



NEW YORK STATE ENVIRONMENTAL EXCELLENCE AWARD CASE STUDY

Suffolk County Soil and Water Conservation District’s Fuel Tank Replacement Program – Honored for its solution to aging agricultural fuel tanks atop Long Island’s sole source aquifer.

SUMMARY

Suffolk County Soil and Water Conservation District’s (SWCD) Fuel Tank Replacement Program, awarded in 2014, is a model of excellence as it demonstrates an innovative, sustainable, and economically viable solution to aging agricultural fuel tanks. Through a unique partnership, farmers were able to install new tanks that met regulatory requirements at a reduced cost.



BENEFITS



Long Island farms sit atop its sole source aquifer that supplies drinking water to nearly 3 million people. Suffolk County’s SWCD identified that fuel tanks on some farms were old, corroding and dangerously on the verge of leaking. Many tanks were on or within

10 feet of the wellheads. The farmers participating in this proactive program were leaders in their industry and set a precedent for others to become good stewards of the environment.

KEY METRICS

- 204 fuel tanks replaced on 118 farms
- 210,000 gallons of fuel secured through installation of new tanks
- Decreased total volume of fuel storage by 9,500 gallons

ABOUT SUFFOLK COUNTY

- Has a rich agricultural and maritime heritage
- Is the top NYS producer of agricultural products in terms of market value
- Approximately 600 active farms with an average size of 59 acres
- 537 agriculture producers

NYS Environmental Excellence Award: Annual recognition of outstanding innovative and sustainable projects or programs and unique partnerships that are improving and protecting New York State’s environmental resources and contributing to a stronger economy

A MODEL OF EXCELLENCE

- Used the Agriculture Environmental Management Program to identify storage fuel tank locations
- Collaboration resulted in an innovative, cost effective and acceptable solution to water quality concerns
- Provided technical assistance and creative funding opportunities
- Created partnerships that led to new, innovative and environmentally -friendly programs
- Created guidelines that included the most stringent codes in one comprehensive document
- Developed an Agriculture Compliance Education Program that allowed farmers to address compliance issues without penalties

HIGHLIGHTS

Suffolk County SWCD's Fuel Tank Replacement Program aligns with county laws, has support from the farming community and has sustainable funding sources. The environmental benefits go beyond the local regulations.

The county identified worked with a fuel tank manufacturer to design a tank that met Suffolk County Department of Health Services (DHS) requirements and was less expensive than other tanks. This innovative partnership resulted in a more economically sustainable solution. Farmers reduced their costs and the grant program was able to make funds available to more farms.

The program also assisted 19 farms with reducing the total volume of fuel stored. Some farmers opted to reduce the amount of fuel stored onsite because a gas station was in proximity or to avoid the complicated permitting regulations. When totaled, farms reduced their overall fuel storage by approximately 9,500 gallons of fuel.

The program enabled 118 farmers to attain grant funding for replacing 204 tanks. This resulted in 210,000 gallons of fuel being secured in double-walled fully contained storage facilities. Farmers could only replace their current level of fuel storage and could not increase their capacity.

In addition, the SWCD partnered with the Suffolk County Department of Health Services (DHS) to develop a five-year Agricultural Compliance Education Program. At the time of the award, DHS had assisted 50 farmers with compliance issues without having to pay penalties.

FUNDING

The Fuel Tank Replacement Program was funded by monies available under the NYS Environmental Protection Fund. Additional funding came from monies available to Soil and Water Conservation Districts through the Agricultural Nonpoint Source Abatement and Control Program.