

T I O G A  C O U N T Y

SOIL WATER

C O N S E R V A T I O N D I S T R I C T



Annual Report 2025

Board of Directors

Tracy Monell	Chairman, County Legislative Rep
Jake Brown	County Legislative Representative
Mark Kwiatkowski	Treasurer, Grange Representative
Tom Zorn	Farm Bureau Representative
Debra Standinger	Member At Large

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District Staff

Wendy Walsh	District Manager
Lisbeth Monell	Financial Officer
Jodi Shumway	Secretary to the Board
Mike Jura	Stream Technician
Alex Marks	Conservation Technician
Brian Reaser, P.E.	Lead Engineer
Danielle Singer	WQ & Nutrient Mgmt. Specialist
Connor Hubbard	Engineering Technician
Heather Gulliford	AEM Specialist



A Note From the District Manager...

2025 was a challenging year with funding delays at the federal level. We however, stayed the course and were able to provide technical assistance, complete numerous project and outreach events that assisted landowners throughout the county. Please take a look at some of our accomplishments for 2025.

Wendy Walsh



Agricultural Program

The majority of our work with farms in the county is done through the Agricultural Environmental Management (AEM) Program. It is a statewide voluntary program led by Soil and Water Conservation Districts to help farmers make smart cost-effective decisions that meet business objectives while protecting natural resources.

We work with interested farmers to create conservation plans that make them eligible to apply for funding or prepared to implement on their own. From large state and federal programs to local District and watershed programs, we planned and implemented many best management practices (BMPs) on farms in the county this year.



2025 Highlights

Background Photos: We assisted 18 farms with over 1500 acres of cover crops in fall 2025.

Lower Middle Photo: We completed a silage leachate Vegetated Treatment Area (VTA) rehab on a dairy farm. The low flow is sent to a manure storage and the high flow filters through the VTA.

Lower Right Photos: We piloted our first silvopasture planting in the county. Silvopasture is the practice of integrating trees and shrubs into a rotational grazing system. A true silvopasture includes trees, livestock, and grasses working together as a sustainable system. The trees or shrubs can provide shade, fodder, diversified income from plant products, or a combination of these benefits. This first planting was installed at Bottomland Farm and used as a hands-on training demonstration for SWCD staff as we learn together how to develop these systems. We look forward to future projects and to learning from the successes of this initial installation.

Left Photos: We closed out a state grant supporting three farms in implementing stream corridor restoration plans. Each farm used a combination of exclusion fencing, watering systems, rotational grazing, and diversion-ditch rehabilitation to create space for stream recovery through stabilization work and riparian forest buffer plantings, while maintaining adequate pasture access and stable stream crossings. One project also added stormwater retention in an existing pond, contributing to local flood mitigation efforts.



61

Farms Served

1

Soil Health Meeting Held

57

*Soil Group Worksheets Completed
For Ag Value Tax Assessments*

7

*Farms Participated in Soil/
Manure Sampling*

55

*Best Management
Practices Installed*

1

Pasture Walk Held

Stream Program

The District stream program is focused on assisting municipalities and private landowners with environmentally sensitive maintenance and repair of streams, while keeping in mind the need for safety, stability, and private property rights. The District works toward these goals by providing a variety of services: monitoring, mapping of stream issues, education, outreach, technical assistance and advice in regards to permit application and design, securing funding for implementation, construction oversight, hazard mitigation planning, flood recovery, and culvert assessments.

East Branch Owego Creek Stream Bank Rehabilitation Project



Photos: Above, erosion was within 10 ft. of power poles and threatening railroad bed. Upper Right: Large stone was first installed in the base as a footing, then large root balls and live willow stakes were installed with biodegradable fabric to hold everything together until the vegetation takes hold.

Right: finished project. 900 ft. of stream bank rehabilitated, preventing any further erosion and increasing fish and wildlife habitat.



A 900 ft. section of the East Branch of Owego Creek downstream of Blodgett Rd had been eroding and laterally migrating toward the power poles and railroad for a number of years. The Tioga SWCD has been monitoring this area since at least 2009. In 2023 the erosion accelerated and it became clear that if something was not done soon, the stream would be eroding the power poles and the railroad bed. The SWCD received Water Quality Improvement Project Grant funding and completed all the design, and permit work necessary, bid and hired the contractor and oversaw construction of the project. Overall the project is a big success and all stakeholders are happy. This is a popular area for fishing, and is open to public fishing access.

Hazard Mitigation Support and Disaster Recovery

Since 2013, the District has contracted with the County to provide hazard mitigation coordination services. since 2004, we have worked with the County and all 15 municipalities to update our hazard mitigation plan, which needs to be done every 5 years. The Federal Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000 requires local governments to prepare and update a hazard mitigation plan that addresses natural disasters. Priorities of the plan include flooding and flood mitigation projects, with the goal of reducing flooding and flooding impacts to our communities. The SWCD assisted with flood recovery from the July flash flooding, and continues to assist municipalities on emergency and flood recovery work, including planning for future events and finding ways to reduce impacts.

2025 Stream Project Photos



Severe erosion was within 15 ft. of a Town of Nichols water main.



Flash Flooding in July caused extensive damages in the Town and Village of Newark Valley.



SWCD worked with Town and Village officials to conduct the initial emergency work, and is assisting the municipalities in getting funding for more extensive repair work.



SWCD assisted the Town Water Department in permitting and technical oversight to re-build the stream bank and re-establish the proper stream dimensions. Large root balls and live willow stakes were installed to promote stability. Then SWCD hydroseeded the site.

8

Projects Implemented

10

DEC Stream
Disturbance

Permits Received

3,615

Feet of
Stream Bank
Stabilized

83

Landowners Assisted with
Stream Related Technical
Assistance

17

Army Corps of
Engineers Nationwide
Permits Received

Engineering Program

The District's engineering team, comprised of two P.E.'s (professional engineers), a stream technician, and one seasonal intern, works with landowners in the county with planning, design, and implementation of conservation practices through multiple funding opportunities provided by state and federal programs. Due to requirements through the majority of these programs to meet NRCS engineering standards, the availability of the engineering team through the District allows for a more efficient and cost effective process for the District and landowners to be able to implement these practices. The engineering team also helps increase the District's capacity to provide effective technical assistance to landowners and municipalities in the county, as well as other counties in the Upper Susquehanna watershed.



Waste Storage Facility in Construction in Mt. Vision (Otsego County) - photo taken in October 2025



Construction & Stakeout of Waste Storage Facility in Truxton (Cortland County) - photo taken in September 2025



Completed Waste Storage Facility in Truxton (Cortland County) - photo taken in December 2025



Old Manure Storage Pit & Barn Foundation in Barton (no longer in use) - Google Earth Aerial Photo from April 2021



Barn Foundation Removed & Old Storage Pit was emptied and closed to turn it into a wetland complex - photo taken in November 2025

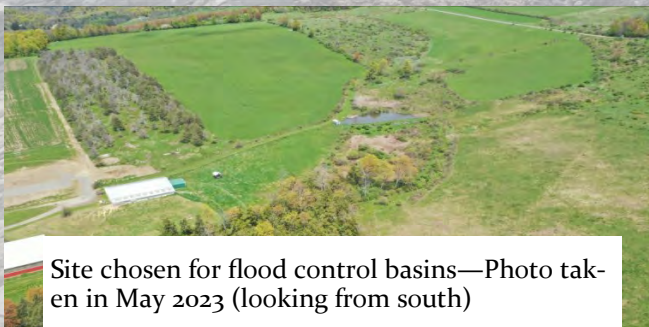
2025 Project Photos

Engineering Assistance throughout the USC Watershed

Through the Upper Susquehanna Coalition (USC), the engineering team is able to provide engineering assistance to other counties in the Upper Susquehanna watershed. This is able to be done through collaborative agreements between the District and cooperating counties. This allows other counties without engineering staff to receive assistance with inventory & evaluation, design, and implementation of projects to install conservation BMP's. In 2025, the engineering team helped to implement projects in Tompkins, Cortland, and Otsego counties through such agreements; along with designs and/or cost estimates from Chemung, Steuben, Broome, Yates, Delaware, and Chenango counties.

Project Spotlight: CCE Tioga Flood Control Structures

Due to the increasing intensity of rain events in recent years, the District has looked to implement small-scale flood control projects at the top of watersheds within the county. This allows for flood control projects to be implemented in more manageable and affordable chunks for landowners, while also providing benefits to the adjacent lands and neighbors close by. While these small projects can't show huge impacts watershed-wide on their own, the small-scale nature can allow for more projects to occur throughout our watersheds without needing to construct one large-scale and expensive dam at the bottom of the watershed. the District saw great potential in the land owned by CCE Tioga. Situated near the top of the Pipe Creek Watershed in Candor, the Engineering Team designed two flood control structures to capture 100-acres of watershed, and reduce the 100-year storm (6" of rain in 24 hours) outflows by almost 70%. Construction of the project was done in the summer of 2025. This project was done with funding from the Susquehanna River Basin Commission (SRBC), local District funds, and USC funding.



Site chosen for flood control basins—Photo taken in May 2023 (looking from south)



Construction of a flood control basin (during installation of the primary outlet pipe)—photo taken in August 2025



Completed basins along with wetland pools constructed by the USC - photo taken in March 2026 (looking from north)

5

Ag Projects Implemented

1

Flood Control Project Implemented

1

Culvert Replacement Project Implemented

5

Streambank Protection Projects Implemented

9

USC Counties Assisted (outside Tioga County)

\$4 Million

In Construction Costs

Forest Buffer Program

The Tioga County Soil and Water Conservation District had another successful season of forest buffer establishment in 2025. The District has been dedicated to expanding our Buffer Program to promote the restoration and long-term functionality of forest buffer areas for water, soil, and habitat quality. The promotion, implementation, and vitality of forest buffer projects continues to be a high priority for the District. The District promotes forest buffer creation and restoration via education, outreach, and technical assistance.

Forest Buffer Volunteers

An integral part of what makes Tioga County's forest buffer program possible is the support from our community of volunteers. The District is always looking for ways to create new partnerships and forge new friendships with those in the community who wish to make a meaningful difference in the watershed. In 2025, 54 volunteers worked with the District to help plant riparian and upland buffers all across the county.



Students from the Owego Free Academy planted 300 trees and shrubs on a farm in Owego in the Little Nanticoke Creek watershed.



The District and Casella Garbage partnered together to establish a riparian forest buffer along the Owego Creek. 6 volunteers from Casella planted 145 trees.



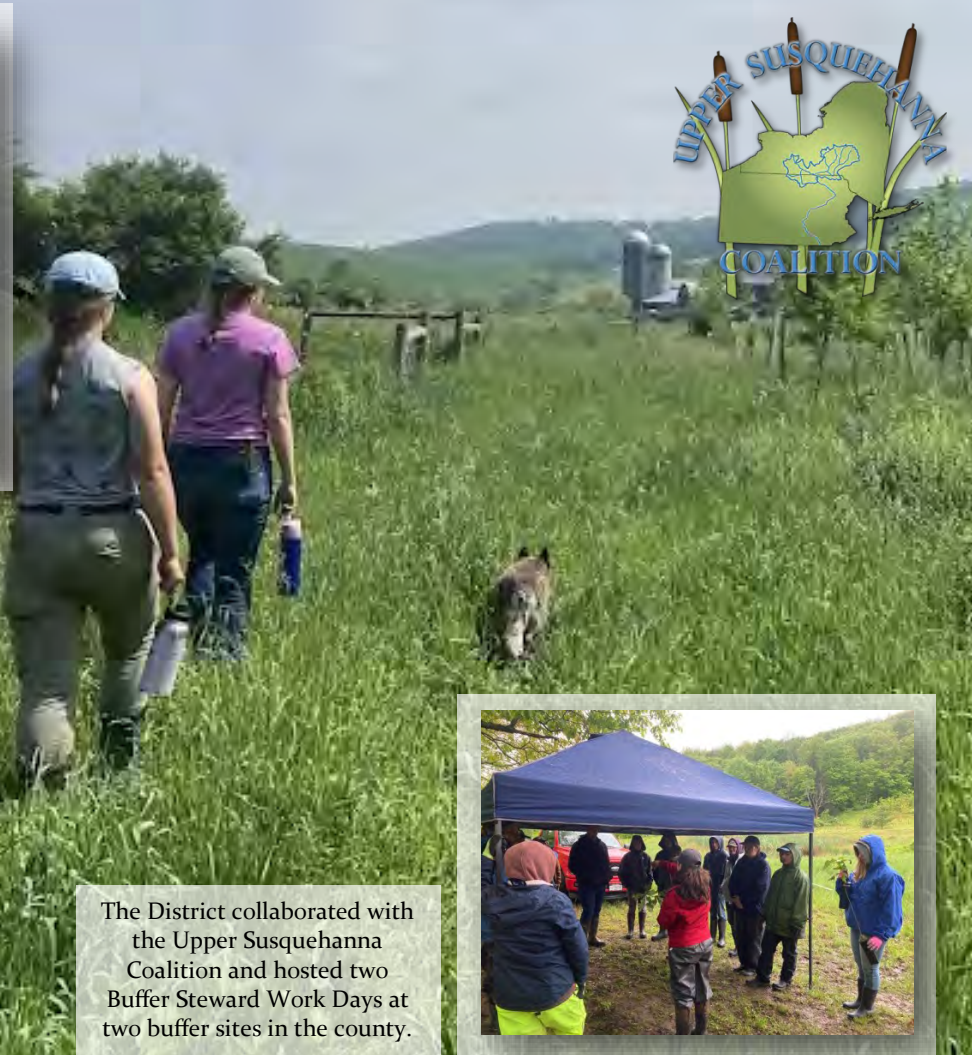
A campground in Newark Valley buffered their land along the Lower East Branch of Owego Creek. 15 Student volunteers from Owego Free Academy assisted with the planting along with District staff and volunteers.

Forest Buffer Monitoring & Maintenance

Our Forestry Steward interns collect and report critical plant data, and perform continued monitoring & maintenance activities to ensure successful establishment of the trees and shrubs planted in the county by the District. Our partnership with the Upper Susquehanna Coalition (USC) makes it possible for us to hire on stewards through their Forestry Steward Program funding. This information collection and extra set of hands has allowed the District to better support landowners and manage problems that arise in buffer plantings more effectively. The work done by our Buffer Stewards has positively impacted the survival and success of Tioga County's buffer plantings, and has aided in achieving nutrient reductions, decreases in flood damage, improvements in water quality, and expansion of wildlife habitat!



The District hired two buffer stewards for the monitoring and maintenance season. Together they monitored 14,744 trees and shrubs and planted 200 trees and shrubs in Tioga County over the course of their internship.



The District collaborated with the Upper Susquehanna Coalition and hosted two Buffer Steward Work Days at two buffer sites in the county.



165.5

Total Acres of
Maintained Buffers
in Tioga County

21.9

Acres of New
Buffer Created

4,405

Trees and Shrubs
Planted

8

New Project Sites

28,103

Total Trees and
Shrubs Planted in
County Buffers
Since 2018

Outreach & Education

We believe that engaging and involving county residents in our work creates a strong and more resilient community. In 2025, the District supported the regional Envirothon, led a Soil Health meeting for local producers, assisted organized grazing education events, initiated several stream clean-ups, hosted various volunteer plantings, staffed education booths at other events, and took the lead on organizing the County's beloved Sundaes at the farm event. These efforts resulted in meaningful engagement with thousands of our county residents.



Tioga Central High School took first place at the 2025 Tioga County Regional Envirothon held at the Tioga Sportsman Association which was hosted by the District.



Tioga County attended Tioga Center's 2025 Planting fest and spoke about soil health and the value of manure.



27 Community volunteers over 3 different stream cleanup events helped us remove thousands of pounds of trash from our county's waterways.



The District tabled the week of the Tioga County Fair conducting agriculturally related educational demos for children and parents alike.



Sundaes at the Farm

District staff and the Agricultural Resource Group (ARG) coordinated the Sundaes at the Farm Event that was held at Meadowvale Farm in July of 2025. The event celebrates and honors local agriculture, and is held at a different dairy farm in the county each year. Close to people 700+ people attended!



2,278

*Members of the
Community Reached*

71

*Community member
volunteers helped us
complete projects*

12

*Outreach and Education
Events Held*

7

*Local Schools/Community
Groups Volunteered with
the District*

32

Volunteer Hours Donated

Rental Program

The District has a machine rental program which makes some specialized equipment available for community use. Currently the District rents out 2 sizes of No-Till Drills, a post pounder, a sidewall tire cutter, and a tree planter.

Tree/Shrub Sale

Our annual Tree and Shrub Sale takes place in the beginning of the year and most things are sold out by April. The annual Tree and Shrub sale is highly anticipated and gives us another opportunity to make relationships with the community while providing them trees and shrubs essentially at cost. In 2025, the District sold 13,100 trees and shrubs to residents for pick-up.



New York Soil and Water Conservation Committee Funding Support

Through the NYS Soil and Water Conservation Committee, districts statewide are eligible to receive funding to complete implementation projects that further our mission and goals. In 2025, Tioga SWCD requested Part B Funding and received \$6,000 to support the implementation of a mini-grant program made available to local school districts. Additionally, Part C funding is awarded competitively to Districts who meet the required performance measures established by the state. The District was awarded \$231,280. total in Part C funding.

Part B Funding

With the support of Part B funds, the District was able to complete a .5 acre micro-cluster planting with 12 10x10 micro-clusters in a wetland area within the county. The micro-clusters were densely planted with native wetland plants within the wetland area with historically low herbaceous biodiversity and wetland hydrology. The size of the cluster and fencing prevents deer browse by being too small of a foot print for deer to enter. The goal of this project is to observe if dense planting and fencing out small areas can provide a more successful methodology for establishing plants in wetland areas, while also improving a wetland for water and wildlife habitat quality purposes. Reintroducing native vegetation to wetland areas provides storm water retention, sediment and erosion control, and filtration of excess nutrients. Wetland enhancement will also enhance habitat for terrestrial and aquatic organisms and contribute to better wildlife habitat in the Little Nanticoke watershed.

Part C Funding

Part C funding was used to support technical assistance provided by staff to landowners and municipalities. Technical assistance was also provided by staff on culvert assessments, stream permitting, non-ag buffer planning and implementation, education and outreach events and training. In addition, the District utilized funding to support staff professional development at trainings, printing of our annual newsletter and report for distribution. We supported several education and outreach events such as attending the County Fair, organizing volunteer buffer plantings, and hosting our annual Sundaes at the Farm event. The District also utilized Part C to supplement our cover crop program which continues to gain the attention of farmers as it expands further across the county each year.

395

*Water Quality and Land Use
Management Technical
Assistance Requests*

43,560

Of Critical Area Seeding

57

*Agricultural Assessments
completed*

8

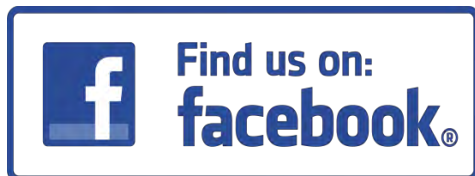
*Acres of Invasive Species Removal
and Treatment Projects*

30

*Total Permit Assists
(Wetland, Stormwater, Historic
Preservation, Streams, CAFO, &
Grass Carp)*



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