

Division IV Merit Award

On behalf of the Schuyler and Chemung County Soil and Water Conservation District's I would like to nominate John Wickham, USC Grazing Specialist, for the Division IV Merit Award. John Wickham has worked for the Schuyler and Chemung County Soil and Water Conservation Districts for the last 13 years. Prior to working with the Soil and Water Conservation District John ran a 60 cow dairy in the Town of Catharine with his wife Jackie, two boys Jeremy and Jim, and daughter Jessica. John brought his wealth of hands on, hard earned knowledge to the Soil and Water Conservation District. A well respected pillar of the community as a life long member, town supervisor, and county planning board member among many other things, allowed John to interact, connect, and successfully make outstanding strides on farms most others would not have even been welcomed on.

John has been well recognized throughout the state as a true leader in Prescribed Grazing Management. John has been a part of GRAZE NY/GLCI since its inception. He has planned, and implemented well over 4,000 acres of prescribed grazing on well over 80 farms in the two counties. John's multi-program approach has proven to create one of, if not the most, successful grazing programs in all of New York State. John has utilized New York State Agricultural Nonpoint Source Abatement and Control Grants, CRP, CREP, AMA, GRP, EQIP, and Congressional Earmark Funds to implement these grazing systems. This multiple program approach has allowed John to single handedly implement over a million dollars worth of conservation. John has also sat on the AEM Steering Committee for Schuyler County for the last decade. He has also been fully responsible for the complete implementation of the Chemung County AEM program for the last two years as well as assisting and contributing a large portion of Schuyler Counties program.

John wouldn't allow his program to be turned into a "fencing program", he knew that management, education and follow up was the true key to success for these farms with Rotational Grazing. John has led multiple educational sessions for not only producers, but also co-workers every year for more than a decade, helping to educate hundreds of people on the intricacies of prescribed grazing. John brings that common sense approach that all of us have related to, appreciated, and admired over the years.

John is a leader in prescribed grazing throughout the state. When John saw a need for correction in a program and he was not afraid to give advice, and work hard to make the necessary changes to that program in order to gain success and usefulness of that program. CREP is a prime example of this. John Wickham fought very hard in order to make CP21 (filter strips), and Wildlife Habitat buffers eligible for fencing, watering systems, and crossings. John, recognized the benefits of the program, but saw the

drawback of mandatory tree planting on some of the non-trout carrying tributaries. Thanks to John's efforts, we all now have more tools in our tool box.

John is also a true partner in every sense of the word. When asked by neighboring Soil and Water Conservation Districts, NRCS, Fingerlakes RC&D, FSA, etc... John will drop everything and assist on accomplishing the main goal, and that is to assist the producers of the area in the most efficient way. If it is simply making a contact, map, getting a signature, or even assisting in implementing a full project, he has never complained and always has seen the greater good in doing so.

John's title may be USC Grazing Specialist but he is so much more. He brings all of the intangibles that you can't overlook. He is a mentor to all of us (maybe boarding on psychologist) when we have a tough decision to make. He is our computer geek when we melt down our computers, which seems to happen on a somewhat regular basis. He is there with no complaints anytime we need a helping hand, from hydro-seeding, to mulching, to assisting with a survey, soil sampling or field visits. If a producer calls him on a weekend, John is still there. Always willing and able, to all of us John exemplifies all of the characteristics of this award.

2009 Districts in the News Awards

The '**2009 Districts in the News Awards**' were presented by State Agriculture Commissioner Patrick Hooker on Monday, October 19th at the New York Association of Conservation Districts Annual Meeting in Lake George. More than 235 print articles and 15 TV news and radio broadcasts were submitted by 22 Soil and Water Conservation Districts for this years awards, which are now in their fourth year.

GOLD CATEGORY:

"AEM in the News Award" - Schuyler County Soil & Water Conservation District

- for submitting over 20 articles that feature their county AEM program, local agriculture and District AEM programs statewide.

- '**Special Recognition**' was also given for having the most press featuring their District Directors in photos and quotes.