



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Thomas F. O'Mara

O'MARA JOINS CHEMUNG COUNTY OFFICIALS TO SHOWCASE SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT'S NEW MACHINERY: State funding boosts one of NYS's most productive shared-services partnerships between Chemung and Schuyler counties

THOMAS F. O'MARA October 2, 2020

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Chemung, N.Y., October 2—State Senator Tom O’Mara (R,C,I-Big Flats) on Thursday joined Chemung County Soil and Water Conservation District Manager Mark Watts, Town of Chemung Supervisor George Richter, and other district representatives to officially get a firsthand look at the district’s new large-scale bulldozer.

The group met yesterday morning at the intersection of Wyncoop Creek Road and Hogback Road in the town of Chemung, where the dozer is currently on site to restore a natural stream channel that was destroyed by the severe storms that hit the area in 2018.

O’Mara, former Chair of the Senate Environmental Conservation Committee, said, “I am extremely proud to help support one of the most proactive stream and infrastructure protection programs anywhere in New York State. Working together, the Chemung and Schuyler County Water Conservation Districts have done and will continue to do remarkable work. It is a wise use of taxpayer dollars because it helps local municipalities, residents and farmers achieve critical environmental protection and infrastructure improvement projects in the most cost-effective way possible. This local shared-services partnership helps protect local environments, local waterways, and local infrastructure across the Southern Tier and Finger Lakes regions, and it helps save local property taxpayers millions of dollars. I’m proud to support it with this new machinery and to hold it up as a model for doing more of this kind of cooperative, cost-saving, shared-services work throughout New York State.”

Chemung County SWCD Manager Mark Watts said, “We are fortunate to have Tom O’Mara as our State Senator. His strong support to his constituents, and Soil and Water Conservation Districts is second to none in New York State. Thanks to his efforts to secure this financial support, we will be able to implement countless projects over the next several years that will benefit the environment as well as our quality of life here in the 58th District. Thank you Senator O’Mara.”

Schuyler County SWCD Manager Jerry Verrigni said, "These projects have helped save tens of thousands of tons of sediment and tens of thousands of pounds of nutrients, focusing on nitrogen and phosphorus to protect and improve our water quality for both recreation and drinking water sources. These projects protect and improve millions of dollars of public and private infrastructure, as well provide for the protection and improvement of fish habitat and water quality of our pristine natural resources which makes our region a leader in tourism in New York."

O'Mara secured \$150,000 in state funding through the 2018-2019 Environmental Protection Fund (EPF) to help the Chemung SWCD purchase the large-scale Caterpillar D-6 Hightrack bulldozer. During that same funding cycle, O'Mara obtained \$120,000 for Schuyler County to purchase a CASE 721G loader.

The group also visited the current site of the districts' New Holland SP240 airflow seeder (see attached photo), which was also purchased with the assistance of \$205,000 in state aid through the EPF. The districts utilize the seeder to currently plant over 2,500 acres of cover crops that help maintain permanent cover on farmland over the winter months after the corn and soybean harvest. This cover aids in the reduction of erosion and improves soil health by allowing for a higher water holding capacity and permeability of the soil. It aids in the reduction of runoff and subsequent flooding during high-intensity, short- duration storm events. Cover crops also provide an increase in organic matter and provide nutrients for the future year's crop when plowed under in the spring as a green manure. Overall, this planting program aids in the conservation of over 6,000 tons of soil on an annual basis. The project is only in its second full year and district officials believe that the seeder will help annually plant over 5,000 acres for years to come.

The Chemung and Schuyler County Soil and Water Conservation Districts have established one of New York State's most successful and unique shared-services partnerships that serves

the Southern Tier and Finger Lakes regions, including Steuben and Yates counties, to help mitigate against, and respond and recover more rapidly and effectively in the aftermath of severe storms and flooding. The shared-services partnership helps accomplish storm mitigation, flood repair and response, stream stabilization, culvert upsizing, retention ponds, controlling nonpoint source pollution, preventing soil erosion, and numerous other infrastructure protection projects throughout the region.

The districts also undertake critical efforts to limit Harmful Algae Blooms (HABs) in regional lakes and streams, and to protect clean water.

According to Watts and Verrigni, the new machinery helps the districts continue all of these efforts on a much larger scale. It is directly responsible for the implementation of over 125 projects annually and aids in the protection of hundreds of millions of dollars of necessary infrastructure.