

**2003 Soil and Water Conservation Society
Empire Chapter
Annual Meeting
Held on February 26, 2004
'Are Farms Today Good for the Environment'**

The Annual Meeting of the Empire Chapter of the Soil and Water Conservation Society was called to order at 10:10 AM by President, Richard Wildman in Syracuse, NY. An attendance sheet listing the attendees including speakers is attached to the Secretary's copy of the minutes. Rich gave highlights of some of the accomplishments of the Chapter in 2003 stating a focus for the year was providing good training opportunities for members and others. The Empire Chapter:

- helped plan and fund the Conservation Skills Workshop;
- several members attended the National SWCS meeting using scholarships provided by the chapter;
- we started a Mini-grant program
- we improved the chapter website;
- the financial status of the chapter is excellent
- the chapter is hosting the NE Leadership Workshop

Rich commented that we have a lot of activity going on with a few people; our demographics have changed over the last 20 years and the type of members have changed. We need to get more folks involved. Rich stated that all of us involved in agriculture and natural resource protection share a commonality, and we share training needs. There is not a huge commitment of time to assist the chapter and we need involvement. He stated that the theme for this year's annual meeting is how agriculture impacts society and the environment.

2002 Annual Meeting Minutes: Rich introduced Elaine Dalrymple, Secretary of the Chapter who handed out copies of the 2002 Annual Meeting minutes. She commented on the major sections in lieu of reading them in entirety. Peter Wright moved the minutes be accepted as presented with a second from Dan Dostie. Motion carried.

Treasurer's Report: Elaine Dalrymple handed out copies of the report prepared by Dick Dale, Treasurer. Dick was unable to attend so Elaine highlighted various parts of the report. The budget is done on an accrual basis. There was a slight loss this year but mostly because the cost of publication and distribution of goods sold was more than we are charging for our publications. This is expected at the tail end of a book's lifecycle. We had to send back a lot of refunds because the new 'Blue Book' has been delayed in publication but it was advertised on the DEC website. Overall, the Chapter is in good financial shape. The Treasurer's Report was approved with a motion from Jim Hotaling and a second by Ellen Luchsinger.

Nomination of Officers Report: Jeff Carmichael presented the report. Jeff said that we are doing things differently this year in that we didn't send out a ballot. He said there is a

lot going on in the Chapter especially with National meeting coming to NYS in 2005. We will be able to put our own spin on it. Jeff reported that Rich Wildman would become the Past President. Dick Dale stays on a Treasurer since it is a three-year position. Mike Dennis stays as Region 2 rep and Bill Keating as Region 4 rep and Lee stays as the representative at large. The positions that are open for nomination are Region 1 and 3 reps, President, Secretary, Vice President and President elect. Regional reps are elected for two-year terms and the others are one-year terms. Jeff opened up nominations. Elaine was nominated for Secretary by Peter Wright; Tony Esser was nominated for President by Elaine Dalrymple; President Elect – no one nominated; Tibor Horvath nominated Dan Dostie for Vice President; Region 1 rep (Western NY) – no one nominated; Region 3 (Central NY) Rep. – Peter Wright nominated. Tibor Horvath. It was decided that the Council would try to obtain nominees for Pres. Elect and Region 1 during the day and nominations will remain open. At the end of the meeting a **final slate of officers** was presented as follows:

President: Tony Esser
President Elect: Dan Dostie
Vice President: Steve Machovec
Secretary: Elaine Dalrymple
Region 1 Rep: Don Kuhn
Region 3 Rep: Tibor Horvath

Ellen Luchsinger moved that nominations be closed, with a second by Elaine Dalrymple. Dana Chapman made a motion to accept the slate as presented, with a second by Jim Hotaling. All in attendance were in favor.

Scholarship Report: Ellen reported that the program is being rolled out today. Brochures are in the back of the room. The program is for sophomores, juniors or seniors majoring in natural resources or agriculture.

Awards Report: Dan reported that there are nomination forms left on the table in the back of the room. Dan reminded attendees that there are 5 award categories and they are all on the web site. In 4 of the 5 categories the nominee doesn't need to be a member. Only category where the nominee needs to be a member is the commendation award. The other categories are Merit, Education, Media and Special Achievement award. Dan commented that Tompkins County SWCD does the newsletter for the Empire Chapter and this is an example of something that could receive a media award. Nominations will be accepted until September.

Other Business: Dana Chapman reported that he is presently the Northeast Representative to the National SWCS Board. He is going off and now is the time we can vote on next NE rep. Jim Hotaling and Melvin Womack are both seeking the position. Members also can vote on national at large rep. John Parrish is here and he is one of the candidates. Dana encouraged us to vote. **National Meeting:** Dana explained how the national meeting relates to this chapter and how much fun they can be. The last time we hosted a national meeting was 1974. We can make \$ from it but it is a lot of work. The following committees all need chairmen. Committees are: Local Arrangements; Finance

(we need to raise \$50-\$100,000; Publicity; Tours (there are usually 6 technical tours); Technology; Hospitality; Registration; Activities; Volunteers; Exhibits. Dana will accept volunteers for all the positions. Dana said the National office has a budget too for the meeting. We need to be well organized by the 2004 national meeting in Minnesota in July. Dana said that the Empire Chapter offered 5 scholarships to attend the meeting last year and only 2 were used. The site of the 2005 meeting is the Hyatt in Rochester from July 30 – Aug. 3. Other chapters will help with funds. Last year's meeting cost the national \$50,000. The total operating budget for the national SWCS is \$1.3 million. Jeff asked if Ankeny has a finance person and Dana said yes. Someone needs to send out a sponsorship letter. We need to set up a budget right away. We need to set up a different budget from our regular budget and it may need some seed money from the chapter. Rich reiterated about the scholarships and how good the national meeting is to go to. We need to show people why they should come to Rochester. **Ontario, Canada Chapter:** Rich said we should collaborate on training. We are trying to set up an international symposium between Ontario and NY maybe for next year's annual meeting. John Parrish from the Ontario Chapter came forward and talked about the Ontario Chapter. He explained that there is a long time relationship between the NY and Ontario Chapters. Dana Chapman went up the Ontario Annual Meeting 3 years ago. The Ontario Chapter shares the same vision. They have 125 members approximately 30 from the private sector, 30 public, 30 academic or producers, remaining ?. They went through a complete change in membership a few years ago. Their chapter used to be mostly public professionals but now the membership is coming up in the private sector. John thinks this is because private consultants are seeing it as a way to see the whole picture. John reported that at Spokane last year there was discussion about trans-national cooperation. Jim Bruce in Ottawa is interested in helping organize a joint annual meeting for fall/early winter, maybe a two-day affair. This could perhaps be a good springboard to Rochester. John commented that members should consider making a technical presentation at the national meeting. Their chair extends his welcome. Peter Wright and Pam Josey are co-chairs on national program committee.

Rich ended this portion of the Annual Meeting saying we will start business meeting again later to entertain more Council nominations.

Rich introduced Lee Telega who explained the background for this year's Annual Meeting theme. Rich introduced Peter Nowak, the keynote speaker. He has been a member of SWCS for 27 years and is a faculty member of Dept. of Rural Sociology and Soil and Water Specialist at the Environmental Research Center at the University of Wisconsin at Madison. Rich first heard Dr. Nowak speak at a National Alliance of Independent Crop Consultants meeting. He caught Rich's ear in terms of technology transfer becoming a driver of rural life. Peter has practical applications for motivating landowners to change? Dr. Nowak gave a very illuminating talk. He spoke of how the conservation professional of tomorrow will need to craft their approach differently. He spoke on three forces/trends that will influence our future: the changing structure of agriculture; the use of information technology; and fiscal constraints. He said that tomorrow's soil and water professionals will need to be able to think in space and time parameters and resource management will no longer be done on a field by field basis. He

commented that ‘surprises’ will be a fact of life in the conservation arena and that ecologists look at ‘surprises’ differently than many others. They see them as a learning opportunity. He said that pathogens will surprise us. We need to use surprises as learning opportunities and think ‘outside the box.’ He commented that “there are structural, fiscal, and technological changes occurring around us and depending on yesterday’s strategies to address tomorrow’s challenges is not a trait of a professional.” He said that a conservation professional is one who constantly adapts to change based on the fundamentals of stewardship.

Dr. Nowak entertained questions after his talk.

The afternoon was devoted to a **panel discussion on ‘Is Farming Good for the Environment.’** Panel members and the perspective they addressed included:

Rob Foster (Moderator), Program Director for the Citizen’s Campaign for the Environment (CCE). Rob opened by giving his perspective on the overall question of farming and the environment. He spoke of the need for different communities to come together. He said that CCE supports farming because the alternative is often development, which can use more pesticides per acre. CCE is working to get money for ag. to try and help them be better stewards of the environment. Rob thinks that most people don’t consider agriculture to be an environmental issue. Rob asked the audience if the ag. community wants the public to look at farming as an environmental issue. Rob believes that the people in control of the food industry do not want it to be an issue.

John Ferrante, Senior Science Engineering Advisor for the Onondaga Lake Partnership. John discussed issues of quantifying nutrient load reductions from agricultural best management practices, determining TMDL’s and protection of the water quality of downstream waterbodies. John said that one needs to know the goals of monitoring and the target resource. You need to know the cause and effect and the representativeness of the samples is very important. You also need to know the behavior of the target nutrient. Ideally you need to be able to extrapolate from one farm to another but you get a lot of variability. He spoke of aggregating and disaggregating data. It is easy doing down but not back up.

Joseph DiMura, Director of the Bureau of Water Compliance at NYS Department of Environmental Conservation. Joe discussed the impacts of livestock farms on nearby waters and strategies for enhancing compliance with and the enforcement of the NYS CAFO General Permit. He commented that trust is important when working with farmers. He said that the big farmers need to be the best and they should be an example for others. We need a vision and leadership to carry out stewardship on farms and we need ideas. Joe said that impervious surfaces have a big impact on water quality and farms aren’t creating that many impervious surfaces. He also said that many waste water systems are coming to the end of their life. We need to use the environment as a feedback mechanism. The government won’t solve things rather it depends on people working together, working smarter, not harder.

Joe Visalli, Director for Research and Development for the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA). Joe discussed issues surrounding the development of farm-generated “green power.” He explained that energy, the environment, and the economy are interlinked. The amount of energy used by urban and suburban sprawl is a real problem. Joe said that farming is essential for the future of our society and prevents sprawl. We will need renewable resources for fuel and mentioned switchgrass as a possible fuel. Joe commented that we need to make farming good for the environment and our future depends on it.

Connie Mathers. Connie is a neighbor to several large farms in a region of central NY with a high density of dairy cattle. She discussed the frustrations of living in the area and efforts to achieve protection for the environment, health and quality of life for her family and others in the community. She commented that the United States is subsidizing big farms. She said the American Public Health Association has asked for a moratorium on CAFO’s. Connie asked the audience to support a moratorium on the expansion of all CAFO’s. She felt that cheap food is a major driver of the development of large farms. She said there needs to be an open transparency as to what farming is today.

Questions from the audience rounded out the 90-minute session.

Rich thanked NRCS for underwriting the meeting. The meeting was adjourned at 3 pm after the nomination of officers was finalized.

Respectfully submitted,
Elaine Dalrymple
Secretary