Training the Next Generation of Conservationists

Soil and Water Conservation Districts are experts when it comes to coordinating efforts to get conservation projects on the ground. Whether it is through municipal cooperation or hiring private contractors, Districts manage to find the most cost effective solution to getting a job done. Just as important, Districts also recognize when there is an opportunity to include an education component to a project. This was the case in Delaware County when the Conservation District brought in Boy Scout Troop 49 from the Town of Hamden to help install a stormwater wetland adjacent to the County's salt storage shed, protecting the West Branch of the Delaware River.

Storm water wetlands are designed to capture rainwater that enters storm drains before it empties into streams or rivers. They are constructed to hold this water long enough for wetland plants to grow, acting as a living filter, capturing and absorbing excess nutrients and allowing sediments to settle. In addition, these areas can also provide a habitat for wildlife.

Members of Boy Scout Troop 49 of Hamden get their feet wet in conservation.

The stormwater wetland was designed and constructed with funding from the US Environmental Protection Agency and the Catskill Watershed Corporation. Once the earth moving construction was done, Larry Day, Soil and Groundwater Specialist and Karen Clifford Special Programs Technician with the Delaware County Soil and Water Conservation District designed the planting plan. The District then used this project as an opportunity to provide a hands-on learning experience to members of Boy Scout Troop 49. The Scouts were first taught the function, purpose, and importance of stormwater

wetlands by the SUNY Delhi Catskill Education Corp. They also learned about recent efforts to control Japanese knotweed, an invasive species that has been growing along the Delaware River, without using harmful pesticides. The Troop then headed out to work along side the District planting beneficial species of trees and shrubs such as Streamco Willow, River Birch, Japanese Larch, Elderberry, Arrowwood, and Redosier Dogwood, as well as Cardinal flowers and salt resistant Soft Stem Bulrush which will provide shade, keep the water cool and filter the water to remove sediment, salt and other pollutants.

At the end of the day, the Scouts went home with a new understanding of wetlands and plants, the Town of Hamden had a new stormwater wetland and the District had one more job completed.

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