

SWCD honors, showcases local efforts

Special to The Odessa File

WATKINS GLEN, Feb. 24, 2017 -- The Schuyler County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) held its Annual Luncheon at the media center of Watkins Glen International Friday.

The purpose of the annual banquet is to showcase to the region's municipal officials the vast and diverse conservation implementation that the Schuyler County Soil and Water Conservation District performs on an annual



basis. In recognition of the necessary shared service effort and assistance it takes to implement such a portfolio of projects, the Soil and Water District presents annual awards.

The SWCD presented three Merit Awards and two Lifetime Service Awards:

-- Merit Award recipients were Tom Beach and Brian Sidle from the Town of Cayuta Highway Department, and Todd Jansen from the Town of Horseheads Highway Department.

-- Lifetime Service Award winners included Phil Biever and Jessica Skinner.

Sperry Navone, Chief of Staff for New York State Assemblyman Philip Palmesano and also representing State Senator Tom O'Mara, presented joint proclamations to all awardees. Alison Hunt, District Director for Congressman Tom Reed, also presented the award winners with special certificates from the Congressman's office.

A variety of conservation projects implemented from 2016 were showcased to the audience of over 150 attendees that included federal, state and local officials, municipal staff, and farmers. "These projects," said an SWCD spokesperson,

"exemplify the unique and concerted effort of shared services work to ensure the most cost-effective means for on-the-ground conservation." The presentation also highlighted the millions of dollars of competitive grant funding brought into the community and the multiplier effect it has on the local economy.

Highlights of this year's project implementation included:

-- 25 stream and road stabilization projects that stabilized over 22,000 feet of streams and road ditches with installation of over 15,000 tons of rip rap;

-- over 70 acres of critical area seeding with Soil and Water's Hydro-seeder;

--15 large-scale farm projects, among them: forced air composting of winery pomace; a covered barnyard; a covered manure storage; a silage leachate total collection system; drainage work, diversions and waterways; riparian buffer creation; alternative watering facilities; rotational grazing projects; a commodity barn; and access road improvements.

"Every year," said an SWCD press release, "the Soil and Water Conservation District focuses on implementation of conservation for the betterment of the community and its water quality and natural resources. To make that happen, a large effort is made to obtain highly competitive grant funding for our region. Ninety-eight percent of the Schuyler County Soil and Water Conservation District's funding is secured through competitive state and federal funding sources. This year the district secured nearly \$4 million in total project funding for agricultural efforts and over \$3 million in total project funding for non-agricultural efforts.

To obtain more information about Soil and Water programs, visit www.schuylerswcd.com or call 535-0878.

Photo in text: Award winners with local official staff. From left: Alison Hunt, Brian Sidle, Todd Jansen, Tom Beach, Lydia Bieber (daughter of Phil Bieber), Jessica Skinner and Sperry Navone. *(Photo provided)*