

SWCD utilizes map technology to assist municipalities in Schuyler County

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SCHUYLER COUNTY, March 11 -- As leaders in Geographic Information Systems (GIS) mapping, the Schuyler County Soil and Water Conservation District creates hundreds of maps for the public that include those for real estate professionals, for students, and for agricultural assessments, parcel boundaries, drainage plans and the like.

A great deal of focus is on employing this state-of-the-art, GIS system to help municipalities use public funds efficiently, as they plan for upgrading and replacing infrastructure.

This cutting-edge technology was first adopted by the Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) many years ago by former District Technician Lloyd Wetherbee. Lloyd was known throughout the State

for his superior GIS knowledge and he willingly worked, for over a year, to pass this knowledge on to the current District Technician, Rebecca Collins. Rebecca has led efforts to utilize this technology to assist with the tracking, planning, and budgeting of municipal infrastructure.

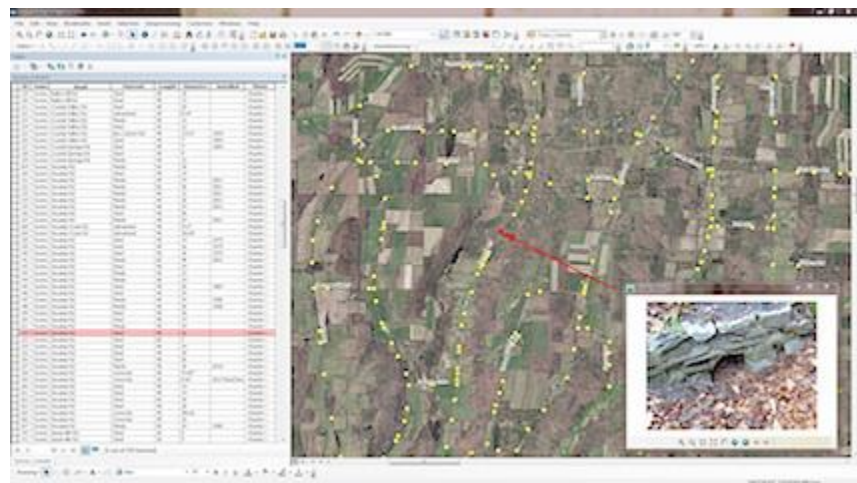


This mapping system is used daily to assist Schuyler municipalities, and residents, but also to aid in SWCD planning, permitting, and implementation. A very intensive project was recently undertaken by the District for the county and towns. It involved mapping the roads in each town, including the type of material from which they are made, and when maintenance work was last performed. Another big component of this project was to map the culvert pipes for each municipality. The culverts were not

only mapped, but an Excel database was created that includes a multitude of information such as culvert type, size, length, condition, date installed, and even has a picture for reference.

Rebecca utilized a backpack Global Positioning System (GPS) to physically map each culvert in the field, and 3,296 culverts were mapped in this arduous process. This database is updated annually with culvert replacements and upgrades. There was such a positive response from the various highway superintendents that the Schuyler Soil and Water Conservation District continued its efforts and mapped 4,000 signs along town and county roads. Again, this database tool allows the highway superintendents to more efficiently plan the use of their annual budgets.

There are other uses for this technology that assist in planning, construction, and maintenance. SWCD has mapped the Hector Water District, the Village of Montour Falls water system, the Village of Odessa water system, and the Town of Reading Sewer District. All of this mapping and database



work was done for no charge to the municipalities. Each year Schuyler Soil and Water tries to find more ways and more uses for GIS technology to save public money.

SWCD utilized competitive grant funds to purchase the backpack GPS unit, a large scale printer called a plotter, and a commercial-sized laminator to protect the poster-sized maps created for residents and the municipalities. Having the ability to laminate maps is especially useful for highway departments and farms who often utilize them like a white board to track work to be performed at any given time. Afterwards, they can be simply erased and reused.

This GIS technology is available to all residents, and visits to the Soil and Water office, located at 2400 Meads Hill Road, Watkins Glen, NY are welcomed.

Photos in text:

Top: GIS specialists Rebecca Collins, present Schuyler County SWCD Technician, and former SWCD Technician Lloyd Wetherbee.

Bottom: An example of a GIS map showing town road culverts and an associated database with specific culvert information. (*Photos provided*)