

SWCDs awarded state funds to assist water and soil quality on area farms

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ELMIRA, July 12 -- The Chemung and Schuyler County Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCD) have been awarded a combined total of \$587,885 to work with local farms to undertake agricultural water quality conservation projects, it was announced Tuesday by State Senator Tom O'Mara, chair of the Senate Environmental Conservation Committee.

The funding is being provided to 25 county SWCDs statewide through New York's Agricultural Nonpoint Source Abatement and Control Program. Forty-two projects, benefitting more than 120 farms, will share a total of \$13.1 million in new funding. The projects being supported will assist farmers in addressing water quality issues in priority watersheds. The overriding goals are to prevent water pollution, reduce erosion and limit the amount of harmful sediments and other deposits in New York's waterways. This year's state budget increased funding for the program to \$19 million.

"These are wise state investments to keep our farmers competitive and, at the same time, protect our natural resources for the long run and strengthen local economies," said O'Mara, who also serves as a member of the Senate Agriculture Committee. "We're investing in the longstanding and successful partnership between local farmers and local conservation districts to achieve vital economic and environmental quality protection goals."

Local conservation districts, including Chemung and Schuyler, work to implement plans in line with the goals of local farms and the needs of local watersheds.

Under this round of funding, O'Mara said that the:

> Chemung County SWCD is slated to receive \$388,985 for the implementation of best management conservation practices to address agricultural water quality concerns on three farms in the Upper Susquehanna River watershed. The watershed ultimately drains to the Chesapeake Bay, where the EPA has assigned a Total Maximum Daily Load with the goal of reducing contamination in order to restore biological function.

> Schuyler County SWCD has been awarded \$198,900 for the implementation of best management conservation practices to address agricultural water quality concerns on

two

farms in the Seneca Lake watershed. The best management practices to be implemented include: livestock heavy use area runoff management systems and riparian buffers. These systems will keep nutrients, sediment and other pollutants out of the watershed while helping the farms remain economically viable.