

Honors bestowed at annual luncheon

Special to The Odessa File

WATKINS GLEN, Feb. 8, 2016 -- The Schuyler County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) held its annual luncheon at the media center at Watkins Glen International on February 5 and presented three Merit Awards and five Lifetime Service Awards.

Merit Award recipients were Carl Scott, Central Garage Foreman; John Rekczis, County Highway Heavy Equipment Mechanic; and Mark Richer, District Technician, Chemung County Soil and Water Conservation District.

Lifetime Service Award winners included the following retirees: Martin Roberts, Richard Richtmyer, Marvin Switzer, Ben Dickens, and James Curatolo.



New York State Senator Tom O'Mara, also representing Assemblyman Phil Palmesano, presented joint proclamations to all awardees. Tom Hyland, Field Representative for Congressman Tom Reed, also presented the award winners with special certificates from the Congressman's office.

A vast number and variety of conservation projects implemented in 2015 were showcased to the audience of over 100 attendees that included federal, state and local officials, municipal staff, and farmers. These projects exemplified the shared services efforts to ensure the most cost-effective means to install on-the-ground conservation. The presentation also highlighted the millions of dollars of competitive grant funding brought into the local community and the multiplier effect it has on the local

economy.

Highlights of this year's project implementation included: 38 stream and road stabilization projects; stabilizing over 18,000 feet of streams and road ditches and installing over 15,000 tons of rip rap; nine miles of road ditch and over 68 acres of critical area seeding was done with the Soil and Water's Hydro-seeder; and 14 large-scale farm projects were completed including several covered barnyards, manure storages, petroleum spill containment systems, milkhouse waste collection, winery pumice composting, rotational grazing and buffer installation, and well over 100 acres of no-till seedings.

Four stormwater management projects were also completed installing the following: over 1,400 feet of grassed waterway, a large stormwater retention pond, along with a demonstration flexi-pave walkway.

According to officials, every year the Soil and Water Conservation District focuses on implementation of conservation for the betterment of the community and its water quality and natural resources. This year was a particularly challenging year handling the normal workload of the Conservation District and then having the after-effects of a large flooding event everyone experienced.



"These challenges," said one SWCD official, "cast an even brighter light on the strength of the partnerships and unending assistance of our highway departments and municipal officials in Schuyler and Chemung County and our neighboring Soil and Water District in Chemung County." For more information on soil and water conservation programs for landowners and municipalities, go to www.schuylerswcd.com

Photos in text:

Top: Merit Award winners with local officials. From left: Tom Hyland, Field Representative for Congressman Tom Reed; Tony Specchio, SWCD Board Chairman;

honorees John Rekczis, Carl Scott, Mark Richer; and State Senator Tom O'Mara.

Bottom: Lifetime Service Award winners with local officials. From left: Tony Specchio, Tom Hyland, Jim Curatolo, retired coordinator of the Upper Susquehanna Coalition; Ben Dickens, retired Town of Hector Supervisor; Marvin Switzer, retired Town of Reading Supervisor; Senator Tom O'Mara. Missing from photo: Dick Richtmyer, retired Town of Dix Highway Superintendent; and Martin Roberts, retired Town of Reading Highway Superintendent. (*Photos provided*)