



## **PRESS RELEASE**

**For Immediate Release: February 4, 2013**

### **OCCA Working on RAPP Education, Outreach**

OTSEGO COUNTY – Beginning February 1, the Otsego County Conservation Association has signed on with Cornell University to represent Cornell’s Recycling Agricultural Plastics Project. OCCA Program Director Travis Sauerwald will be working to recruit farmers to participate in this statewide effort, in conjunction with RAPP coordinators, the Otsego County Soil & Water Conservation District and the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation.

A large volume of plastic is used by the approximately 35,000 farms in New York State to grow, process and store agricultural crops. After being used once, most of this plastic is discarded. Traditionally, very little has been recycled, in large part because used agricultural plastics are cumbersome to handle and have been considered undesirable by plastics recycling markets.

Thanks to RAPP, recycled agricultural plastics from New York State are now being made into sidewalk pavers, plastic lumber, oil and other products. RAPP’s best management guidelines help keep used plastic clean and compact, and mobile compaction equipment is available for use on farms and in rural areas. Since 2009, RAPP has coordinated the collection of nearly a million pounds of used plastic that would otherwise have gone into landfills, been burned in open fires, or left behind in fields.

Building on this success, Sauerwald will be working directly with Otsego County farmers to develop a recycling plan that meets both their needs and the requirements of the program to reroute agricultural plastics from the waste stream.

“Farmers might already be taking some of the steps involved in the recycling process: used plastic should be folded or rolled into pillow-sized bundles and stored off the ground, out of the mud, grit and gravel,” Sauerwald explained.

“When a farm collects enough plastic to make a full 1000-pound bale, RAPP will arrange to have a plastic baler brought to the site. For those handling smaller volumes, their plastic can be baled along with plastic from other farms,” he said.

Otsego County users of film or rigid plastics in agriculture – including livestock farmers, landscapers, producers of maple syrup and horticultural crops – can call Sauerwald at [\(607\) 282-4087](tel:6072824087) to learn more about the RAPP program and how to participate locally. Site visits will be scheduled, after which Sauerwald will assist program participants in developing individualized best management plans to prepare their plastics for recycling.

“RAPP provides an exciting, environmentally responsible method of disposing of agricultural plastics by recycling old products into new,” said OCCA Executive Director Darla M. Youngs.

“We’re eager to start working with the Otsego County agricultural community through this statewide recycling initiative,” she said.

New York State RAPP is coordinated by the Cornell University Recycling Agricultural Plastics Project. Major funding is provided by the New York State Environmental Protection Fund, administered by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation. For more information, visit <http://environmentalrisk.cornell.edu/AgPlastics/>

Otsego County's oldest environmental conservation organization, OCCA is a private, non-profit membership group dedicated to promoting the appreciation and sustainable use of Otsego County's natural resources through education, advocacy, resource management, research, and planning. For more information, or to donate, call [\(607\) 547-4488](tel:6075474488) or visit [www.occainfo.org](http://www.occainfo.org).