



ONONDAGA LAKE AGRICULTURAL ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

Project Description: Agriculture plays a major role in our economy and quality of life in Onondaga County. However, agriculture can have an effect on water quality, particularly when fertilizers, both natural and man-made, are carried into creeks and streams by rainwater. The problem is worsened by improper manure spreading and the close proximity of barns and barnyards to creeks and streams. Those tributaries eventually carry the wastes into Onondaga Lake. This type of pollution is called nonpoint source pollution.

The Onondaga County Soil and Water Conservation District (District) is working with farms to address nonpoint source concerns on farms in the Onondaga Lake watershed. The Onondaga Lake Agricultural Environmental Management Program is managed by the District and funded through the Onondaga Lake Partnership. This voluntary program uses the Agricultural Environmental Management (AEM) process that has been effective throughout New York State to help farmers address water quality issues.

AEM provides a coordinated framework for developing alternatives to protect and improve the environment, while maintaining the viability of the farm as a commercial enterprise. Technical solutions to water quality concerns typically take the form of Best Management Practices (BMPs) that are designed to meet the

specific circumstances on each farm. The AEM program involves a five-tiered process to determine what types of water quality issues exist on the farm and what type of alternatives can be developed.

Location: The District works with farms throughout the Onondaga Lake watershed. The initial focus was on the Onondaga Creek subwatershed but recently began working with farms in the Nine-Mile Creek subwatershed as well.

Project Sponsor: Onondaga County serves as the non-Federal sponsor of this Onondaga Lake Partnership project, and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency serves as the Federal sponsor. The project is being completed by the Onondaga County Soil and Water Conservation District.

Current Status: The Onondaga County Soil and Water Conservation District began this project in 2000 by inventorying farms in the Onondaga Creek subwatershed. Through June 2006, a total of 42 farms have completed Tier 1, 31 have been through Tier 2, 17 farms have completed the Tier 3 planning process and 9 farms have been through Tier 4 implementation. The District is also working with 7 farms on various stages of BMP implementation and expects to complete several BMPs during 2006.



Before – Livestock crossed the stream throughout its entire length in the pasture.



After – Stream crossing installed with livestock laneway for pasture access.