



St. Lawrence County Soil and Water Conservation District

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Friday, December 15, 2023

Subject: Support of North Country Regional Ag Team

The St. Lawrence County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) was concerned to hear about the imminent dissolution of the North Country Regional Agricultural Team (NCRAT).

The NCRAT plays an important role in maintaining representation of agricultural agents within St. Lawrence County. Their role has been especially vital regarding the North Country Agricultural Development program, a nearly \$500,000 year state investment into the agricultural development for the North Country Region. The NCRAT is responsible for continuing research into best agricultural practices for field crops and dairy. All farms benefit from the research and work done by the NCRAT, even those not directly involved with the team. This type of region wide research is not represented by any other organization and a loss of it will likely leave farms lagging in highly competitive market.

St. Lawrence County is not only the largest county in the state, but it also leads the state in operational farm acres. A loss of NCRAT leaves only one free public resource for farmers and landowners to ask their soil and crop related questions, the SWCD, who only has one Certified Crop Advisor on staff. While we strive to assist farmers to the best of our ability, a single person covering the largest county in NY State does not effectively serve our constituents. SWCD is concerned that without additional support local agriculture will suffer.

The NCRAT has been a source of collaboration between SWCD and farmers, partnering on events like Soil and Cover Crop field days, Hay and Pasture School, and Crop Congress. Historically the team has also provided local continuing education and training opportunities, such as pesticide use and equipment safety. This type of high value outreach is the most productive way reach farmers and demonstrate new technologies and techniques.

Finally, the SWCD is concerned that even with the addition of an agricultural focused staff member proposed for CCE, the level of knowledge, research capabilities, and community trust the NCRAT members upheld, will be difficult to replace.

Thank you,

Cayce Salvino

District Manager

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