

# THE CONSERVATION CONNECTION

News from MCSWCD

**VOLUME 49**  
**ISSUE 4**  
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*Protecting Today, Providing Tomorrow*

**INSIDE THIS ISSUE:**

## 2026 Conservation Tree & Shrub Program is Now Accepting Orders!

2026 marks the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the start of our annual Conservation Tree & Shrub Program! For 50 years this conservation pre-order program has allowed landowners to purchase trees, shrubs and plants that are bare-root, cost-effective, and native or naturalized to New York. Species offered through this program are well-suited to local climate and soil conditions, and support local conservation efforts including but not limited to, wildlife food and shelter, erosion control, and natural windbreaks. Additionally, many species offered can be planted in your landscaping or yard to improve the aesthetics and curb appeal of your home, require less watering, more resistant to pests and diseases, and require less overall maintenance!

We're celebrating 50 years with seven new species being offered this year! Check out the next page to learn more about our new species; and to view all of our species, including returning customer favorites, seed mixes, and enhancement items, please visit our website:

<https://monroecountyswcd.org/tree-shrub-program/>



A detailed catalog of all available items being offered, planting tips, Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs), and species information (spacing, pH, soils, shade tolerance, etc.) can all be found on our website as well.

Orders can be placed either online at our District Square site or by filing out an order form and submitting it to our office via email or mail. Order forms can be found on our website or on the last page of this newsletter. We offer a variety of payment methods including cash, check, or credit card (order form, over the phone, or online). We recommend ordering early to ensure availability of species!

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**2025/2026**

**District Dates & Deadlines**

**January 20<sup>th</sup> & February 19<sup>th</sup>**  
NYS DEC Endorsed 4-Hr Erosion & Sediment Control Training

**March 6<sup>th</sup>**  
Tree & Shrub Program Order & Payment Deadline

**Our office will be closed:**

**Christmas -**  
December 25<sup>th</sup>

**New Year's -**  
January 1<sup>st</sup>

**Martin Luther King Jr. Day -**  
January 19<sup>th</sup>

**Presidents' Day-**  
February 16<sup>th</sup>

## What's New for 2026!



One of the showiest and tastiest of our native trees, **American Plum** is a delicious addition to your property not just for you, but for wildlife as well. The flowers are an early spring source of nectar for native pollinators before producing scrumptious fruit to be enjoyed by late summer in some jellies or jams... that is if you beat our native songbirds to them!

Another showy addition to 2026 is **False Indigo**. This native perennial shrub will liven up any property, while attracting various pollinators including many species of bees and butterflies. Several butterfly species also use false indigo as a host plant during their larval stage.



Also known as White Fir, **Concolor Fir** is a long-living conifer known for its pyramidal shape and droopy lower branches. It is commonly used for shade, windbreaks, and screens. When younger, these firs have great shapes to use as Christmas trees.

If winter weather gets you down, then **Winterberry** is just what you'll need on your property. Known for its vibrant red berries that mature in late fall, they will remain on the shrub into winter providing color to the usual greyness and vital winter food for birds and mammals.



A hardy native nut producing tree, **Northern Pecan** is most known for the delicious pecan nuts produced in late summer and into fall. What this tree lacks in showy flowers, it more than makes up for providing food to you and various local wildlife including various mammals and birds.

**Black Chokeberry** is a native shrub in the Rose family that produces berries edible to people and wildlife. The leaves turn a gorgeous red in the fall adding some showiness to your property in addition to benefitting wildlife.



Uncommon, but just as beautiful as other native shrubs, **Coralberry** produces dull white flowers followed by incredibly vibrant pink and purple berries to compliment the bright green leaves. Easy to grow, lots of wildlife cover is provided by dense branches as various wildlife flocks to this shrub to eat the berries.

## 4<sup>th</sup> Round of Reforestation Efforts Against Ash Tree Loss Implemented in Monroe County

Continued reforestation efforts took place this fall as part of the awarded \$200,000 in federal funds through the Fiscal Year 2022 Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) Forest Restoration grant in an effort to plant over 11,000 trees and shrubs and restore 200 acres within Monroe County that have been decimated by the invasive Emerald Ash Borer (EAB).

For over a decade, EAB has wreaked havoc on mature ash tree populations across Monroe County, affected heavily due to some of the highest ash density in the state, leading to ecological and economical disruptions including more invasive species presence, increased economic costs for tree removal, and more. Restoration of former ash dominated forests is vital to ensure clean air and drinking water for county residents, wildlife habitat and food, erosion control, carbon sequestration, and more.

In November, 2,451 trees were planted across eight sites by three partners. Monroe County Parks Department planted 2,257 trees at Black Creek Park, Ellison Park, Greece Canal Park, Northampton Park, Oatka Creek Park, and Powder Mills Park; NYS Dept. of Environmental Conservation and volunteers from Braddock Bay Raptor Research, Genesee Valley Audubon Society, and more planted 117 trees in the Braddock Bay Wildlife Management Area known as Owl Woods; and Rush Recreation & Park Association planted 77 trees at Hundred Acre Park.

These plantings added up to a total of 5,686 trees for 2025, and an overall planting of 8,631 trees planted so far restoring 177 acres. The final plantings are scheduled for 2026.

Several trees planted at Oatka Creek Park



Volunteers plant trees at Owl Woods



“USDA USFS is an equal opportunity provider”

## District Implements Streambank Stabilization Along East Branch of Allen Creek

In early fall, a streambank stabilization project was implemented on the East Branch of Allen Creek in the Town of Pittsford. Eighty feet of streambank was stabilized using longitudinal peaked stone toe protection and complemented by riparian buffer plantings along the restored reach. These practices will prevent further erosion of this section of stream and improve water quality. This project was funded through the Finger Lakes-Lake Ontario Watershed Protection Alliance.



Construction along the project site



Mulching after construction followed by riparian buffer plantings



## Preventing Winter Fish Kill in Your Pond

Owning a pond can bring increased property aesthetics, wildlife presence, and recreational opportunities, but only if you properly manage it.

Management doesn't stop once winter hits and your pond begins to freeze over. Come springtime, if your pond has experienced a significant fish die-off, you may need to develop a winter management strategy to prevent future impacting episodes. Major fish kill events are typically due to low amounts of oxygen in your pond once frozen over. This is due to aquatic plants being unable to perform photosynthesis. When snow accumulates on ice over the pond surface and blocks light from entering the pond and reaching the plants, they are unable to photosynthesize and oxygen levels decrease significantly, leading to kill events.

The following are ways to help prevent fish kill:

- **Remove** snow from the ice so light can penetrate through to plants
- **Cut/maintain holes** evenly throughout the ice to allow air exchange. Using floating objects attached to ropes like inner tubes or balls are good so you can pull them out after a freeze
- **Keep your pond ice free** with aerators or compressed air bubblers.



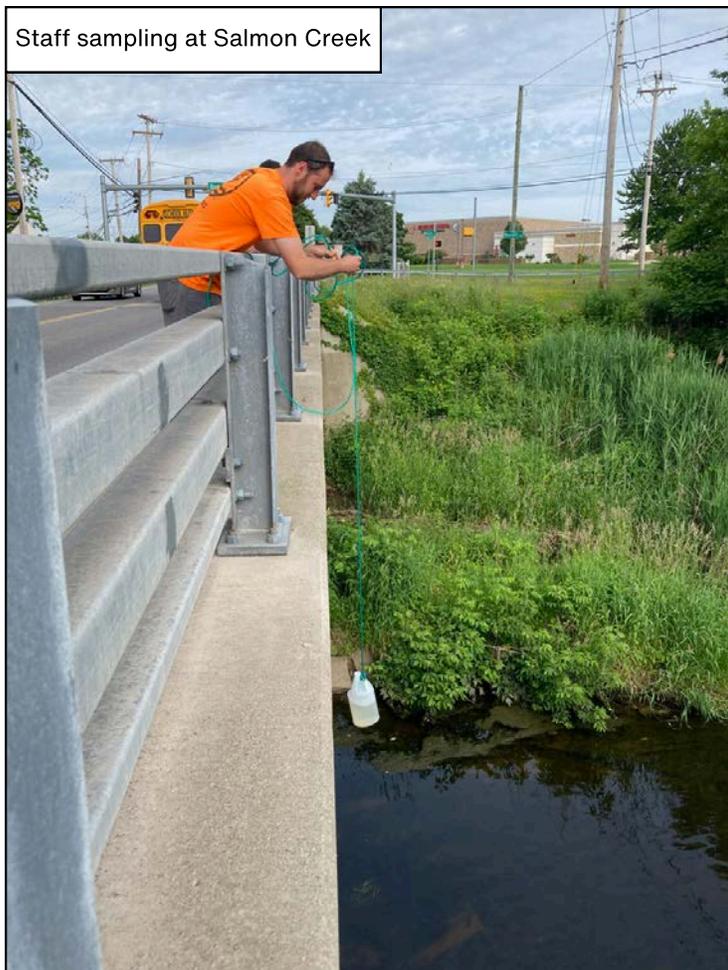
## District Participates in Water Quality Monitoring of Braddock Bay Tributaries

In partnership with SUNY Brockport Department of Environmental Science & Ecology and Monroe County Department of Environmental Services, District staff since late summer have been performing water quality monitoring at three sites (Buttonwood Creek, Salmon Creek, West Creek) that are tributaries into Braddock Bay.

Following the delisting of the Rochester Embayment Area of Concern, thanks in part to restorative practices in Braddock Bay including wetland and barrier beach restoration resulting in improved fish and wildlife habitat, continued monitoring of this area is needed to further improve water quality. This monitoring seeks to identify seasonal trends in nutrient, plant, and algal dynamics, including input from nutrients in the three tributaries. These restored habitats will only succeed if the threats of increased nutrient concentrations, elevated algal blooms, dense aquatic vegetation stands, and harmful algal blooms (HABs) are able to be targeted.

The data collected throughout this sampling effort will help to understand the potential role of watershed-level events in modulating trophic state, cyanobacterial blooms and

Staff sampling at Salmon Creek



associated toxins, and overall water quality in the bay. Staff perform monitoring from roadside sites, so if you see staff please slow down and move over if able. For more information on the delisting of the Rochester Embayment AOC please visit the Department of Environmental Conservation’s website:

<https://dec.ny.gov/nature/waterbodies/watersheds/management/great-lakes/areas-of-concern/rochester-embayment>



## Winter Agricultural Best Management Practices

Since the snow started falling in Monroe County we have already seen a few snowmelt events where excess nutrients on farm fields can be washed into our creeks, rivers, ponds, and lakes if appropriate practices are not in place on farms. There are several management strategies farmers can put in place to protect water quality and the environment while keeping their soils healthy:



- **Cover Cropping** - Bare farm fields are subject to increased erosion, loss of nutrients in the soil, and an overall decline of beneficial soil biology. The simple practice of cover cropping, where a non-cash crop species is planted in the field between the harvest and next year's growing season will absorb residual nutrients and prevent erosion during snowmelt and thaw events. Getting cover crops planted early is important as freeze-thaw cycles are more likely in late fall/early winter before sustained cold temperatures arrive below freezing.
- **Buffer Strips** - Just like cover crops, buffer strips planted between fields and waterways will filter melting runoff and absorb nutrients before they enter the waterways.
- **Conservation Tillage** - Minimizing soil disturbance maintains soil structure, improving water infiltration during ground thaw events and will help keep nutrients more in place, reducing the chance of runoff into our waterways.
- **Managing Creek Access for Livestock & Equipment** - Often times fields for crops and livestock are placed near or along creeks, rivers, or even lakes. Livestock constantly entering and exiting the creek degrade the banks allowing for excess nutrients to enter the waterways, especially in early winter or early spring thaws when little to no vegetation is present along banks leading to less stable conditions.
- **Proper Timing** - Perhaps the most important practice to prevent nutrient loss and runoff during thaw events is the proper timing of certain farming practices. Applying manure or other fertilizer in winter to frozen grounds is not ideal. Frozen soil in fields should be thought of as concrete, in that melting water will immediately run right off the ground into the nearest waterway along with the nutrients from the fertilizer(s).

## Proper Christmas Tree Disposal

When the end of the holiday season arrives and it's time to remove your tree, there are several different eco-friendly methods to properly dispose of your tree:

### MULCH

Chipping your tree traps carbon from releasing back into the environment. Check with your town to see if they take trees for mulch.

### WILDLIFE

Putting your tree back into the environment can provide food and shelter to various wildlife. If you own a pond, they can provide cover and food for fish.

### DONATE

Zoos and animal sanctuaries may accept donated trees for play and enrichment. DO NOT just show up to these, please contact beforehand to ask.

### CRAFTS

Turn your trees into adorable and interesting crafts including wreaths, coasters, homemade fresheners, and more.

### GARDENING

Branches from your tree can provide insulation to your garden bed, protecting from winter freezing and early spring thawing.

### RECYCLE

The majority of cities, towns, and villages in Monroe County offer tree recycling programs through curbside pickup or drop-off locations.

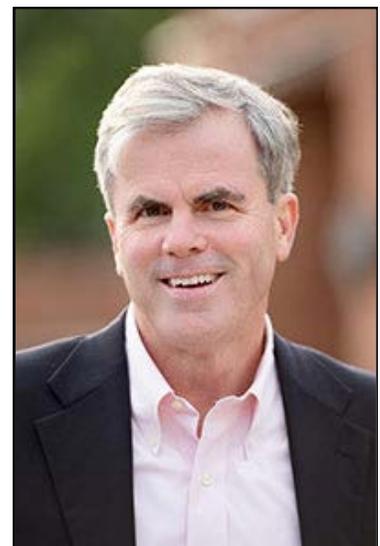
**\*Always be sure to remove all ornaments and tinsel before any of these methods\***

To find your town's tree recycling options: <https://www.monroecounty.gov/des-environmentalrecycling>

## Welcome John B. Baynes

The District wants to welcome Legislator John B. Baynes to our Board of Directors. Representing the Town/Village of East Rochester, Village of Fairport, and Town of Perinton, John currently resides in East Rochester and his three children and six grandchildren all call Monroe County home.

John spent 46 years as a high school English teacher at Fairport High School. He founded and guided the unique public school charitable giving program called Friends of Fairport, which acted as a pass through of over \$450,000 in contributions from employees of the Fairport schools to various community groups. Welcome to the Monroe County Soil & Water Conservation District John!



**Monroe County Soil & Water  
Conservation District**

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**Jacob Kearney**

*Conservation Program Specialist*

# 2025 Conservation Skills

In early fall, District staff attended the 2025 Conservation Skills Workshop in Auburn, NY. This annual workshop series is hosted by the NYS Conservation District Employees' Association (CDEA) relating to all conservation work facets of the Conservation District employees from executive directors all the way down to interns, and focuses on developing and expanding conservation concepts, knowledge, and abilities for all District employees.

These workshops focus on in the field, hands-on training. Workshops attended this year included Stream Basics, Introduction to Forest Health, and Invasive Species Monitoring & Treatment, covering broad infield topics such as stream surveying, signs of healthy or unhealthy forests, and management of invasive species populations. Thanks to the NYS CDEA and the various training instructors for a great week of training!

The District is also excited to have Rochester hosting the annual Water Quality Symposium (WQS) once again in March 2026, after doing so in March 2025. Where Conservation Skills is more hands-on, field training, WQS focuses on wide ranging core conservation topics and case studies from fellow District instructors and other conservation professionals.



Attendees observe hemlock stands being treated for hemlock woolly adelgid



Attendees perform a cross section survey in a stream

