



Quarterly

NEWSLETTER



DATES TO REMEMBER



July:

- 15 - Chemung County Steward Workday
- 17 - Twin Oaks Dairy Pasture Walk (p2 for flyer) & Trail Survey Workshop (p8-9 for flyer)



August:

- 4 - Edwards Hill/Broome County Steward Workday
- 12 - Chenango County Steward Workday & BBQ
- 21 - USC Bi-Monthly Meeting

September:

- 10 - Watershed Forestry Task Force Meeting
- 14 - Planting with Purpose Orders Due
- 16 - 2026 Watershed Wednesdays Begin

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Save the Dates

Returning for 2026: Watershed Wednesdays

Each Wednesday Morning at 9:30 from 9/16 to 12/16 (excluding holidays) USC will host a series of mini, watershed -focused webinars. We're looking forward to presentations by watershed partners on a wide variety of topics. Mark your calendars and stay tuned for our presentation schedule.

Find videos of past Watershed Wednesdays sessions on the USC webpage: www.u-s-c.org/ww or on our youtube channel.

Jasper Planting with Purpose Project

By Thomas Conklin, *Program Specialist,*
Madison County SWCD

In April of 2026, district staff at Madison County SWCD assisted a local landowner in Hamilton, NY with a .75-acre upland planting. The landowner showed interest in the program after talking to a neighbor about their planting that was conducted in September of 2025. Before the planting, the area was used as a deer food plot. However, the landowner was ready to retire the plot and return it back to a native hardwood forest. Seasonal hunting still occurs on the plot to control deer disturbance of the planted stock.



Project Area Before Planting

An advertisement for The Nature Conservancy's "Planting with Purpose" program. It features a person in a cap and gloves planting a small tree. The text reads: "Get trees for your land —no cost, no hassle." Below this, it says: "Participate in The Nature Conservancy's Planting with Purpose program to get support with planting trees on your property." Logos for The Nature Conservancy and USCA (Upper Susquehanna Conservation Area) are at the bottom.

Project Area After Planting



Twin Oaks Dairy Pasture Walk

Friday, July 17
10:30 a.m. ET

3214 State Route 13,
Truxton, NY

Register for the Pasture Walk
Here:



<https://forms.office.com/pages/responsepage.aspx?id=9DZ9usq8W0ODzin3qwZEyAbB5PRuu6FPgH2HDLuO47ZURUszUEIHRFITTVCWFRPQ0pCQlhNTzU0RC4u&route=shorturl>

Wetland Restoration Project Enhances Nanticoke Creek Watershed



By: Biley Griffiths, Broome County SWCD
Natural Resource Conservationist

The District continued its restoration efforts in the Nanticoke Creek Watershed this spring by planting approximately 2.6 acres of freshwater emergent wetland with native trees and shrubs through the Trees for Tributaries Program. This project builds upon the 225 trees and shrubs planted in the site's upland area during spring 2025.

The success of this project was made possible through the cooperation of two adjacent landowners whose properties share a common boundary. Their commitment to conservation allowed for a coordinated planting effort that maximized the ecological benefits across the site.

A new planting technique, known as "micro-clusters," was also tested at the site. Using four-foot welded wire fencing and T-posts provided by the Upper Susquehanna Coalition Watershed Forestry Team, eleven clusters were installed to protect approximately 210 trees and shrubs from deer browse while allowing adequate space for growth. An additional 75 trees were planted using shelter tubes and stakes outside the clusters.

The goal of the project is to improve water quality by reducing nutrient and sediment runoff before it reaches nearby waterways. The restoration will also provide important benefits including floodwater storage, wildlife habitat, and increased biodiversity.

Projects like this demonstrate the value of collaboration between landowners, conservation partners, and local organizations in protecting and improving natural resources for future generations.



The planting crew poses at the Nanticoke Creek Watershed restoration site after a successful day of installing native trees and shrubs.



The project site showing newly planted trees protected by both micro-clusters and traditional tree tubes, helping ensure successful establishment and growth.



Kicking off the 2026 Field Season with Stewardship

By Ava Glasser, *USC Buffer Steward Coordinator*

Meet our summer 2026 forest stewards in the Upper Susquehanna watershed! These interns will be hard at work this summer monitoring and maintaining our many acres of trees planted in the watershed. If you see them around, welcome them to the districts.



Delaware County

My name is Travis Houck and I am from Downsville, New York. I am a buffer steward at the Delaware County Soil and Water District. I wanted to become a buffer steward because the job seemed interesting, and I love being outside. From this job I hope to have new experiences, meet new people, and learn about the environment in this area.



My name is Carter Tarrants, I'm 21 years old and going into my senior year at SUNY Cobleskill studying wildlife management. My next goal is to become a New York State Forest Ranger.



Chenango County

Hi my name is Roman Desnoyers, I am from West Winfield, NY. I am currently a senior at SUNY Morrisville pursuing my degree in Environmental and Natural Resources Management. I am interested in a career in forestry.



My name is Kate. I am from Chenango soil and water. I like to go fishing and hiking throughout the year. I enjoy doing anything outdoors and I also like to go camping. I am going for my bachelors degree at SUNY ESF. I am excited to continue my internship through the summer!



Broome County

My name is Ashton McCann and I am an undergraduate Biology student at University of Rochester, going into my senior year. I am originally from Binghamton and went to Seton Catholic Central High School. I enjoy being outside and learning more about the environment, whether it involves plants, animals, or people.



Hello! My name is Olivia Fenwick and I am from Westchester, NY. After receiving a B.S. in Environmental Science at Binghamton University, I was thrilled to be accepted as a Buffer Steward Intern for the Broome County Soil & Water Conservation District. A couple years ago, I spent an eye-opening summer in Belize for IFR (Institute for Field Research), which is where I fell in love with field work. Nothing makes me feel more connected to the Earth than getting my hands (and sometimes my feet) in the dirt. One of my greatest passions aside from nature and travel is culinary arts, as I challenge myself with new recipes and flavor profiles as much as I can! I am very happy to be part of something so important this summer.



Madison County

I am Rebekah Cullen, and I am attending Paul Smith's College this fall, where I'll be majoring in Environmental Science. I love all things science, community, and the outdoors. In my free time, I participate in FFA events, play sports like soccer, softball, and basketball, hike, kayak, camp, garden, and give back to my community.



Tioga County

Hi, my name is Emily Dimock and I am from Endwell, NY. I graduated from SUNY Broome CC with an A.S. in Environmental Science and received my B.S. in Environmental Science: Ecosystems from Binghamton University this past May. I am working with Tioga County SWCD for my second season and am so glad to be back! Fun fact: I am a NY state champion archer.



My name is Melissa Faughnan, and I am a returning riparian buffer steward with the Upper Susquehanna Coalition. I am currently working out of the Tioga County Soil and Water Conservation District. I have a background in Environmental Science with a BS from Binghamton University. I'm passionate about conserving our natural world and learning about how complex and helpful it is. Outside of work, my love for the environment continues with hikes, being obsessed with any bug or creature I come across, creating art inspired by nature, birding, camping, reading in or about nature, kayaking, and many other activities!



Otsego County

My name is Kieran, I'm an intern this summer at Otsego County heading into my senior year at SUNY Cobleskill. I like to spend a lot of my time outdoors hiking, playing sports, and exploring new places.



Hello, I'm Taylor Knapp. I'm an intern at Otsego County SWCD. I'm entering my final semester at Westfield State University, where I'm studying Biology and Environmental Sciences. I love hiking and enjoy spending time outdoors. I'm excited for the opportunity to learn while working outside this summer!



Bradford County

I'm Camille McRoberts. I currently am a Junior at Juniata College and I'm studying environmental engineering! This is my third year working for the USC and I'm excited for what this year has in store!



Steuben County

My name is Hunter Cupp and I'm 23. I have a bachelor's degree in Natural Environmental Studies from Alfred University. I played College lacrosse for the Saxons and also started all 4 years during that time. I'm avid outdoorsman's, I like too hunt, fish, and hike. Something that interests me is the ecology of white-tailed deer; I conducted an independent research study looking into how seasonal food availability and human disturbance influence white-tailed deer movement in agricultural-forest landscapes.



USC Buffer Stewards continued...

Oneida County

Calvin Rhoades is a resident of New Hartford, New York, and a recent graduate of SUNY Polytechnic Institute in Utica, where he earned a Bachelor of Science in Biology with a minor in Chemistry. He is excited to be working with the Oneida County Soil and Water Conservation District and plans to pursue a Ph.D. in Biology or a related field in the future.

My name is David R. Carnie. I am 28 years old and I am from Syracuse NY. I have had a passion for the natural environment and wildlife habitat from a young age. I have finished my senior year at Morrisville and now have joined Oneida County Soil and Water District as an intern to finish my degree requirements and to put the knowledge I have just received into practice. I am excited to be part of a team that contributes to the sustainability of our natural areas and resources and helps support landowners, municipalities, and communities.

Chemung County

My name is Ean Walsh. I live in Hector, NY, and I plan on going to college at SUNY Oswego for Environmental Science and pursue a job in the environmental science field. This year I'm excited to be gaining hands-on experience in the field as a riparian buffer steward with Chemung Soil & Water.

Additional New Staff in the Watershed



USC Wetland Team 2026 Intern:

Hi, I'm Megan Bryla! I'm from Endicott, NY and I just graduated from Hartwick College with a degree in Environment, Sustainability & Society. I'm happy to be working with the USC and the conservation district again and to be learning more about wetlands! A fun fact about me is that I've been a vegetarian for 10 years!

Susquehanna River Basin Commission 2026 Seasonal Interns:

My name is Joyanna Lynn and I am a rising senior in Environmental Science and Art at Elmira College. I love going on adventures outside and getting to learn more critters, plants, and fossils to identify while out in the field.

My name is Elise Wheadon, and I am an incoming junior majoring in Environmental Studies at Binghamton University. I am passionate about science and nature, and love learning about different native species and how to conserve them.

Growing Conservation through Eels in the Classroom

The inaugural 2025–2026 **Eels in the Classroom** program introduced hundreds of students across New York's Susquehanna watershed to the fascinating life cycle of the American eel while fostering hands-on learning in aquatic ecology and conservation. Throughout the school year, students cared for juvenile American eels in classroom aquariums, monitored water quality, observed eel behavior, and gained a deeper understanding of one of North America's most remarkable migratory fish.

Four schools participated in the pilot program, engaging nearly **320 students** from elementary through high school. The program culminated in two community eel release events held in **Homer** and **Elmira**, where students released their eels into local waterways that connect to the Chesapeake Bay watershed. More than **70 volunteers and partners** contributed to the success of these events, including the following organizations:



Students at the Elmira release searching for released eels



Launching the program required significant collaboration behind the scenes, including obtaining permits, developing classroom protocols, assembling aquarium supplies, coordinating eel deliveries, and organizing large-scale public release events. Valuable lessons learned during the pilot year—including earlier aquarium setup, improved tank supplies, the need to limit size variability in each tank to ensure feeding is more uniform and there is less chance for cannibalism in the tanks, and refinements to release logistics—will help make future programs even more successful.

The momentum continues to build for the **2026–2027** school year. Six new classrooms will join four returning schools, expanding the program to **10 participating classes** across the region. As the program grows, Eels in the Classroom will continue inspiring students through hands-on science while connecting them to the importance of healthy rivers, watershed stewardship, and the remarkable migration of the American eel from local streams to the Sargasso Sea. By combining education with conservation, the program is helping cultivate the next generation of environmental stewards.



Join a
**TRAIL SURVEY PROGRAM
WORKSHOP**

in partnership with CCE
Broome and Broome County
Soil and Water
Conservation District



When: Friday, July 17th from 12pm - 2pm

Where: Wolfe Park
42°09'436"N 75°54'493"W

What to expect: Learn how to identify key terrestrial
invasive species, understand its impact on our
ecosystems, and gain the knowledge you need to
survey on your own!

**Register
Here**



HOBART AND WILLIAM SMITH





Join the TRAIL SURVEY PROGRAM

Help us survey for terrestrial invasive species across our region!

Survey period will be from: April 1st - September 30th

We are tracking high priority invasive species across the region. We are asking for your help to find these species on our trails! Volunteers will be trained on invasive species identification and trail safety.



How to Participate:

Fill out our interest form by using the QR code to the right and then:

1. Attend our virtual training sessions on April 1st, June 9th, and July 29th or review the training materials available on our website and our YouTube channel (available April 1st)
2. AND/OR Attend an in-person workshop at a trail near you!
3. After either, you're ready to survey on your own or in a group!

Register
Here!



 HOBART AND WILLIAM SMITH

 FINGER LAKES
INSTITUTE

 PARTNERSHIP FOR REGIONAL
INVASIVE SPECIES
MANAGEMENT
FINGER LAKES

Investing in Riparian Buffers: Building Long-Term Stewardship Across the Upper Susquehanna Watershed

By Lydia Brinkley, USC Watershed Forestry Coordinator

With 2024 funding from National Fish and Wildlife Foundation's for our *Investing in Buffers* initiative, we have been focused on addressing one of the greatest challenges facing riparian restoration—ensuring newly established forest buffers survive and thrive for years to come.

While planting thousands of trees is an important first step, successful restoration requires ongoing stewardship. Many landowners lack the equipment, technical expertise, or labor needed to maintain young plantings during their critical establishment period. This project helped bridge those gaps by providing contracted maintenance services, expanding district stewardship capacity, and strengthening partnerships with conservation districts, contractors, volunteers, schools, and community organizations.

Project accomplishments demonstrate the value of investing beyond the initial planting. More than **753 acres of riparian forest buffers** received maintenance services, including mowing, invasive species control, and herbicide treatments. The project also supported the installation of **54.83 acres of new riparian forest buffers** and **43.5 acres of grazing conservation practices**, helping protect water quality while improving long-term habitat throughout the watershed.

The initiative also fostered innovative partnerships and education. In Morris, New York, USC collaborated with the Butternut Valley Alliance, Morris Central School, and the Susquehanna River Basin Commission to engage students in stream monitoring before restoration work began along Butternut Creek. Students have continued returning to the site to observe the growing buffer and help steward the planting, creating a lasting connection between restoration and environmental education. Meanwhile, in Chenango County, partners successfully implemented one of USC's first large-scale Japanese knotweed control projects, improving conditions for an 8.1-acre riparian forest buffer by giving newly planted trees and shrubs a significant advantage over this aggressive invasive species.

Beyond on-the-ground restoration, the project strengthened the region's conservation workforce by supporting **11 Soil and Water Conservation District stewards**, hosting **10 buffer steward workdays** that provided hands-on training across approximately **90 acres** of restoration sites, and engaging **107 volunteers** in planting and maintenance activities. USC also developed the *Cultivating Riparian Forests* landowner guide to provide practical stewardship information that continues to support restoration efforts across the watershed.

Although challenges remain in maintaining remote restoration sites, the Investing in Buffers initiative has established a stronger foundation for long-term stewardship, demonstrating that successful restoration depends not only on planting trees, but on investing in the partnerships, people, and maintenance needed to ensure those forests flourish for generations.



Mulching at the Town of Winfield Park to prevent weed-whacking of the trunk.



Aerial image of Chenango site post herbicide application.



New York State Federation
of Lake Associations

Citizens Statewide Lake Assessment Program (CSLAP) Coordinator New York State Federation of Lake Associations (NYSFOLA) Position Type: Full-Time, Year-Round

Anticipated Start Date: August 2026

The New York State Federation of Lake Associations seeks a knowledgeable, organized, and self-motivated professional to coordinate New York's premier citizen science lake monitoring program: the Citizens Statewide Lake Assessment Program (CSLAP). This is a direct leadership role that combines freshwater science, volunteer engagement, environmental education, and statewide program coordination. The successful candidate will ensure the collection of high-quality lake monitoring data, adding to four decades of scientifically based data and acquisition, while supporting volunteers and strengthening lake stewardship throughout New York State. NYSFOLA is a statewide 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization dedicated to partnering with stakeholders to preserve, protect, and enhance the lakes and watersheds of New York State. Membership includes lake associations, individuals, researchers, and lake management professionals working together to advance science-based stewardship and education.

Through CSLAP, trained volunteers and lake associations collect quality assured lake monitoring data from waterbodies across New York State through a long-standing partnership between NYSFOLA and New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC). The CSLAP Coordinator works closely with NYSDEC staff, volunteers, laboratory partners, and other stakeholders for the continued success of this statewide effort. While the position collaborates extensively with NYSDEC, it is an NYSFOLA position and not a direct NYSDEC appointment.

NYSFOLA is an Equal Opportunity Employer and is committed to fostering a diverse, inclusive, and welcoming workplace.

Position Summary

The CSLAP Coordinator manages the day-to-day operation and long-term success of the program under NYSFOLA's contract with NYSDEC. The CSLAP Coordinator serves as the primary liaison to volunteers, lake associations, NYSDEC Division of Water staff, laboratory partners, and other stakeholders. The position requires balancing scientific rigor with practical program administration and public engagement. Responsibilities include coordinating statewide volunteer training and monitoring efforts, maintaining accurate and timely program records, facilitating laboratory and agency coordination, interpreting, and communicating lake data, and supporting broader NYSFOLA initiatives.

The CSLAP Coordinator serves as an ambassador for citizen science and helps empower volunteers and communities to better understand and protect New York's lakes.

Application Process

Interested applicants should send a written expression of interest with a current resume to NYSFOLAlakes@gmail.com

Any updates to the position description and recruitment process will be posted at the NYSFOLA website: <https://nysfola.org/>



Silvi-Corner: *Ilex verticillata*

When much of the landscape has turned gray for the winter, **winterberry (*Ilex verticillata*)** stands out with brilliant clusters of bright red berries that provide both beauty and important wildlife habitat. Native to eastern North America, winterberry is a deciduous holly commonly found in wetlands, floodplains, stream corridors, and other moist habitats, making it an excellent choice for riparian restoration and conservation plantings.

Habitat & Site Characteristics

Winterberry naturally thrives in moist to wet soils although it can also perform well in average garden soils with adequate moisture, and grows best in full sun to partial shade. Because of its adaptability and ability to stabilize soils, winterberry is frequently incorporated into riparian buffer projects, wetland restorations, and native landscaping.

Establishment & Management Considerations

Winterberry typically reaches 6 to 12 feet in height and spread, making it well suited for naturalized plantings, buffer enhancements, and wildlife habitat projects. Shrubs should generally be spaced 6 to 10 feet apart, depending on desired density and management objectives. Since winterberry is dioecious, both male and female plants are required for fruit production, with one male shrub capable of pollinating several nearby females. Young plants may benefit from protection against deer browsing, particularly in areas with high wildlife pressure. Once established, winterberry is relatively low maintenance and tolerant of seasonal flooding.

Distinctive Characteristics

Unlike evergreen hollies, winterberry sheds its leaves each autumn, leaving behind vibrant clusters of scarlet berries that persist well into winter. Its smooth gray bark and upright branching provide additional visual interest during the dormant season. The shrub's simple, oval leaves have finely serrated edges and are arranged alternately along the stems. During the growing season, the foliage is a rich medium green before turning yellow to bronze in autumn.

In late spring, winterberry produces small, inconspicuous white to greenish flowers that are highly attractive to native pollinators. Successful pollination results in abundant bright red berries that remain on the branches after leaf drop, creating one of the most recognizable winter displays among native shrubs. While the berries are not edible for people, they become an important food source for cedar waxwings, American robins, eastern bluebirds, wild turkeys, and numerous other bird species as winter progresses. Small mammals also benefit from the fruit and the dense branching structure provides valuable cover throughout the year.

Conservation Value

Winterberry offers benefits that extend far beyond its ornamental appeal. Its fibrous root system helps reduce soil erosion along streams and wetlands, while its flowers support pollinating insects during spring. The persistent winter berries provide critical food when other resources are scarce, making winterberry one of the most valuable native shrubs for enhancing biodiversity. Whether incorporated into riparian forest buffers, wetland restoration projects, or residential landscapes, winterberry contributes year-round ecological value while adding striking seasonal beauty to the landscape.



Winterberry stabilizes streambanks, tolerates flooding, and provides critical food and habitat for wildlife year-round.



Source: Maryland DNR

SRBC Launches Data Centers & Water Use Resource

As data center development is increasingly in the news, the Susquehanna River Basin Commission (SRBC) has launched a new **Data Centers & Water Use** webpage to help communities, developers, and decision-makers better understand the industry's potential impacts on water resources. The page explains SRBC's regulatory role, outlines how proposed high-water-use facilities are scientifically evaluated, and highlights water-saving cooling technologies that can significantly reduce demand. Visitors can also access frequently asked questions, educational articles, webinars, fact sheets, and information on approved projects. The resource promotes informed planning that supports both economic development and long-term protection of the basin's valuable water resources.

<https://www.srb.gov/regulatory/data-centers/>



This flyer and many other resources on the webpage

SRBC and Cool Collaboration

By Stacey Hanrahan, SRBC Communications & Outreach Specialist

Penn State University (PSU) professor Dr. Daniel Allen, Department of Ecosystem Science and Management, recently contacted us about a research project one of his PhD students is doing using eDNA (environmental DNA) metabarcoding techniques to develop a way to assess stream macroinvertebrate communities.

SRBC scientists have been leading the way in eDNA monitoring in the basin and were immediately excited to partner. The new collaboration with PSU will be spearheaded by SRBC Aquatic Biologist Luanne Steffy. The research project will incorporate our Continuous Instream Monitoring (CIM) network, which has 10-15 years of routine macroinvertebrate sample data to reference.

SRBC staff will continue to collect macroinvertebrate samples as part of our normal spring sampling, while both Commission and PSU staff collect eDNA samples. By the end of spring, the teams will have 50 paired traditional macroinvertebrate samples with triplicate eDNA samples from sites across the Susquehanna River Basin. This is an excellent opportunity to leverage our CIM network for novel research, while cultivating a strong partnership.

Learn more about our eDNA work related to aquatic invasive species by checking out the story map below.

<https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/85e2fade8b9047acb6e5b69ece542f5>

