



Lewis County
SOIL & WATER
CONSERVATION DISTRICT

Conservation News- Summer 2026

*Celebrating 80 Years
of Conservation*

Healthy Soil
Clean Water
Strong Communities



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Lowville, NY 13367



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www.lewiscountysoilandwater.com

Mission

The mission of the Lewis County Soil and Water Conservation District is to support a comprehensive natural resource program for county residents and landowners by implementing projects and programs that will preserve, protect and enhance the wise use of the county's soil, water and related resources.

Staff

Nichelle Swisher- District Manager

Michael Durant- District Technician

Carla Yaw- District Treasurer

Alexis Lyndaker- Watershed Ag Conservation Specialist

Board of Directors

Ashely Marolf- Chairman

Barry Lyndaker- Legislator

Michael Hanno- Legislator

Brian Reape- Farm Bureau Rep.

Fred Munk- Member At Large



Educational Events

Conservation Field Days

Conservation Field Days was held on May 21st at the DEC field office in Lowville, NY. This event is coordinated by Lewis County Cornell Cooperative Extension for all Lewis County 6th graders. The District has taken part in this event for many years. The past few years the topic we have covered has been “Soil Erosion”. Staff demonstrate the importance of vegetation in our watersheds and why keeping soil from eroding is important. An educational tool that is always a hit at the District’s station is our EM River Model. This model demonstrates stream morphology and river dynamics. Schools that attended this event include Beaver River, Lowville, Harrisville, Copenhagen, River Valley and a Homeschool group.

Pictured Left: District Technician, Michael Durant, showing the important of culvert placement and streambank protection to a group of students.



Progressive Agriculture Safety Day

On Wednesday, May 20th, the Lewis County Soil and Water Conservation District held its annual Progressive Agriculture Safety Day at the Lewis County Fairgrounds. The Safety Day is a field trip for Lewis County fifth graders meant to teach children lessons to keep them, as well as their families safe, while at home or on the farm. Participants were divided into groups and took turns visiting 12 learning stations provided by local businesses and volunteers. 253 students along with 30 teachers and chaperones from 5 different schools attended this event. 30 local volunteers were also on site dedicating their time to teach lessons or provide other program support. The 2026 lesson topics were : Bicycle Safety (Adirondack Foothills Cycling Club), 911 Emergency Procedures (Lewis County 911 Dispatch), Gun Safety (NYS DEC), Fire Safety (Lowville Fire Department), Tractor Safety (Sydenstricker Nobbe Partners of Lowville NY), Tick and Lyme Disease Prevention (Lewis County Public Health), Undercover Germs (Lewis County Cornell Cooperative Extension), Disability Awareness (Aaron Mayer), ATV Safety (Lewis County Recreation, Forestry and Parks), Snowmobile Safety (Lewis County Snowmobile Association and NYS Forest Rangers), Look Alike Poisons (Lewis County Public Health), and Hand Tool Safety (Kinsley Power Systems). The station included hands on and/or visual demonstrations that helped to reinforce various safety lessons.

Each student that attended received a take home bag containing a variety of safety items donated by our sponsors. The Lowville Elks donated mini first aid kits for each goody bag. O’Brien Family Dairy sponsored the morning break by donating cheese curd for all to enjoy. The District would like to express our sincere gratitude to local businesses, organizations and volunteers for their time and contributions that made this event possible.





Educational Events

Lewis County Highway Safety Day

Twelve staff members representing four Division III counties gathered at the Lewis County Highway Department on May 14th to participate in the Annual Highway Safety Day training. This event is focused on strengthening workplace safety practices across the region. Participants took part in a series of targeted safety courses designed to reinforce essential skills and promote safer field operations. Some sessions throughout the day included Utility Damage Prevention and Response, Trailering and Towing, Digging Safely, Caught-In and Struck-By Hazards, Lockout/Tagout (LOTO) and Confined Spaces, and Sexual Harassment, Workplace Violence, and Right-to-Know. Following the training sessions, staff visited vendors and enjoys a catered chicken barbecue lunch. In the afternoon, the group met for an open-discussion Division meeting.



16th Annual Black River Watershed Conference



The 16th annual Black River Watershed conference was held on June 3rd at Tug Hill Estate. This event is hosted by the District along with the NYS Tug Hill Commission. The day started off with Keynote Speaker, Zachary Labe, showcasing bridging weather and climate communication through data storytelling. Following this presentation, staff from Oneida, Hamilton, Lewis and Jefferson County Soil and Water Conservation Districts presented on key projects their County's have implemented throughout the year. Cody O'Donnell and John Reed, from the Lewis County Highway Department, discussed the county's work on culvert assessments with inventory and applications. Other presentations throughout the day included "Snapshot NY" which is a community-based statewide wildlife monitoring project, De-icing Salt: Road Safety Versus Runoff, as well as an interaction session called "Flowing Forward; a Conversation about the Black River Watershed".

Pictured left: Cody O'Donnell (Deputy Lewis County Highway Superintendent) discussing the Highway Departments culvert monitoring program.

Career Day Events

Lewis County Soil and Water Conservation District staff have been busy with multiple career day events. Michael Durant and Alexis Lyndaker attended the Beaver River Career Showcase on March 26th. This full day event helps students in grade 7-12 explore many different career opportunities within our community. The afternoon session was set-aside for mock interviews with Juniors and Seniors. Together, Mike and Alexis conducted 7 interviews.

Mike and Alexis also gave a presentation at River Valley Mennonite School for grades 7 through 12. They talked about each of their careers and displayed a picture slideshow of the many different areas of work their positions involve while explaining each job duty.

Pictured right: Michael Durant (District Technician) doing a mock interview with a Beaver River student.



Conservation Projects

Agricultural Best Management Practice Systems

The Lewis County Soil and Water Conservation District has had many agricultural Best Management Practice (BMPs) systems implemented throughout the County. The purpose of BMPs are to protect our natural resources while maximizing productivity and sustainability in our agricultural industry. Each one of these BMPs have their own NRCS conservation practice standard which engineering firms and contractors abide by.

Most recently, a farm installed a Livestock Heavy Use Area Runoff Management System. This system is designed to intercept, collect and treat any runoff water from a barnyard area or concentrated livestock areas. Many components are encompassed within this system. Some BMPs that were installed include; heavy use area protection, access control, fence, roof runoff structure, roofs and covers, subsurface drainage and critical area planting.



Meet our BOCES Intern



My name is Caden Tanner and I have multiple hobbies like riding horses, hiking and biking. All of these things have something in common and that is that they are all out in nature. I love being outdoors whether it is raining, snowing or the sun is blazing.

I have lived in Lowville all my life. I have attended Lowville Academy and Central School since I was 5. This year, in 2026, I will graduate with my advanced regents diploma. However, the highlight of my high school career has to be BOCES. I attend BOCES in the Environmental Conservation and Forestry Program. I learned how to be safe while performing chainsaw work while also learning map skills, tree ID, animal ID and so much more. The class fit my outdoor passion perfectly. In August I will attend Paul Smith's college for Natural Resource Conservation and Management.

Through BOCES, I had the opportunity to participate in an internship. For this I chose Lewis County Soil and Water. I learned some skills like surveying and wetland delineation. I also learned about several different kinds of forms and applications with environmental assessments. More importantly, I learned more about what they do for the community and how intricate their jobs are. I learned how much of a role they play in educating the public and I had the opportunity to participate in those activities.

In the future I hope to be set up for the ENCON academy. I want to be an Environmental Conservation Officer in order to protect nature for future generations. I want to be part of educating the public because when people are informed, they understand why certain activities are necessary or potentially harmful.

Lewis County Fair

The 205th Lewis County Fair was held July 21st–25th. As part of the Lewis County Soil and Water Conservation District's celebration of 80 years of conservation, District staff designed this year's fair exhibit around the theme **"Blast from the Past."** The display highlighted conservation projects, programs, and memorable moments from the District's history. Looking back through decades of photographs was a rewarding experience, showcasing the many successful projects and lasting accomplishments the District has achieved while serving the residents of Lewis County.

Besides the educational display, a stand-in "Ronny Raindrop" board was available for photo opportunities as an activity for families to take part in. Participants were able to email their pictures to the District for a chance to win free trees from our 2027 Tree Sale. Thank you to all who visited and participated in activities at our booth.



Emerald Ash Borer (continued from back page)

How Can You Tell if a Tree is Infested? In addition to declining or dying branches in the upper canopy, common signs of Emerald Ash Borer infestation include:

- New shoots or sprouts growing from the base or trunk of the tree
- Bark splitting, peeling, or turning gray
- Distinctive D-shaped exit holes left by emerging adult beetles
- S-shaped galleries just beneath the bark
- Sightings of the metallic emerald-green adult beetle

By 2026, Emerald Ash Borer had been confirmed in every county in New York State, including Lewis County.

What Should You Do? If you have healthy ash trees on your property, they may still be candidates for preventative insecticide treatments. These treatments are most effective before the tree becomes heavily infested and should be applied by a qualified arborist or according to product directions.

If an ash tree is already heavily infested or is dying, insecticide treatments are generally no longer effective because the tree cannot adequately transport the treatment throughout its tissues.

Dead ash trees become extremely brittle and can lose branches—or fall entirely—with little warning. Trees located near homes, roads, power lines, driveways, or areas where people gather pose a significant safety hazard. Dead ash trees should be evaluated and removed by a qualified tree professional as soon as practical.

Help Slow the Spread! One of the primary ways Emerald Ash Borer spread across New York was through the movement of infested firewood. Even though the insect is now widespread, transporting untreated firewood can still spread other invasive pests and diseases.

Whenever possible:

- Buy or gather firewood where you plan to burn it.
- Do not transport untreated firewood long distances.
- Properly dispose of ash wood according to local guidance.

For additional information about Emerald Ash Borer, visit the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation's Emerald Ash Borer webpage: <https://dec.ny.gov/nature/animals-fish-plants/emerald-ash-borer-eab>





Lewis County Soil and Water Conservation District: Celebrating 80 Years of Conservation

For 80 years, the Lewis County Soil and Water Conservation District has been a trusted steward of the land and water resources that define Lewis County, New York. Since its founding in 1946, the District has worked alongside farmers, landowners, municipalities, schools, and community partners to protect the natural resources that sustain our communities and local economy.

Nestled between the Black River Valley, the Adirondack Park, and the Tug Hill Plateau, Lewis County is home to some of New York's most valuable forests, farms, streams, and wetlands. The District's mission has remained constant throughout the decades: to provide technical expertise, education, and conservation programs that help protect soil, improve water quality, reduce erosion, and preserve these resources for future generations.

Over the past eight decades, conservation has evolved from simple erosion control practices to comprehensive watershed management, agricultural environmental planning, stream restoration, invasive species management, and environmental education. The Lewis County Soil and Water Conservation District has been at the forefront of these efforts, helping local farmers implement best management practices, assisting municipalities with environmental projects, leading water quality initiatives, and educating thousands of students and residents about conservation stewardship.

Partnership has always been the foundation of the District's success. By working with local, state, and federal agencies, agricultural producers, community organizations, and volunteers, the District has leveraged resources to complete projects that strengthen the resilience of the Black River Watershed and other watersheds in the county, and protect the natural beauty that makes Lewis County unique. These collaborative efforts ensure that conservation is not just about protecting today's resources—it is an investment in tomorrow's communities.

As the Lewis County Soil and Water Conservation District celebrates its 80th anniversary, it also looks toward the future. Emerging challenges such as changing weather patterns, water quality protection, sustainable agriculture, and habitat conservation require innovative solutions and continued community engagement. Even though current staff were not there at the District's inception, the current staff have over 80 combined years of experience. Guided by eight decades of experience, the District remains committed to helping landowners make informed conservation decisions while preserving the county's rich natural heritage.

Eighty years of conservation represents more than a milestone—it reflects generations of dedication, partnership, and stewardship. The Lewis County Soil and Water Conservation District proudly honors its past while continuing its mission of guarding and enhancing our natural resources for tomorrow.





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Emerald Ash Borer Has Arrived in Lewis County!

You may have noticed dead or dying trees around Lowville and neighboring communities—on residential lawns, along roadsides, and lining town streets. Unfortunately, many of these are ash trees.

For years, Lewis County remained one of the last areas in New York State that had not been affected by the **Emerald Ash Borer (EAB)**. Sadly, that is no longer the case. The invasive insect has now been confirmed in Lewis County and is beginning to kill ash trees throughout the area.

What is the Emerald Ash Borer? The EAB is a highly invasive, non-native beetle whose larvae attack and kill all species of ash trees. Native to eastern Asia, it was accidentally introduced to North America through infested wood packing materials used in international shipping. The adult beetle lays its eggs on the bark of ash trees. After hatching, the larvae tunnel beneath the bark, feeding on the tree's inner tissues that transport water and nutrients. As these tunnels expand, they effectively cut off the tree's ability to survive. Most infested ash trees die within two to four years of becoming infected.

Because symptoms often go unnoticed during the early stages of infestation, the Emerald Ash Borer has likely been present in Lewis County for several years before the dead trees we are seeing today became evident. (*cont'd page 6*)