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Schuyler County SWCD 2022 Annual Report

Over 40 Years of Dedication to Schuyler County



James Barrett (left), and his loving Wife Janet (right)



Schuyler County SWCD Board
Of Directors, Employees, Friends, Family

The Schuyler County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) and its very active Board of Directors, dedicated its Natural Resources Protection Building to James F. Barrett. Jim's efforts are known County and region wide. He was a dedicated equipment operator for the Schuyler County Highway Department for well over 30 years. During that time Jim was the go to guy that every municipality asked to borrow his services when dealing with difficult situations and remediation from flooding impacts. Jim's talents are second to none. He has done more work over the last 4 plus decades in Schuyler County to aid in flood attenuation, sediment and nutrient reduction, as well as flood remediation than any other individual. Jim, while at the County Highway Department, started to build projects for the Schuyler County Soil and Water Conservation District over 16 years ago through shared service efforts this area is known for. When Jim approached retirement from the Schuyler County Highway he expressed interest in continuing seasonal efforts with the Schuyler County Soil and Water Conservation District. Jim was hired immediately as the seasonal equipment operator and has continued on for over 10 years.

Jim has helped grow the Schuyler County SWCD exponentially. Grant funding was now able to be used for materials only, stretching grant funds to do over 50 projects a summer. Due to Jim's exceptional work ethic and reputation, we were able to borrow equipment throughout the area in order to get projects on the ground. This allowed us to slowly purchase our own equipment to meet the needs of common sense cost effective conservation in Schuyler County. We now own over 2 million dollars in equipment thanks to Jim. We were also fortunate enough in 2017 to bring on a second very experienced and dedicated operator in Michael Manwaring. Together they are a seamless pair to watch in the field. They know what each other needs and wants at any given time. It's a privilege to watch them work and to work along side of them.

Jim has more dedication, experience, and ability than anyone could imagine. Yet it's who Jim is as a person that is the most special asset he brings. It's difficult to have a bad day, and nearly impossible to not have a smile on your face when you are working alongside Jim. He is a truly special person who has done more for water quality improvement, while protecting and enhancing millions of dollars of public and private infrastructure than can fully be expressed.

Community Programs



Agricultural Pesticide Plastics Collection

The Schuyler and Chemung County Soil and Water Conservation Districts once again had a very successful free of charge collection of agricultural pesticide plastics from Schuyler and Chemung Counties. This plastic will be recycled and used for drain tile.

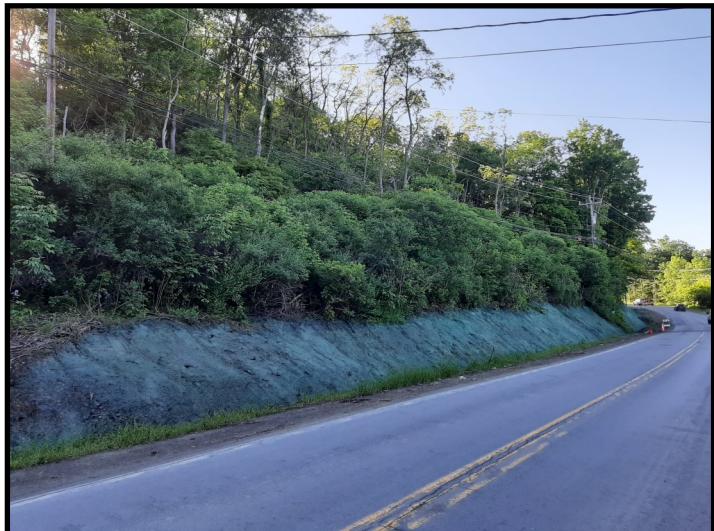
Annual Tree and Shrub Sale

We were able to once again hold our annual tree and shrub seedling sale. We sold nearly 10,000 seedlings to over 100 area residents at the well attended annual event.



Hydro-seeding

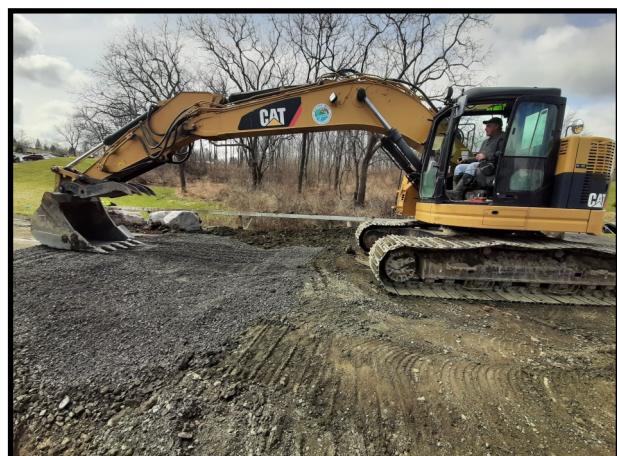
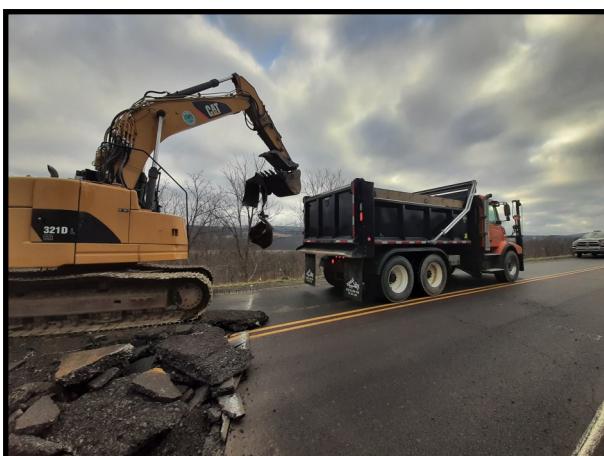
The Soil and Water Conservation District continued its efforts of critical area seeding with the use of its hydro-seeding program. The drought stricken year presented its challenges. However over 88 acres were hydro-seeded to help prevent erosion of road ditches and conservation/municipal projects. This program saved over 240 tons of sediment from entering surface water bodies this year alone.



Municipal Assistance

Belle Cornell Drive—Village of Montour Falls

We were able to work with the Village of Montour Falls DPW, and the Town of Dix Highway Department to replace and upsize a failing culvert on Belle Cornell Drive in the Village of Montour Falls. The existing pipe itself had failed causing a safety issue on the road. The pipe replacement was a challenge with a main gas line located on the outlet end of the structure. The old failed culvert was removed carefully with the new larger culvert being placed under the gas line. Stabilization of both the inlet and outlet ends of the culvert were done with rock rip rap. The Town of Dix Highway Department was a huge help in the trucking of gravel to the job site for us.



Municipal Assistance

Crystal Valley Road—Town of Tyrone

We assisted the Town of Tyrone Highway Department with an area along Crystal Valley Road where the road shoulder was sinking away. There are an immense amount of springs in the area. We were able to stabilize the road shoulder with rip rap and tile drainage.



Disbrow Hill Road—Town of Tyrone

We continued efforts to stabilize a road ditch on Disbrow Hill Road. We utilized a combination of Flexi mat and gabion rock. This eroded ditch is on a steep slope directly across from Waneta Lake.



Pre Emption Road—Town of Tyrone

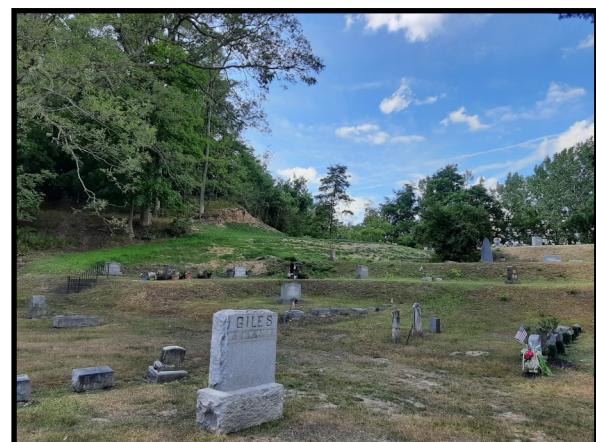
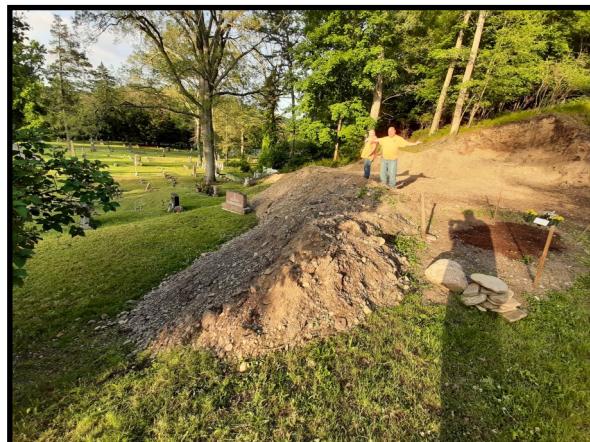
We continued efforts to stabilize a road ditch on Pre Emption Road. We have now stabilized over 1,200' of road ditch with the use of Flexi Mat. Flexi Mat allows for a grass sod to grow up through the concrete mat keeping water temperatures down to aid both macro and micro-invertebrates. It also allows the sod layer to grow on slopes that normally couldn't sustain vegetation.



Municipal Assistance

Watkins Glen Cemetery—Village of Watkins Glen

We were able to assist the Village of Watkins Glen to stabilize a slope within the Greenwood Cemetery. This eroded slope was threatening to cover headstones down slope of the excavated site and needed stabilizing as fast as possible. We first regraded the disturbed site to give it less percent grade. We then brought in topsoil and seeded the site down. Next we utilized rolled erosion control fabric on the steepest locations in order to keep them from eroding while grass got established.



Municipal Assistance

West Lake Road—Town of Orange

We worked with the Town of Orange Highway Department to stabilize several hundred feet of stream, roadside and culvert outlet on West Lake Road in the Town of Orange..



Switzer Hill Road—Town of Orange

We assisted the Town of Orange Highway Department in replacing a failed culvert on Switzer Hill Road. This failed culvert caused the road itself to collapse. There was significant erosion and it posed a serious safety and welfare issue. We were able to replace and upsize the cross culvert and stabilize both the inlet and outlet ends of the culvert.



Municipal Assistance

Sexton Hollow Road—Town of Orange

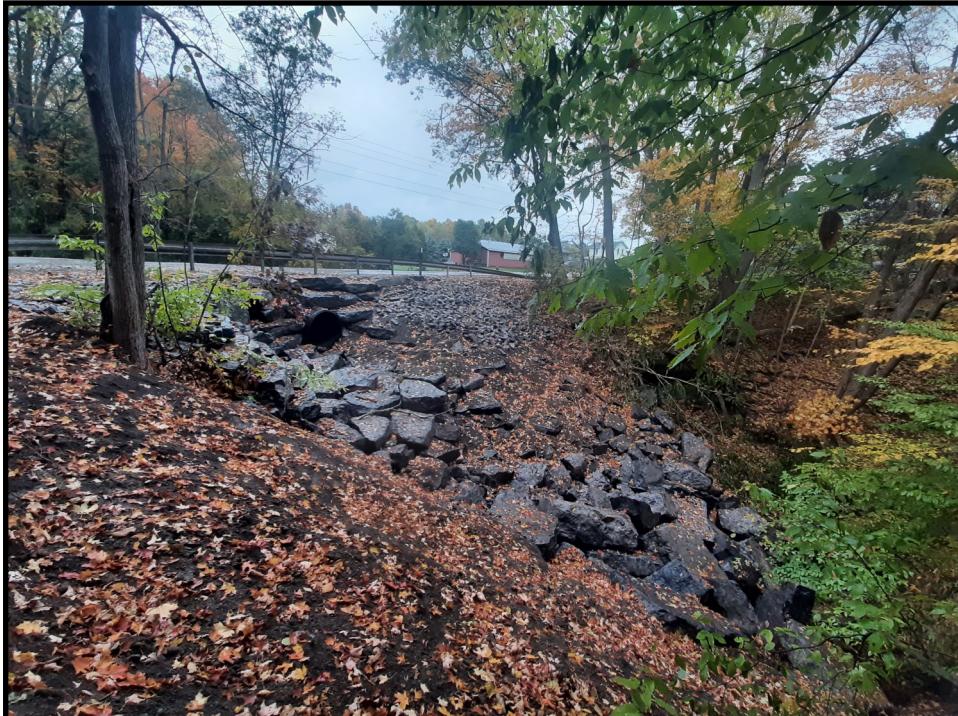
The Sexton Hollow Bridge was failing and needed to be replaced. The Town did not have the funding or capacity to keep the road open. The Schuyler County Soil and Water Conservation District obtained a Bridge NY grant and several other sources of funding to aid the Town of Orange in replacing the failed bridge with a large scale concrete box culvert. In an unprecedented joint effort for a federal aid style project the Schuyler County SWCD and the Town of Orange highway department were able to have the road re-opened in just 3 weeks.



Municipal Assistance

Station Road—Town of Dix

We were able to replace a failed cross culvert on Station Road that collapsed the road. We also upsized the culvert. The outlet end of the culvert was just above the Watkins Glen State Park and had a 15 plus foot vertically eroded bank from the outlet of the culvert. We were able to stabilize this outlet end of the culvert with over 400 tons of rip rap.



Municipal Assistance

Club Seneca Road—Town of Hector

Club Seneca Road is a private road owned by a landowners association in the Town of Hector directly adjacent to Seneca Lake. There was a catastrophic culvert collapse on the road making the spur part of the road impassable and allowing for an immense amount of sediment to enter Seneca Lake. This was a very challenging and dangerous site location. There was a more than 20ft vertical drop off onto shale on the outlet end of the pipe that lead directly to the lake. The lake road itself was very narrow and very steep and almost 3/4 mile from the state highway. The private association was willing to pay for the materials if we would install the project for them. We received a great deal of help from the Town of Hector Highway Department who allowed us to use multiple talented equipment operators and equipment on several days of the project. The State Highway Department shut down NYS Route 414 so we could get the 9' diameter steel culvert down the highway and then down the treacherous private road way. This project wouldn't have been possible without both of these entities assistance and the willingness and ability of their personnel. Our own equipment operator Michael Manwaring, was instrumental in formulating a step by step process that ensured the safety for all on site and the successful implementation of this project.



Flood Retention

Retention Ponds

Construction of retention ponds in the upper sub reaches of flood prone watersheds can have a dramatic impact in flood attenuation. We have all seen the impacts of more frequent high intensity short duration storm events that have devastated our region and our county. Infrastructure is unable to be built to the scale needed to handle these volumes of storms in such a short period. Retention ponds help to store that intense stormwater runoff reducing peak curve numbers during these storm events and elongating the time of concentration overall. These ponds have a primary spillway constructed of an inline control structure that allows us to build permanent free board into the pond creating significant volumes of storage.

We were able to construct six retention ponds this past year. These ponds are storing millions of gallons of stormwater to help reduce damage seen from flooding impacts. They create habitat, conserve nutrients and sediment, in some cases will serve as irrigation or alternative watering facilities for livestock sources in drought conditions, and are one of the most cost effective long lasting conservation practices that will aid in climate resiliency.



Johns Creek Retention

This retention pond was built at the very headwaters of Johns Creek. Significant flooding issues in the lower portion of the watershed threaten homes in a mobile park, and the public drinking water wells for the Village of Montour Falls. We hope to build several more retention ponds in this watershed to have the biggest positive impact possible.



Flood Retention

Dugue Road Retention

A multipurpose pond was built on Dugue Road. The pond will aid in retention and reduced flooding in a highly flood prone watershed that saw devastation in the 2018 flood and will also act as an irrigation source during drought times for a future orchard operation.



Flood Retention

Dix Flood Retention

We were able to construct two retention ponds in the Town of Dix in the upper sub reaches of a watershed that was devastated in 2021. Flooding impacts to Pearl Street, Catlin Hill Road, Beaver Dams Moreland Road and County Road 18 were seen and have been experienced several times over the last decade. These two retention ponds located in strategic areas in the flood prone watershed will go a long way to help reduce future flooding impacts in the lower reaches. We have plans to build several more retention ponds in this watershed in the near future.



Flood Retention

Catharine Creek Flood Retention

We were able to build a retention pond in the very headwaters of Catharine Creek. We have suffered through continual flooding issues on Catharine Creek in the Town and Village of Montour Falls. The headwaters of Catharine Creek emanates in Chemung County. We were fortunate enough through AEM Tier IV implementation funding in Chemung County to construct a retention pond in Sleepers Creek area. This will benefit Chemung and Schuyler County with the significant flooding impacts we have experienced in this watershed.



Agriculture

Williams Farms

We were able to construct a 65 plus acre rotational grazing system and access control system that created over 11 acres of riparian buffer on this multi-generational farm. We were able to construct over 825' of grassed waterway, 3 stream crossings, over 200 feet of stream stabilization and a retention pond. This project utilized multiple funding sources both state and local in nature.



Agriculture

Crosswinds Farm and Creamery

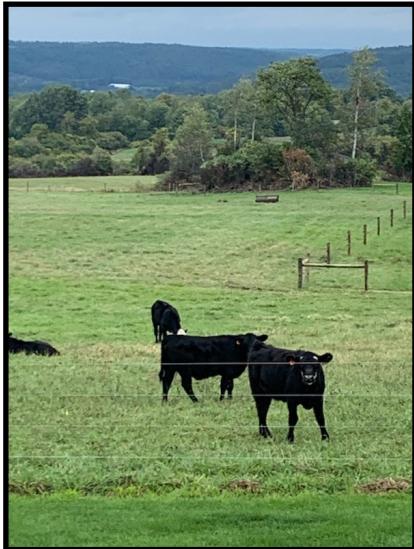
We completed 922' of laneway improvement at Crosswinds Farm and Creamery a dairy farm in Rock Stream. We also completed 300' of grassed waterway. The farm as part of the project also completed an extensive rotational grazing system and access control system creating over 18 acres of riparian buffer. There were also two drains from the parlor of the farm that outlet right next to the barn and created a ponded area where the cows enter and exist to be milked. The farm purchased a 1,000 gallon tank and we installed and plumbed it for them.



Agriculture

Bailey Farms—Town of Orange

We were able to complete a significant rotational grazing and access control system that created over 2.5 acres of riparian buffer. Over 12,000' of fencing was installed on this multi-generational beef operation in the Town of Orange.



Remembrance Farm—Town of Hector

An alternative watering facility and well were completed on the farm. There is additional access road improvements and a pond enlargement for irrigation planned for 2023.



Apples and Moore—Town of Dix

An upgraded higher efficiency irrigation management system was completed on the farm. The farm now has over 44,000' of irrigation.



Agriculture

Chaffee Farms—Town of VanEtten

We were able to implement an access control and rotational grazing system to protect over 2.3 acres of riparian buffer on Cayuta Creek. This system included a well, alternative watering facility and over 9,000' of fencing.



Tanner Farms—Town of Chemung

We were able to construct a covered barnyard on the family run and owned dairy farm in Chemung County. The livestock heavy use area management system will allow the animals to be housed in a roofed area in non-grazing times of the year. This will help keep clean water from mixing in a denuded open barnyard situation. The nutrients will then be collected from the covered structure and used on the farms crop fields, reducing the need for purchased commercial fertilizer.



Agriculture

Richtmeyer Farm—Town of Dix

We were able to complete several hundred feet of access road improvement, two stream crossings, several thousand feet of fencing creating a riparian buffer, and large scale dual purpose retention pond. This retention pond will be developed by the farm into a water source for their pastured herd.



Agriculture

Under the Vine Mower and No-Till Drill

Continued use of our under vine mower was utilized by participating vineyards of a multi year demonstration project. The mower was utilized on more than 200 acres of vineyards reducing the need for herbicide on this acreage by over 70%. We also continued rental use of our No-Till drill system on area farms. Over 200 acres of no-till was completed throughout Schuyler County this year.



Cover Crops

We once again worked with our area farms to focus on one of the most beneficial and cost effective practices we have in our arsenal. Cover crops help to reduce erosion, improve soil health by increasing organic matter, permeability, and water holding capacity to name a few. This year it was critical for our farms to get as many acres of cover crops established as they could because of feed shortages due to the drought filled growing season. We were able to get over 1,500 acres of cover crops established and documented.



Education - A Key Focus Area

Schuyler County SWCD

Southern Tier Regional Envirothon

A team from Odessa-Montour High School won the 2022 Southern Tier Regional Envirothon—the first such victory by Schuyler County school representative at the annual competition. The team defeated 29 teams from 11 regional schools, and five counties.

Schuyler, Chemung, Broome, Tioga, and Tompkins County Soil and Water Conservation Districts combine their efforts to provide high school students in the five counties with a regional, Southern Tier Envirothon competition to determine county champions. The students' knowledge is put to the test as the teams complete tough written exams in five categories: Current Issues, Wildlife, Forestry, Soils, and Aquatics.



The Regional Envirothon winning team from Odessa-Montour School “Otters”. From left: Aiden Thurston, Ethan King, teacher Doug Chapman, Veer Patel, and Casey Keys.

GST BOCES Agricultural Program

Schuyler County Soil and Water continued its support of the GST BOCES agricultural program. Several years ago the Soil and Water District helped to pay for and guide the students in the construction of a grazing area for mixed livestock use. The program was successful and has grown over the years. This year the GST BOCES were looking to expand their grazing and livestock area to include pigs but needed assistance with materials. The Schuyler County Soil and Water Conservation District was able to supply the posts for the construction of this worthwhile project.



Great Sadness



Lloyd Wetherbee—former District Technician

It is with great sadness that we remember the untimely passing of retired Schuyler County Soil and Water Conservation District Technician, Lloyd Wetherbee. Lloyd had an immense amount of technical ability in so many facets of conservation. However, where Lloyd shined brightest was as a recognized statewide leader in GIS technology. Lloyd was completely self taught. He started when this technology was in its infancy and went through several operating systems as they developed and changed throughout the years. He was an amazing teacher. He valued passing on his knowledge.

Most of all Lloyd had an incredible sense of humor. He was so witty half of the time you would be half way back to your desk and then realize the joke he just made. All of us who were fortunate enough to work with him over the years miss him greatly. We all learned so much from him and respected him as a person, co-worker, veteran, and family man. He will be greatly missed, and had such a impact on so many people throughout the region.

New Additions for '23



Jessica Verrigni—Stormwater Program Technician

Jessica comes to Schuyler County with over 24 years of soil and water conservation district experience. She has planned, surveyed, designed, and implemented millions of dollars of agricultural practices and non-agricultural practices. She has been recognized state wide as a leader in stormwater management. She is a NYS DEC Certified 4 hour erosion and sediment control trainer, as well as having both CPESC, and CPSWQ certifications.

Jessica will be able to hit the ground running and will be a very big asset for not only our soil and water conservation district but for our county. Her ability and willingness to write millions of dollars of grants one day and perform labor in the field the next day will fit in great with our soil and water team. We look forward to the growth Jessica will provide our program into the future.

Board of Directors

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James Howell Vice Chair, Legislator
Rick Reisinger, Treasurer
Gary Gray, Legislator
Gary Gaige, Member

SWCD Staff

Jerry Verrigni, District Manager
Jessica Verrigni, Stormwater Program Tech.
Jim Barrett, Equipment Operator
Michael Manwaring, Equipment Operator

Contractual Staff

John Wickham, USC Grazing Specialist
Jackie Wickham, AEM Planner
Elaine Dalrymple, WQCC Chair
Karen Tillotson, Asst. Secretary

David L. Sidle Agency
219 S. Catherine Street
Montour Falls, NY 14865
607-535-6501

Cotton-Hanlon Inc.
Timberland Management
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P.O. Box 65
Cayuta, NY 14824
<http://cottonhanlon.com/index.html>

Watkins Glen
Fire Department




Watkins Glen
Elks Lodge #1546
300 N. Madison Ave
Watkins Glen, NY
607-535-2859



Moose International
Family Center 426
2096 State Rte 14
Montour Falls, NY
607-535-4741

INTEGRITY
ENGINEERING PLLC
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Elmira Heights, NY 14903
607-426-5684

Seneca Lodge
3600 Walnut Road
Watkins Glen, NY
14891
607-535-2014

Seneca Lake Pure Waters
Association
www.senecalake.org

Reisinger's Apple
County
2750 Apple Lane (Off Ellison
Road)
607-535-7493

**THANK YOU TO ALL OF OUR 2022
ENVIROTHON DONORS**

This Newsletter is made possible through funding from the Finger Lakes– Lake Ontario Watershed Protection Alliance (FL-LWPA).

All programs and services of the Schuyler County Soil & Water Conservation District are offered on a nondiscriminatory basis, without regard to race, color, national origin, religion, sex, age, marital status or handicap.


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