

**OSWEGO
COUNTY**

2023 Annual Report

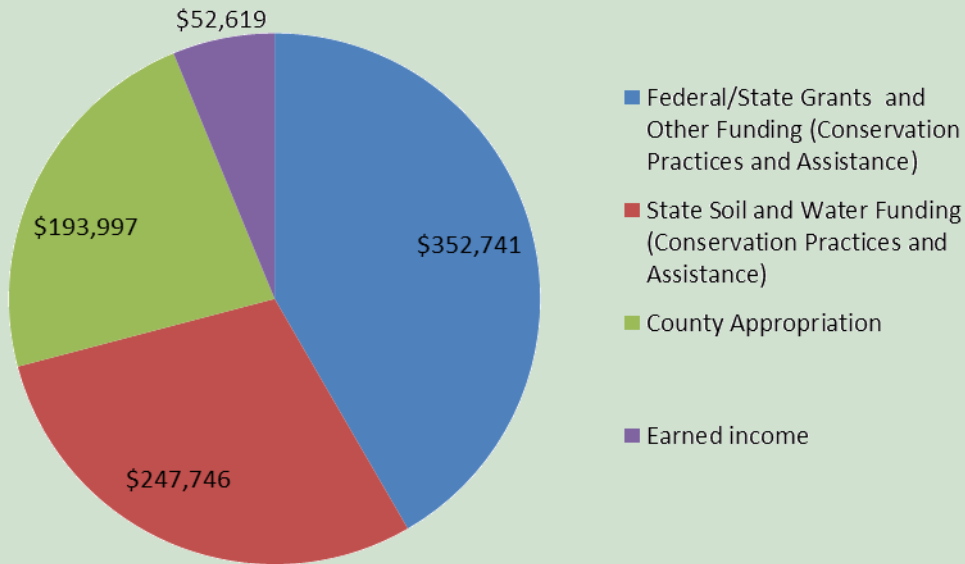
**SOIL AND WATER
Conservation District**

“Promoting, Protecting and Improving Natural Resources”



2023 Funding Allocations

During 2023, the Oswego County Soil and Water Conservation District (OCSWCD) leveraged \$653,106 in funds for the \$193,997 investment from the county. This represents a \$3.37 return for each dollar in County appropriation funds to help meet the conservation needs of residents and municipalities in Oswego County.



Board of Directors

- Jeffrey Richards**, *Chairperson/Grange Representative*
- Linda Lockwood**, *Vice-Chairperson/Legislative Member*
- Tom Bonoffski**, *Farm Bureau Representative*
- Marry Ellen Chesbro**, *Legislative Member*
- Sandy Tuori-Bell**, *Member at Large*

District Staff

- Joe Chairvolotti**, *District Manager*
- Laura Romanowicz**, *District Treasurer*
- Erica Schreiner, Sr.**, *District Technician*
- Sarra Learned**, *District Technician*

Oswego County Soil and Water Conservation District

3105 State Route 3

Fulton, NY 13069

(315) 592-9663

www.oswegosoilandwater.com

We hope that you enjoy reviewing the highlights of the district from a very productive year. If you have any questions about programs or services offered, please feel free to contact us.



2023 District Achievements

- **10,500** Trees and Shrubs Sold
- **98** Acres in Forest Management Plans for Landowners
- **\$3.37** Return for Each Dollar From County
- **47** Sites Surveyed for Giant Hogweed
- **1,300** Mosquito Dunk Kits Distributed to Landowners
- **31,019** Pounds of Water Chestnuts Hand-Pulled (Photo C)
- **138** Acres of Water Chestnuts Treated
- **48** Ag Land Value Assessments Completed
- **35** Acres of reforestation marked for a timber harvest (Photo B)
- **262** Landowners and Municipalities Assisted
- **36** Farmers Assisted Through the Agricultural Environmental Management Program (Photo D)
- **6** Summer Interns
- The District Worked with **854** K-12 Students (Photo E)
- **5,466** Trees Distributed Through Plant-A-Tree (Photo A)
- **39** Bluebird Houses and Bat Boxes Sold



A



B



C



D



E

Environmental Education

Plant-A-Tree

In April, participants in the 32nd annual Plant-a-Tree (PAT) program received Norway spruce seedlings and educational materials. PAT was open to 5,466 County youth in grades pre-kindergarten through five. Three hundred eighty-six educators from nineteen county schools participated. The program is coordinated by the District and Cornell Cooperative Extension of Oswego County, and funded by Constellation and the Oswego County Federation of Sportsmen's Clubs.



Top: Students at Lura M. Sharp Elementary in Pulaski help package tree seedlings into individual bags.

Left: Plant-a-Tree program coordinators and sponsors met with students at Lanigan Elementary School in Fulton to deliver tree seedlings and educational materials.



Envirothon

Students from Altmar-Parish-Williamstown, Paul V. Moore (Central Square), G. Ray Bodley (Fulton), Hannibal, Oswego, Phoenix, and Pulaski high schools participated in a hands-on environmental competition about aquatics, current environmental issues, forestry, soils, and wildlife. The 31st annual event was held at Camp Hollis in the Town of Oswego. Students from Oswego High School placed first, G. Ray Bodley second, and Altmar-Parish-Williamstown third. Constellation and the Indeck Oswego Energy Center were the primary sponsors. **Left:** Students from Oswego High School placed first at the 31st annual Oswego County Envirothon.



Conservation Field Day

Right: At Oswego County's 35th annual Conservation Field Day at Selkirk Shores State Park, students learned about invasive species with Linda Brosch from Cornell Cooperative Extension of Oswego County. The event was sponsored by the Oswego

County Federation of Sportsmen's Clubs and Selkirk Shores. Each of the eighteen classes in attendance traveled to five different natural resource related presentations.

Left: Thank you note from a fifth grader who attended the 35th annual Oswego County Conservation Field Day.

Thank you for teaching us at Selkirk Shores! I loved learning about the birds and all of their sounds. The bird whistles are really fun. Sometimes you get a chirp or two back. I am moving soon and there are woods with lots of birds nearby. I will probably hear some woodpeckers. Thank you again for teaching us at Selkirk Shores.



Forestry

Oswego County Reforestation Management

The District continues to implement a multiple use forest management plan on 2,200 acres of County Reforestation property. **Right:** G&C Martin Logging conducted post-harvest clean-up approximately 1-year after a cutting operation. All contractors that harvest on Reforestation property are required to restore the site by grading skid trails and the landing with a bull dozer, as well as installing any necessary Best Management Practices (BMPs), such as water bars or broad-based dips. All practices are intended to



facilitate proper drainage and alleviate erosion concerns. When harvesting ceases late in the year, site restoration is generally delayed until the following growing season.

Left: Three of the District’s water chestnut interns stayed on board for an additional week in 2023 and installed signs on Oswego County Reforestation property. This process identifies the property for public use, but also can deter potential timber trespass. The signs were installed around the boundary of several properties.



Forestry Technical Assistance

The District provided forestry assistance to more than 55 forest landowners and municipalities in 2023. Staff were contacted for advice in the following categories: forest management, insect or disease identification and control, wildlife habitat improvement, forestry or trail Best Management Practices, urban forestry, layout of practices for federal forestry programs, and invasive species. The program plays an important role in promoting sustainable forestry practices in Oswego County. This photo shows a tree marked as part of the Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP) administered by the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). District staff originally developed a management plan for this landowner several years prior to being enrolled in EQIP. In 2023, staff marked a cut-over northern hardwoods stand in an attempt to establish regeneration and regain sustainability.



Forest Management Planning

The District developed management plans for 3 landowners in Oswego County on a total of 98 acres of forested land. Staff conducted an inventory of resources and analyzed the data for each property. The results of the analyses formed the basis for the management plans produced. Each document developed includes the identification and description of natural resources on the property, recommendations and options available for management of those resources, a schedule of management activities, invasive species information and several maps detailing forest stands, water features, roads, soils and topographic features. This photo shows District Manager, Joe Chairvolotti, measuring a tree as part of a forest inventory. The data collected during an inventory provides composition, size class, stocking details and other data regarding each forest stand on a given property and is the basis for silvicultural recommendations.



Agriculture

AEM - Agricultural Environmental Management

Before



AEM is a voluntary, incentive-based program that helps farmers operate environmentally sound and economically viable businesses. Site specific farm plans are developed for participants by Oswego County SWCD staff and contracted planners. Using the priority issues identified in the plans, District staff apply for state and Federal grants to implement Best Management Practices or BMPs.

Photos: One of the projects completed in 2023 was a Heavy Use Area Protection System, which is a system of BMPs for the interception, collection, and safe treatment of runoff water from the barnyard. A before and after photo is shown of the project site. The project will help protect and improve water quality. The tall corner walls on this concrete pad barnyard serve as an area where the farmer can push manure and easily scoop it up with a tractor bucket. All the rainwater/snowmelt leaving the concrete pad passes through two wire mesh screens before emptying to a grassy vegetated filter area. The purpose of the screens is to collect any solids.

After



AEM Forestry Course

District Manager, Joe Chairvolotti participated as an instructor for the Agricultural Environmental Management (AEM) Forestry course at the Conservation Skills Workshop (CSW) along with Greg Albrecht from the State Soil and Water Conservation Committee, and Kristin Ballou from Franklin County Soil and Water Conservation District. The CSW offers a series of trainings with a focus on various conservation skills to Soil and Water



District staff from across New York State. This course in particular was intended to teach District employees about the AEM process as it relates to forestry, how to fill out tier 1 and 2 assessment forms and about the various Best Management Practices that can be installed in the woodlots of agricultural operations to improve water quality.

The photo on the **Left** shows the District Manager speaking to the group about forestry BMPs at a forested site.

Technical Assistance

Water quality and general technical assistance was provided to 203 landowners and municipalities throughout Oswego County in 2023. Assistance was offered regarding shoreline and stream bank erosion, drainage concerns, flooding, pond construction and maintenance, culvert repair, wetland and nuisance beaver issues, plant identification, permit requirements, available natural resource programs, government or private services, water and soil testing, aerial photos, property mapping and soils information. District staff conducted site visits in most cases, with phone calls or emails used to follow up with individuals. An array of residents contacted OCSWCD in 2023 for guidance including agricultural producers, recreational users, municipalities, and rural, urban/suburban residents and riparian landowners.



Sandy Creek 9 Element Plan

In 2023, this office was provided the opportunity to assist Jefferson County Soil and Water Conservation District in the preliminary work required for the development of a 9 Element Watershed Plan for the Sandy Creeks watershed. This geographic area covers portions of Oswego, Jefferson and Lewis Counties. The plan itself is intended to identify the status of the watershed and provide recommendations for the maintenance or improvement of the water quality. The steps in the development of this type of document include public input, completion of a

Quality Assurance Project Plan (QAPP), water quality monitoring, modeling and plan creation with Best Management Practice (BMP) recommendations. The public outreach process took place in January and February of 2023, and involved a number of organizations including this office, Jefferson County SWCD, Lewis County SWCD, Tug Hill Commission and Upstate Freshwater Institute (UFI). This entailed organizing several public meetings to gain the input needed to guide plan development. Water sampling began in March of 2023 on 14 streams and continued through December of the same year. Each month, a staff person from Oswego County SWCD assisted Jefferson County SWCD with obtaining the samples during 2 different rounds of monitoring. The monitoring process also included collecting velocity, turbidity, temperature, nutrient levels and other valuable information that will be incorporated into the modeling as well as the plan.



Left: This picture shows a pond that is losing water through a leak in a berm. The District assisted the landowner by providing information on how to find the exact leak location and the potential ways to seal it. The District receives many requests regarding pond construction and maintenance (i.e. structure, aquatic vegetation).

Right: Landowners often call regarding wetlands, streams, rare/endangered species, and other regulatory features on their properties. District staff will conduct a brief environmental review of a property or project site, conduct site visits to offer

recommendations, obtain photos or measurements, and facilitate communications with the appropriate regulatory agency contacts to discuss permitting needs and project designs. In this case the District put the landowner in contact with the Department of Environmental Conservation and US Army Corps of Engineers to discuss the permits and practices required in order to conduct a dredging operation.



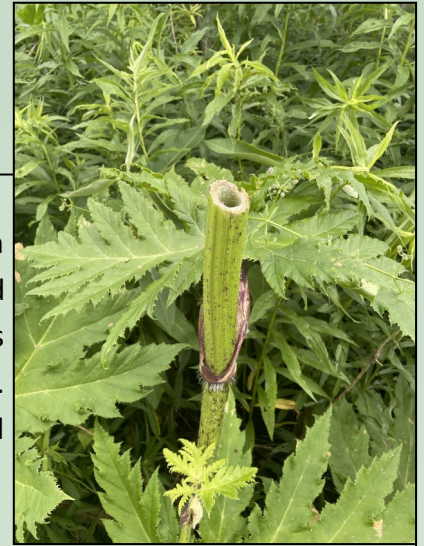
District staff pursued several regulatory permits for various groups and municipalities. This involved field visits, mapping, measurements, designs (if appropriate), meetings with regulatory agency staff and the completion of permit applications. Pictured on the **Left**, is an existing agricultural trail through a wetland that the Mexico Trail Riders Snowmobile Club requested to use in order to avoid significant road travel in particular area of their trail network. The red line in the photo marks the trail and the blue arrow indicates an overflow channel. The District assisted with securing the appropriate permits to install a wetland mat over this channel to allow for temporary access by snowmobiles in the winter of 23/24.



Invasive Species Programs

Giant Hogweed

Giant hogweed not only has an ecological impact, but also is a threat to human health. The sap from this invasive can induce hyper-sensitivity to sunlight and cause severe burns. The District has led a program for several years to control this noxious weed and in 2023, approximately 60 sites were visited for control. Approximately 50% of these sites located throughout Oswego County were treated with herbicides. Many others were monitored with no control efforts needed.



The photo on the **Left** shows a plant that has been treated with herbicide effectively and the photo on the **Right** is of a plant that received flowerhead removal to prevent the seed from falling. This program was implemented using State Soil and Water funding.

Hemlock Woolly Adelgid

Hemlock Woolly Adelgid (HWA), an invasive forest pest, was confirmed in Oswego County in 2021. This aggressive insect causes the decline and eventual mortality of Eastern hemlock trees resulting in ecological, economic and aesthetic impacts as well as safety issues. In 2021 and 2022, the District and County collaborated on getting numerous hemlock trees treated with pesticide at Independence Park. In 2023, a biocontrol effort was launched at the park. This office assisted the NYS Hemlock Initiative (NYHI) and the St. Lawrence Eastern Lake Ontario Partnership



for Regional Invasive Species Management (SLELO PRISM), to release 2,000 Laricobius beetles. This release was part of NYHI's regional effort to establish HWA biocontrol on the leading edge of the HWA infestation.

The photo on the **Left** shows a container of HWA infested foliage housing the beetles. The photo on the **Right** shows District Manager, Joe Chairvolotti, placing the foliage bundle with the beetles present, in an HWA infested hemlock tree at Independence Park.

Before



Water Chestnut

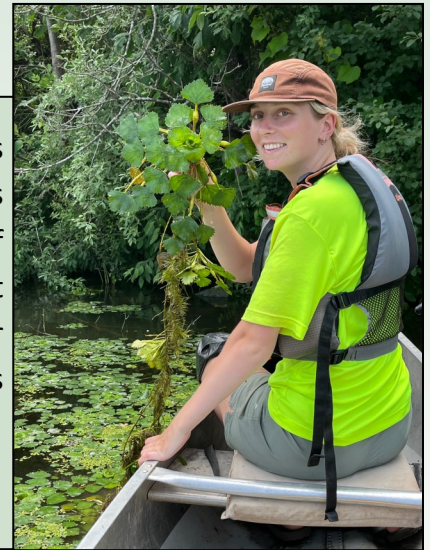
OCSWCD arranged for the herbicide treatment of 138 acres of dense water chestnut patches on the Oswego River. An agricultural drone was utilized exclusively in 2023 to apply the herbicide in mid-July, with a follow-up treatment in early August. Observations were conducted several weeks after the application showing success. The split photo here shows a before and after image where the aquatic herbicide was applied. The results are exceptional, but repeated applications are still necessary to reduce the chestnut populations to densities that can be controlled through hand pulling. The program was supported with State Soil and Water and Finger Lakes-Lake Ontario Watershed Protection Alliance (FOLLOWPA) funding as well as county appropriation.

After



In addition to the herbicide treatment, the District also employed 6 college interns for a period of 9 weeks during the summer to physically hand pull water chestnuts from canoes and a small motor boat. The team removed more than 31,000 lbs of chestnut plants from the Oswego River as well as other waterbodies throughout Oswego County. The program was supported with State Soil and Water and Finger Lakes-Lake Ontario Watershed Protection Alliance (FOLLOWPA) funding as well as county appropriation.

Right: District intern, Lilly Johnsen, with a large water chestnut plant.



Before

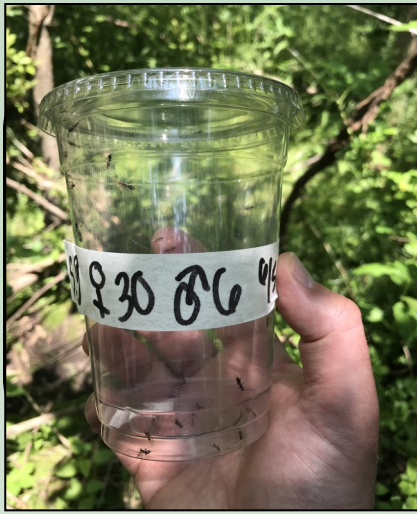


After



Above: Before and after photos of a chestnut population that was hand pulled on the Oswego River.

Emerald Ash Borer Biocontrol Release



The District assisted the St. Lawrence Eastern Lake Ontario Partnership for Regional Invasive Species Management (SLELO PRISM) with the release of Emerald Ash Borer biocontrol wasps. These wasps were released in different stages and with varying methods at SUNY Oswego Rice Creek Field Station. The intent is to establish a population to control EAB, but future monitoring will be needed to determine success.

Left: A container of adult wasps ready for release.

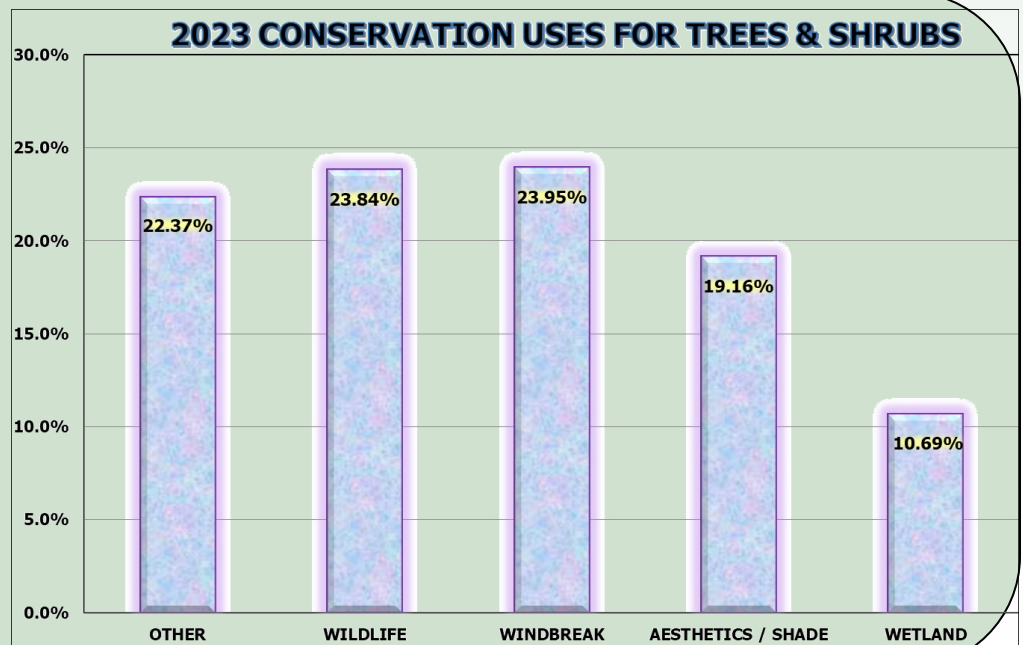
Eastern Equine Encephalitis

Eastern Equine Encephalitis (EEE), a mosquito borne illness, has had a known presence in Oswego County in past years. This area is rich in water resources, especially wetlands, causing mosquito populations to thrive and allow this disease to become established given the right conditions. Although residents can take certain precautions to avoid mosquito bites, control measures for individual homeowners are limited. In 2023 the District partnered with the Oswego County Health Department and distributed approximately 1,300 larvicide kits (pictured on the **Right**) to homeowners. These were available at our office, the health department and each municipality. Each package of larvicide contains 24 water soluble packets that are intended to be placed in containerized water only (i.e. rain barrels, etc.). All recipients are expected to follow the label.



52nd Annual Tree and Shrub Program

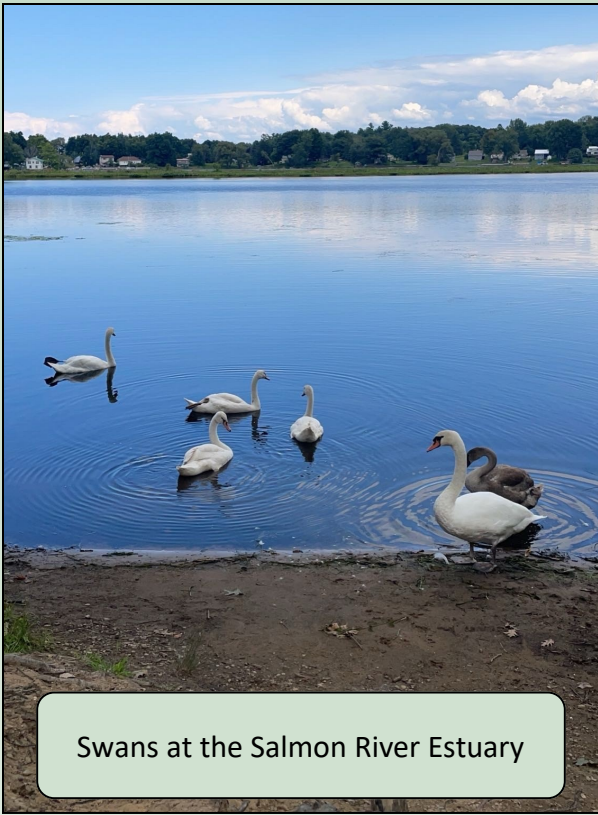
In 2023, the District offered 23 varieties of trees and shrubs to the public in the spring tree and shrub sale. Over 10,000 trees were planted for a variety of reasons including reforestation, shade, erosion control, ground cover, wind and snow breaks and wildlife habitat improvement.



Public Outreach

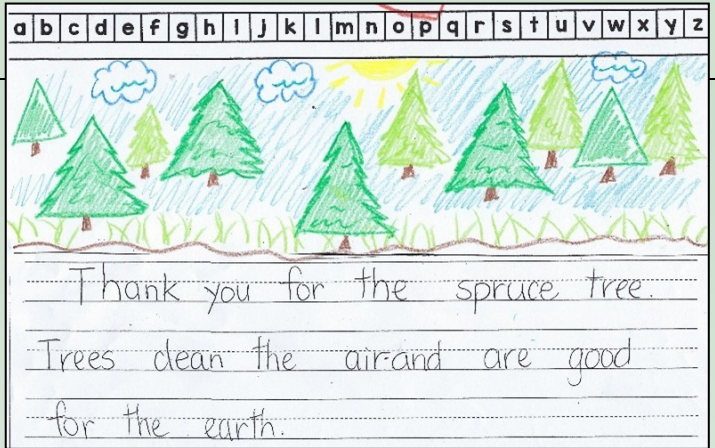
- Agricultural Agency Awareness Day: Worked with partners to prepare and present information
- Agricultural Literacy Week: Volunteer reader at a local elementary school
- Day in the Life of Lake Ontario and St. Lawrence River Watershed Student Summit: Presentation about water quality
- Great Lakes Basin Bin: Host site for educational materials
- New York State Envirothon: Volunteer at event
- New York State Fair: Booth with SWCDs statewide
- Oneida Lake 9 Element Plan Public Meeting: Worked with partners to prepare and present information
- Oneida Lake Association Annual Membership Meeting: Booth
- Oswego County Assessors: Presentation about agricultural assessments
- Oswego County Beef Producers: Presentation about District services
- Oswego County Career Summit: Booth about careers at SWCDs
- Oswego County Fair: Booth
- Oswego County Highway Superintendents Association: Presentation regarding District services available to municipalities
- Oswego County Progressive Agriculture Home and Farm Safety Day: Presentation titled Safety in the Outdoors
- Salmon River Fish Hatchery Open House: Booth and interactive display
- Sandy Creeks 9 Element Plan Public Meeting: Worked with partners to prepare and present information
- Volney Elementary School Earth Day: Presentation titled Animal Tracks and More!





Swans at the Salmon River Estuary

Thank you note from one of the students who received a tree and educational materials through the annual Plant-a-Tree program.



District interns showing off the pounds of water chestnuts removed from Oswego County using hand-pulled water chestnuts!



Laricobius beetles for hemlock woolly adelgid biocontrol treatment at Independence Park



District staff at the Oswego County Youth Career Summit

Oswego County Soil and Water Conservation District

3105 State Route 3

Fulton, NY 13069

Phone: (315) 592-9663

www.oswegosoilandwater.com

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