Conservation Service incentive programs.

This year, staff completed 16 forest management plans for forest owners throughout the county on 2,361 acres of land.



COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Annual Tree & Shrub Sale

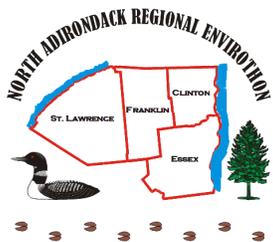
While a lower sales year than previous years, our 2025 tree sale was still a success! Many of the trees and shrubs were utilized for various conservation efforts such as reforestation, creating windbreaks, controlling soil erosion, and enhancing wildlife habitat. Proceeds from this program are used to support conservation activities here in St. Lawrence County.

The 2026 tree and shrub sale will go live in January! Let us know if you'd like to get on our tree-sale mailing list. Call our office, 315-386-3582 or go to our website at www.slcsxcd.org to browse the available trees, seeds, and tree care products, and place your order online. Pick up in early April!



North Adirondack Regional Envirothon

St. Lawrence, Franklin, Essex and Clinton Counties make up the North Adirondack Regional Envirothon (NARE). High school students from these counties come together to compete in the event focusing on Wildlife, Aquatics, Soils, Forestry, and a Current Environmental Issue topic that changes yearly. The top team from each county goes on to compete against other teams in the NYS Envirothon.



Pictured to the right is the 2025 winning team from St. Lawrence County, Canton Central School.



Day at the Farm



The 2025 Day at the Farm event put on by our partners at the St. Lawrence County Farm Bureau, was at Mapleview Dairy, Madrid, NY. Soil and Water hosted a table of information coupled with an erosion demonstration, farm-themed tattoos, and bubbles! The set-up focused on the benefits of having ground cover, such as cover crops, to reduce erosion and support water quality. Adults and children alike came by to learn what Soil and Water does, and take a picture in our new photo station!



COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Conservation Field Days



On June 3rd and 5th, Alivia, Heidi, Sarah, and Aaron attended the Conservation Field Days hosted at the Indian Creek Nature Center. Approximately 200 fifth grade students from schools across St. Lawrence County were taught about Point and Non-point Source pollution and Watersheds! We used our new pollution model, and a fun relay-race game to demonstrate how pollutants around our community, can end up in waterways and our watershed, and ultimately the role we can play to decrease pollution!

St. Lawrence County Fair

We had a fantastic time at the St. Lawrence County Fair, engaging with the community! We did something a bit different this year and created a “mini-Envirothon” to test our communities knowledge in the natural world! We had questions about soils, wildlife, forestry, aquatics, and agriculture! We were impressed by everyone's knowledge and hope people learned a thing or two about our natural world!



HAVE SLC SWCD COME TO YOUR EVENT:

Watershed Non-Point Source Pollution Model!

Soil & Water can come to your classroom or event and can do demonstrations with sludge, pesticides, fertilizers, and misc. soil or debris around the model. Demonstrations can help learners understand:

- How water pollution occurs
- The impact of water pollution
- How to prevent water pollution



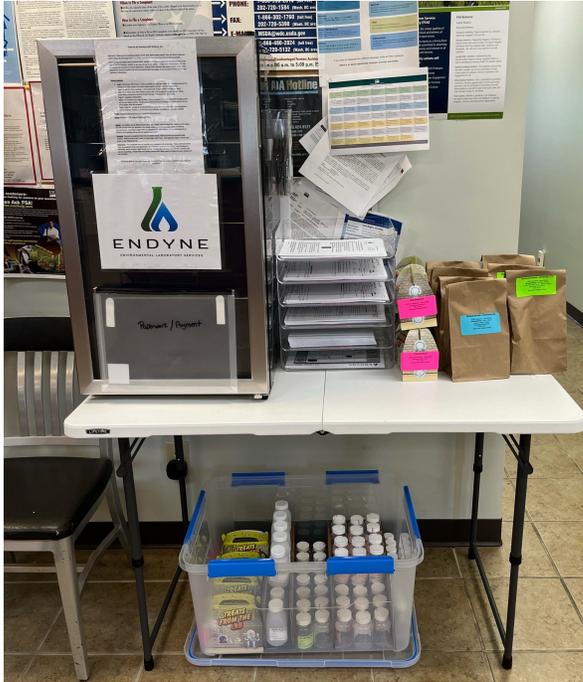
We are working to build our educational outreach calendar for 2026.

We can table, do informal interactive activities, or come into the classroom for more formal education.

To discuss the possibilities, email us: conservation@slcswcd.org

NEW SERVICE

Water Quality Testing



We've continued to partner with Endyne Labs to help residents of St. Lawrence County ensure their drinking water is safe! Whether you're an individual or a municipality, you can now pick up your water testing bottles and instructions from our office in Canton.

Water Samples are picked up by Endyne Labs on the second Monday of every month at 10am. Samples must be dropped off between 7am and 10am on the second Monday. Samples should be taken within 24 hours of drop off time and kept cold (but not frozen).

It's recommended to test your well water yearly, after large weather events (like flooding), or if there are changes to your water system or household (such as moving to a new home, the arrival of a new baby, or if someone in your household is immunocompromised). Regular testing ensures your water stays safe and healthy for you and your family.

SLELO PRISM GRANT

The St. Lawrence County Soil and Water Conservation District received funding through the St. Lawrence and Eastern Lake Ontario PRISM (SLELO) to manage and suppress isolated, low-density populations of non-native invasive plant species, specifically phragmites, honeysuckle, and buckthorn within a 53-acre project area in the Town of Madrid. This parcel contains ecologically significant riparian and wetland habitat associated with Trout Brook and its surrounding wetlands, serving as important movement corridors and habitat for the Blanding's turtle, a species of conservation concern in New York State.



WATERCHESTNUT PULL



This year we got the chance to help SLELO PRISM with a Water Chestnut pull on the Oswegatchie River in Heuvelton. Water Chestnut is an aquatic invasive plant native to Eurasia and Africa. They form dense mats that shade out native aquatic plants that provide food and shelter to fish. They also reduce dissolved oxygen in the water.

USDA-NRCS

Do you currently manage a garden? Do you sell vegetables at a local farmers market, or operate a small farm stand? Would you like to extend the growing season? The NRCS High Tunnel initiative may be a fit for you.

If you'd like more information on this or our other programs, please reach out to Tom Pratt by phone or email: thomas.pratt@usda.gov ; 315-221-5867

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