The Genesee County Board of Supervisors created the district in 1944 to "conserve soil resources and control and prevent soil erosion." This was done according to state law known as the Soil Conservation Districts Law. A 1964 amendment to the state law added "water" and the title became the Soil and Water Conservation Districts Law. Another amendment in 1989 added language regarding water quality improvement and abatement of non-point sources of water pollution. In 1989 the Genesee County Legislature designated the district as "the local planning, management, and implementing agency responsible for 1) erosion and sediment control on potential non-point sources such as streambanks, construction sites, forestry, mined land, road banks, urban sources and agriculture; 2) stormwater runoff; 3) fertilizer and pesticide management; 4) agricultural waste."
DEPARTMENT: SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

MISSION:
It is the mission of the Genesee County Soil and Water Conservation District to work directly with county landowners to provide for the conservation of soil and water resources, improvement of water quality and prevention of flood water and sediment damages, thereby protecting the natural resource base and promoting the health, safety and general welfare of the county residents.

Key 2013 Accomplishments

Conservation planning and technical assistance is provided to landowners to maintain sound agricultural resource base. Emphasis has been on farms classified as concentrated animal feeding operations (CAFOs: http://www.dec.ny.gov/permits/36895.html) which are now covered under a State Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (SPDES) permit. A total of 30 farms have filed a notice of intent (NOI) for coverage under the permit. We continue to seek grant funding through both state and federal sources to assist farms with implementation of conservation practices. Work was completed on one Genesee County farm using state Agricultural Nonpoint Source Abatement and Control Program (AGNPSACP) – Round 18 grant funding for the Tonawanda Creek Barnyard Water Management. The total cost of the conservation practices implemented to date was $78,453 with state cost-share funds covering $58,846. Local contractors were selected by the farm to complete the work. Work on one Genesee County farm is yet to be completed ($16,260). The District submitted AGNPSACP – Round 19 applications for three Genesee County farms in the amount of $526,885 in total project costs ($393,796 in state funds requested). The applications were not funded.

Construction has been completed on another AGNPSACP – Round 17 grant funded project for Boldt Farms in Stafford. Boldt Farms received $5,978 in state grant funding and $4,348 in federal funding for the $11,595 erosion and sediment control project in the Black Creek Watershed. Survey and design work is complete and we anticipate construction work to start soon on seven conservation practices (estimated cost = $70,320) on two other Genesee County farms. Cost-share funding is from the same grant program.

During 2013 the District was able to make available “local” cost-share funds from the water quality program (Finger Lakes-Lake Ontario Watershed Protection Alliance) grant to landowners. Conservation practices were completed on one farm totaling $20,580 (landowner earned $15,000 in cost-share funds). The District Board approved project requests for 75% of the costs ($29,411) for $39,215 in total (estimated) project costs on three Genesee County Farms.

The District worked on Year 9 of the Agricultural Environmental Management (AEM) Strategic Plan. We continued to promote the AEM program through public outreach and educational displays at various meetings, trainings and events, and newsletter articles. Through the AEM committee an Agricultural Plastic Container Recycling program was continued in 2013. The AEM process helps agricultural producers address soil erosion, water quality and agriculture in the community while documenting their farm stewardship. The District has received $14,347 (state funding) as reimbursement for staff time involved with AEM planning in 2013. This is an area that the District falls short in achieving maximum state reimbursement (potential = $40,000) and the Board is looking carefully at ways to achieve the maximum potential. The District staff continues to struggle with finding an efficient and effective method to collect and maintain data.
Drainage projects have been completed on over 11 farms with over 113,700 feet of tile installed thus far. Unfortunately the trend in drainage project assistance seems to be a reduction in the District workload. Drainage contractors are using Global Positioning Equipment (GPS) equipment and other modern technology to provide their own positioning and grade control. Also, larger farms are now purchasing their own drainage installation equipment along with modern (GPS/Laser) technology to install drainage systems on their own.

During 2012 the District was able to assist the Town of Batavia with implementing a canoe and kayak access facility at Kiwanis Park on Tonawanda Creek. The District provided $8,000 in funding and technical assistance in support of this project. Planning and design work is in progress for a similar project in the Village of LeRoy on Oatka Creek. The District has approved $10,370 in support of this project to be completed with “shared services” among three municipalities (Towns of Batavia and LeRoy, Village of LeRoy) and the District. The project is slated to be completed this fall.

**Conservation Education Programs:** Local and New York State Envirothon; Genesee County Fair Exhibit; Environmental Education programming at the Genesee County Park Interpretive Nature Center; educational materials distribution and conservation training of staff and directors.

The District’s full-time Conservation Education Program Coordinator continues to carry out the education and awareness component of the District conservation education program. In addition to those duties, the individual is responsible for developing and presenting interpretive and educational programming for the Genesee County Parks Interpretive Nature Center. This is done as a cooperative effort with the County Parks, Recreation and Forestry Department. A total of 45 educational programs were conducted from January through August of 2013. The total number of participants was 2,847 youth and adults. ACORNS volunteer numbers have leveled off at 48 so far this year.

**Research, Inventory and Monitoring:** The District continues to use and assist clients in using web based and digital soil survey data, delivered early in 2005 by USDA-NRCS soil scientists. Soil Survey information is now available on the internet at the following website: [http://websoilsurvey.nrcs.usda.gov](http://websoilsurvey.nrcs.usda.gov). We continue to receive numerous requests for soils information for Genesee County and, in most cases, clients are satisfied with results obtained from the website. We have frequently assisted people in working their way through the “mechanics of the website”.

Watershed committees continue to meet regularly for Black, Oatka, Oak Orchard, and Tonawanda Creek watersheds. Two watersheds (Black and Oatka) were awarded a Local Waterfront Revitalization grant from the EPF in the amount of $149,545 for work toward watershed management plans. The District continued to cooperate with Genesee/Finger Lakes Regional Planning Council to move the watershed planning process along. The District continues to monitor activity on a Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) study for phosphorus that has been initiated on Black Creek by New York State Department Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC). This is the first stream in NYS to receive consideration by NYSDEC for such a designation. During 2012 NYSDEC monitored water quality at several sites in the Upper Black Creek Watershed. Most recent information is that NYSDEC intends to move ahead with issuing a TMDL for the nutrient phosphorus in Upper Black Creek Watershed. The plan is subject to approval by U.S. EPA. We continue to follow activity on a section of the Oak Orchard Creek in Genesee County also being studied for the same parameter.

We continue to use Geographic Information System (GIS) capabilities and coordinate activity with other County agencies through the County GIS Focus Team. We cooperate with various County Departments in implementing a county-wide GIS strategy. During 2013 the District gained access to LiDAR (Light Detecting and Ranging) data for
the northern two-thirds of Genesee County (Towns of Darien, Alexander, Bethany and Pavilion were not included). The data was provided by USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service. NRCS also provided topographic coverage (as a GIS layer) with 2 foot contour intervals as a product of the LiDAR data. The District continues to collaborate with Dr. Paul Richards from the College at Brockport in his work on the Onondaga Formation of limestone in Genesee County. His use of the LiDAR data is a key part of the current work in identifying “bedrock related features” such as sinkholes, depressions, and disappearing streams. The District has assisted the County Planning Department and the Town of Batavia with acquisition of the LiDAR data from USDA NRCS.

Provide technical support to Ag and Farmland Protection Program.

Assist County with County Park planning, development, and environmental education programming.

Assist County and Towns with flooding, drainage, and erosion control issues.

Assist County as a member of the Genesee County Water System Hookup Administrative Review Committee

Assist Towns with pond site evaluations for private landowners as required by local zoning.

Work with Town and County Highway Departments on use of hydro seeder for erosion control along streambanks and roadsides.

Work with USDA-NRCS on planning, surveying and designing wetland habitat improvement projects funded through the Wetland Reserve Program (WRP).
## Genesee County Soil and Water Conservation District
### Budget Summary for Year 2014

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BUDGET HIGHLIGHTS

1. The District continues to provide support services to agriculture throughout the county. Drainage service provided to landowners continues to be a significant (although declining) part of our workload. During 2011 District staff assisted farms in installing a record 1,360,950 feet of drainage tile. Preliminary figures for 2013 indicate a definite decline in assistance provided for drainage projects. A fee is charged for this service but generates only a modest amount of income. As a revenue source, it appears this will be a budget deficit for 2013. Sale of tree seedlings and ground cover continues to be a significant income producer. Sales remained steady this past year, and income remained somewhat constant. County appropriation continues to be our largest source of income representing 48.5% (49% in 2012) of our total proposed budget. With a 2012 reduction in County support the District Board found it necessary to eliminate two positions (one full time equivalent).

2. Grants: The District continues to apply for and secure grant money to assist county landowners in implementing conservation practices and to offset the District’s budget impacts on County Government. The District received word that it was not successful in obtaining State funding through Round 19 of the AGNPSACP. District staff continues to work on previously funded AGNPSACP projects (Rounds 17 and 18).

The District awarded Finger Lakes–Lake Ontario Watershed Protection (FL-LOWPA) grant funding to two farms for three projects ($54,781) during 2013. These funds were appropriated in SFY 2009-10 ($44,175), SFY 2010-11 ($38,250), and SFY 2011-12 ($38,250) from the Environmental Protection Fund. The District received funds from SFY 2010-11 and SFY 2011-12 during 2013. As soon as we close out the 2009-10 grant we will be eligible to receive funding appropriated for 2012-13 ($38,250). District staff is in the process of writing the grant narrative for SFY 2013-14 appropriated funds ($49,920). We are anticipating by the end of 2014 we will be current with funds appropriated under this program.

3. New York State and USDA Support: State reimbursement to Districts is proposed in the Environmental Protection Fund (EPF) to be $60,000 (Part A) per District. This figure represents a $30,000 increase in State appropriation, as a result of a change in NYS Soil and Water Conservation Districts Law (August 2012) which “caps” funding. This is a 50% reimbursement for equipment and personnel services for providing technical assistance to landowners. Our District, last year, submitted eligible expenses for reimbursement for $153,418 (a decrease of $22,577 in eligible expenses from the previous year). For 2013, with the change in district law and EPF appropriation, the District received $59,325 ($29,325 over budget) in Part A reimbursement.

AEM provides potential ($40,000 maximum state reimbursement) income for personnel services in conducting free farm assessments, outreach and education, evaluation and reporting and agency/department partnership participation. Currently the Genesee County AEM Committee is made up of representatives from NRCS, Gen. Co. Cornell Cooperative Extension, Gen. Co. SWCD, North West New York Dairy, Livestock & Field Crops Team, Ag. Consulting Services, Western NY Crop Management, and a local farmer. Our 2014 budget assumes we will earn $21,000 in reimbursement for staff time, an increase of $6,000 over the 2013 budget.

It appears that USDA-NRCS will continue to cover rent costs for the District office at the current location in the USDA Service Center at 29 Liberty Street.
INDICATORS

1. A total of 30 farms in Genesee County have filed Notices of Intent (NOI) to comply with CAFO requirements. Additional compliance requirements were a part of the re-authorization of the CAFO permit in New York this past year. NYSDEC granted an extension for medium CAFOs to June 30, 2014. We are not certain on the number of Genesee County medium CAFOs (14 farms) that have applied for extension. The state budget for 2014 slightly increased the 2011 cut of our FL-LOWPA (water quality) grant funding ($38,000 anticipated). The AGNPSACP grant program also slightly increased funding in the 2014 budget. The Round 20 (rfp) announcement is anticipated very soon.

2. For 2014, with the change (cap increase of $30,000 to $60,000) in district law, we anticipate at least $55,000 in Part A reimbursement.

3. We are anticipating a reimbursement from the AEM program this year of $21,000. This represents an increase of $6,000 over the 2013 budget figure.

4. County support for the District is requested at $168,768. The District continues to make efficient use of grant funding and NYS reimbursement, in addition to earned income, to support all District programs. We have reduced spending including personnel cuts in 2012. Personnel continue to be the biggest expense in our budget. 2012 staff reductions have translated into a reduction in personnel hours available to meet our workload demands. We have also been unable to earn as much income from outside sources (fees charged to landowners, state and federal reimbursements, and sale of conservation supplies). We are attempting to continue to provide an adequate level of service to farmers and other clients.

5. During 2007 the District hired a full-time Conservation Education Program Coordinator and entered into an agreement with the County Department of Parks, Recreation and Forestry to provide environmental education program services for the Bethany Park Interpretive Nature Center. According to the agreement, the District was to be reimbursed for 75% of the total salary and benefits. The District Board, this year, is also attempting to recover vehicle use expenses associated with the service provided. For 2014 that reimbursement figure is budgeted at $44,254. This figure is $2,860 over the 2013 budget.

6. The District anticipates a continuation in the decline of earned income generated by fees charged for drainage services provided to agricultural landowners. Contractor use of modern technology (GPS) and large farm acquisition of drainage installation equipment is fast becoming a reality in Genesee County.

7. Employee benefits (health and NYS retirement) continue to increase. NYS retirement is $11,000 more for 2014.