

CHAMPLAIN WATERSHED
IMPROVEMENT COALITION OF NEW YORK
CLINTON | ESSEX | FRANKLIN | WARREN | WASHINGTON | COUNTIES

Annual Report 2023

CWICNY REPRESENTATIVES

2023 Executive Board

Kristin Ballou, President
Alice Halloran, Vice President
Peter Hagar, Treasurer
Randy Rath, Secretary

2023 CWICNY Members

Soil and Water Conservation District

Peter Hagar, Clinton County	Jim Lieberum, Warren County
Alice Halloran, Essex County	Corrina Aldrich, Washington County
Kristin Ballou, Franklin County	

Water Quality Coordinating Committee

Gary Henry, Clinton County
Anna Reynolds, Essex County
Guy Middleton, Franklin County
Randy Rath, Warren County
Lyndsy Hilder Washington County

Lake Champlain/ Lake George Regional Planning Board

Sam Blake
Allison Hargrave Gaddy

The mission of the Champlain Watershed Improvement Coalition of New York is to foster collaborative planning and implement projects that protect water quality, increase resilience, and enhance natural resources to meet local needs and support a healthier Lake Champlain

Message from the President, Kristin Ballou

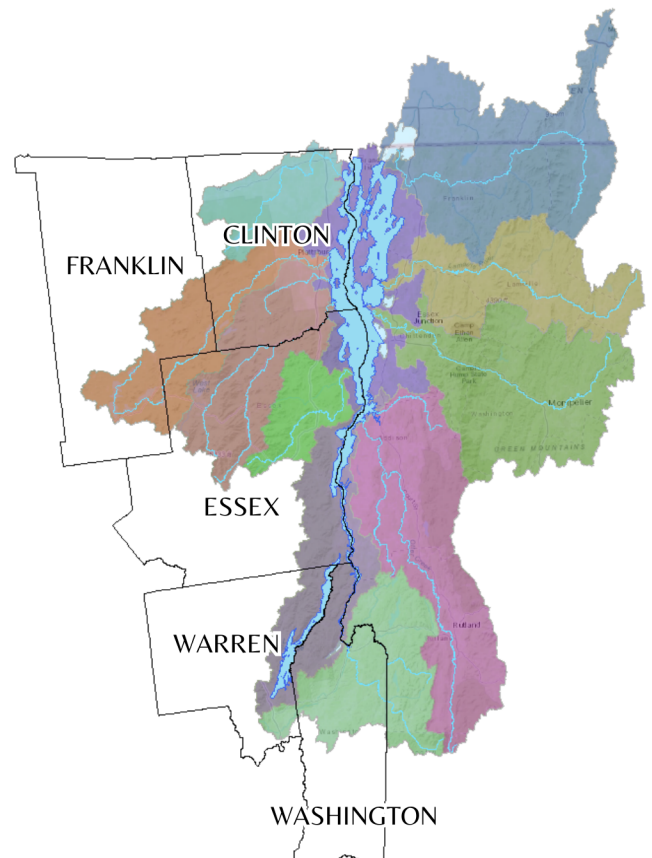
The Champlain Watershed Improvement Coalition of New York (CWICNY) continues to be very active and involved in water quality related projects, education, and information. Since the development of our strategic plan, we have been working to better align with our goals and objectives for the organization. In 2023, we were able to secure funding for multiple projects and initiatives and including implementing soil health practices, implementing erosion control projects on roadsides and in forested settings, support for the North Country Stormwater Tradeshow and Conference and we worked to submit multiple applications for projects in 2024.

This report outlines our activities over the past year. Our partnerships remain strong, and we are grateful for our close working relationships with the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation, Lake Champlain Basin Program (LCBP), NYS Soil & Water Conservation Committee, NEIWPC, Lake George Association, Lake Champlain Sea Grant, Lake Champlain – Lake George Regional Planning, AuSable River Association, Upper Saranac Foundation, Boquet River Association, Trout Unlimited and LCBP NY Citizen Advisory Committee.

I would like to thank my fellow Board and CWICNY members for their dedication and contributions to our efforts. My job was made easier by all the members and partners spending countless time and resources on a regular basis to ensure that CWICNY upholds its mission while remaining responsive to ever-changing threats to Lake Champlain. Most importantly, I need to thank Randy Rath, for his dedication and long-standing contributions serving as the CWICNY Secretary for the past 12 years.

As we reflect on the work and contributions 2023 offered, we are very excited to welcome 2024 and all that it has to offer.

*Thank you!,
Kristin Ballou*



THE NORTH COUNTRY STORMWATER TRADESHOW AND CONFERENCE

The North Country Stormwater Tradeshow and Conference has been an annual event since 2005. The purpose of this annual event is to provide training for municipalities, engineers, and other professionals on current stormwater topics. CWICNY strives to be a source of high-quality information and technical assistance, and this is one of the ways for us to provide it. On October 19, 2023, CWICNY successfully held the 18th Annual North Country Stormwater Tradeshow and Conference.

The committee of individuals that assisted in putting this event together include Maren Stoddard, Warren County SWCD; Randy Rath, Warren County WQCC and Lake George Association; Sean Doty, KSPE; Jillian Zajac, Clinton County SWCD; Kristin Ballou Franklin County SWCD; and Lyndsy Hilder, Washington County SWCD.



Planning for this event began immediately following the 2022 event with an application to the Lake Champlain Basin Program for an Organizational Support Grant. Save the Dates were sent out to potential vendors and sponsors in May. This year in addition to standard vendors we offered tiered sponsorship opportunities. Each tier offered different benefits. We would like to extend a special thank you to our Lake Level Sponsors: Kathleen Suozzo PE Civil Engineering Firm (KSPE) and Lane Enterprises.

Thank you to the Lake Champlain Basin Program and the New England Interstate Water Pollution Control Commission, this project has been funded wholly or in part by the United States Environmental Protection Agency under assistance agreement (LC 00A00981-0) to NEIWPCC in partnership with the Lake Champlain Basin Program.



This year's event had the largest attendance that we have seen in several years with 120 pre-registered. Attendees included engineers, DPW staff, town supervisors, SWCD staff, planning board members, zoning board members, contractors, government officials, and vendors. This years event also afforded us the opportunity to expand on our vendors, with 12 different companies and organizations in the tradeshow area.

Planning for the 2024 event has already begun!

Save the Date for October 15, 2024!

WORLD WATER DAY

The Lake Champlain Basin Program and the Champlain Basin Education Initiative brought World Water Day to the Champlain Centre in March 2023 in Plattsburgh NY. There were over 20 exhibitors hosting exhibits and hands-on activities celebrating water resources. Exhibitors included Clinton, Essex, Warren County Soil & Water Conservation Districts and CWICNY.

**2024's World Water Day
will be held March 16th
at the Champlain Centre
Mall!**



IDEAL DAIRY VEGETATED TREATMENT AREA

AGNPS ROUND 25 FUNDING

Ideal Dairy had a previously designed total collection system for both the low flow and high flow silage leachate from their feeding complex. This system directed this effluent into the liquid waste storage to augment the needed liquids to efficiently operate the sand separation system to recapture sand for reuse as bedding material.



However, after experiencing a couple of very wet years and adding surface area to their feed storage areas they experienced a marked decrease in the storage capacity of their manure storage systems and decided that they needed more flexibility in management of the high flow effluent from the feed storage system. The decision was made to install an improved Silage Leachate Control and Treatment System by adding a 1.75 acre Vegetated Treatment Area (VTA) and options for pumping the high flow leachate to either the VTA or the manure storages. Funding was secured through AgNPS Round 25, and the project was completed in the summer of 2023. This has given Ideal Dairy more flexibility in how they manage the high flow effluent from their feeding area and also to properly follow their Nutrient Management Plan by not having lost capacity in the waste storages during times of continually wet weather. The increased flexibility in managing both the silage effluent and nutrient management is working very well for the farm.

LAKE CHAMPLAIN COVER CROP PROJECT

ENHANCED AGRICULTURAL BEST MANAGEMENT PRACTICE (BMP) PILOT

Through a Lake Champlain Basin Program grant, the five Soil & Water District members of CWICNY worked with farmers to implement cover crops on over 2,600 acres of 38 farms over the course of two years. Agriculture is a major land use in the Lake Champlain watershed. Cover crops improve soil health, making it a very effective best management practice (BMP) for farmers. Addressing agricultural concerns has been a consideration of watershed planning efforts in the Lake Champlain Watershed for several years.

This program offered reimbursement for farmers to implement cover crops that will reduce, abate, control, or prevent soil erosion/nonpoint source pollution originating from agricultural sources. Other benefits include improved soil health, conserving nutrients and increasing soil organic matter. \$200,000 in funding was provided by the NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets specifically for projects in the Lake Champlain watershed.

Rye Interseeded into Corn (right)

Rye No-Tilled into Corn stubble (below)



CWICNY LEGISLATIVE TOUR 2023

A legislative tour of recent projects in the Essex/Clinton County area was held on September 21, 2023. Approximately 12 people gathered at the Ausable Brewing Company in Keeseville for coffee, donuts, and an introduction to CWICNY. From there the group headed to Soper Road where Adirondack Farms is building a satellite Waste Storage facility utilizing funding from an Agricultural Nonpoint Source grant. Peter Hagar, District Manager for Clinton County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD), explained the project purpose and described how the manure storage and injection process will work. The next stop was North Country Creamery, owned by Ashlee Kleinhammer and Steven Googin, where an on-farm fuel storage facility was recently completed. Alice Halloran, District Manager for Essex County SWCD, and Steven Googin gave an overview of the project, which was funded through the Agricultural Environmental Management program and a Lake Champlain Basin Program grant. After also visiting the bedded pack barn, milking parlor, and viewing the cheese cave, the farm's cheeses were sampled along with locally made crackers. The final stop was a brief visit to the Chesterfield water treatment plant, which was recently upgraded. The group returned to the Ausable Brewing Company for lunch.



WASHINGTON COUNTY COVER CROPS IN CHAMPLAIN WATERSHED

In 2023 Washington County farmers in the Lake Champlain watershed were enthusiastic in their signup response to utilize the second year of funding available to them with almost 2700 acres signed up.

Because this was the second year of this program we only had funding available to reimburse for 411 acres. The wet summer season led to late maturing corn and in turn a slow start to the fall cropping season which also experienced delays due to the amount of rain experienced throughout the fall. Farms tried to implement cover crops as they could but the inclement weather contributed to reduced numbers of cover crops going in. The delayed planting date prevented the ability to try and use multi species mixes beyond the normal winter rye.

We continued to work with the three farms who initially received funding for upgrades to their corn planters for no-till capability through CWICNY and LCBP funds. They have added cover crops to their cropping systems and continue to adapt and utilize them through Tier 4 implementation with the state funded Agriculture Environmental Management program in Washington County.

Rye no-tilled into corn (right)

Retrofitted no-till corn planter (below)



FOREST ROAD IMPROVEMENT PROJECT FOR PROTECTION OF CRITICAL HABITAT AREAS AND BETTER WATER QUALITY ACCESS

The City of Glens Falls Water Department owns nearly 3,500 acres of forested property in the Lake Champlain watershed. The properties are comprised of forested land with four drinking water supply reservoirs, three intake ponds, and one storage pond totaling eight significant water sources for the 14,000 residents of Glens Falls. The purpose of these properties is to ensure safe drinking water for the community and to manage the property in a way that protects the longevity of the resource for the community. When CWICNY received the funding from NYS DEC for Forest Road Stabilization Projects, the city reached out to the Warren County SWCD to request that these properties with forested roads included in the assessments. Currently, each reservoir is checked several times a week by the water department staff for routine water quality testing and monitoring, and with this they must maintain access throughout the winter and spring snowmelt months.

In the early summer of 2023, District staff set out to begin inventorying roads throughout the properties. The Water Department staff provided information about areas of concern and past skidder roads from timber harvesting that may need assistance. A full inventory of sites was completed for the properties outlining improvements and recommendations for best management practices that could improve the forest roads. From there, District staff prioritized projects based on sites that were impacting environmentally sensitive areas such as wetlands and streams. Thus, creating a master dataset of future projects, cost estimates, and improvements that could be made to protect the water quality within the properties.

In August, the District staff worked with the Water Department to address one of the high-priority sites located on the Wilkie Reservoir Road. The forest road was routinely washed out during small and larger storm events due to how the road was constructed and was depositing road material into a nearby wetland and stream that crossed under the road. For this project, the District had a week-long mini excavator rental and ordered erosion and sediment control supplies to help stabilize the road. Going into this project, the water department had little to no experience in road construction or heavy machinery. The current management for maintaining the roads was utilizing a small tractor and bucket to help regrade the roads as necessary.



When the machine arrived at the site, Water Department staff came into work at 5 am to begin training themselves on how to use the equipment for creating turnouts, ditches and other recommended stormwater improvements. This project encompassed stabilizing over 300ft of road by making stormwater conveyance improvements through earthen work such as constructing swales and turnouts along the roadway. The road was also raised,



re-crowned, and graded to help with breaking up the stormwater to convey into the newly constructed swales and infiltrate the stormwater into the forest lands. Areas of open soil were stabilized with hand seeding and mulching as well as installing a series of check dams with filter sock throughout the earthen swales. The department also received a set of York Rakes from this project to maintain the road grading and project site.

What was unique about this project was not only stabilizing a forest road that prevented sediment from entering a nearby stream but the water department's ability to learn new skills to help better manage the accessibility of their properties. They were motivated to work overtime to complete the project and as well as take the extra time to use the rented equipment to make other improvements along the road from what they had learned while working on the project with the District. In the end, the City of Glens Falls Water Department understood the importance of improving their roads to help protect the water quality of the nearby feeder streams and allow for better accessibility. All in all, this funding led to new opportunities for all the SWCDs within CWICNY and will continue to help improve water quality throughout the area within forested lands.

WOODLOT OWNERSHIP 101

A successful Woodlot Ownership 101 workshop was held at SUNY Adirondack on June 3rd, with approximately 32 attendees and presenters. The purpose was to provide a forum for current or prospective woodlot owners on a variety of topics since owning a woodlot is a wonderful opportunity, but it comes with ownership costs, goals, and responsibilities. The workshop was developed to introduce attendees to information for assistance in making informed decisions and where to go for forestry assistance.

In Warren County just over 7% of our woodlots have changed hands in the past 3 years, about 8,000 acres. That might not seem like much, but it does translate to 518 properties. If we use an average that's 15 acres per property. We're sure that the real average isn't 15 acres, but it probably isn't too far off. While our land may stay the same size, the number of owners has increased, and the areas reduced. Small woodlot owners need to play a critical role in forestry by conserving or preserving the lands. If you want to actively manage your woodlot, go for it but if you want it to just evolve as it will, great. Becoming informed on how to develop your goals to see the benefits and negative impacts from any decision is something that I feel has been missing for landowners, especially new or prospective ones.



We often hear “how valuable is my forest?” That certainly depends on who you ask. If you ask a logger or forester, you may get a strict economic answer based on volume and current market pricing. If you ask a biologist, it will likely be on the wildlife or plant species, especially ones unique to your area. Ask a municipal planner and they may say it is incalculable because of the environmental impact and for physical and mental health benefits. Ask your assessor and you might be surprised! However simply try to understand what you see your woodlot being. If you see it as a timber harvest area for income, there is nothing wrong with just considering that many people do. Do you like tweety birds? If you do, then you might go with a wildlife management route that encourages understory species. Remember goals can change and should be evaluated periodically.



The workshop went very well and a big THANK YOU to the presenters who did a wonderful job with the various aspects of ownership/understanding what you are getting into and not necessarily just management: Bruce Cushing- NYS Forest Owners Southern Adirondack Chapter Chair, Peter Taylor – landowner, Paul Curtis – landowner, Joe Chairvolotti – Oswego County Soil and Water Conservation District, Scott Fitscher - USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service, Rich McDermott - NYS Department of Environmental Conservation, and Kris Williams - Partnership for Regional Invasive Species Management. Thanks to SUNY Adirondack for hosting the workshop. The college is a tremendous resource in our local landscape. We hope to continue partnering with them for programming.