

PRESS Release

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Heavy Rains Make July Front Runner Training More Important

FARMINGTON – Front Runners are taking on a whole new level of importance, especially in light of the recent heavy rains.

Franklin County Soil & Water Conservation District will be hosting our only Front Runner/Grader Gravel Road Maintenance training for 2008 on Monday, July 28 from 8 am to 1 pm in Wilton. Participants should meet for the initial part of the training at Academy Hill School, corner of Route 156 and East Wilton Road at 8 am. The outside part of the workshop will be held at Hanslip Road, Wilton.

This workshop, to be held rain or shine, is designed for camp road owners, highway crews, camp owners and contractors. Contractor certification credits will be given to participants upon request. Those attending will be given a \$10 voucher towards the lease of a Front Runner from FCSWCD, not to be used in combination with any other discounts. The cost of the training is \$35 per person. Payment must be made at the time of registration. Checks should be sent to FCSWCD, 107 Park St., Farmington, ME 04938.

Those wishing to rent a Front Runner from any soil and water conservation district must have completed the training.

If your road or driveway keeps disappearing in heavy rains, it is not only costing money, time and effort, but it may be contributing to the demise of your local swimming or fishing spot, according to Rosetta Thompson, FCSWCD District Manager. Rainwater erosion from gravel roads and driveways carries sediment that threatens the quality of lake water. She points out that proper road maintenance is key to preventing gravel roads from potentially polluting streams

and lakes. People are often surprised to hear that gravel roads cause so much pollution, she said.

In the classroom session, road maintenance contractor and Front Runner inventor Russ Lanoie, of Conway, NH, will discuss proper road construction techniques as well as basic principles behind maintaining gravel/dirt roads and reducing non-point source pollution problems. Participants will have a chance to actually operate a front runner, as well.

“Pollution from gravel roads is nobody’s fault, but everyone’s problem,” according to Lanoie. “Our rains seem to be more intense on a regular basis. We've had a couple of spring washouts within the last several years along with recent “gulley washer” thundershowers that have created problems that have yet to be repaired. The principles I'll present will apply to any road maintenance equipment, whether it be a front-mounted grader/rake on a plow truck or an old bedspring dragged behind a Volkswagen.”

In addition to more severe rain events, increased development without the necessary associated infrastructure improvement is a major factor in local road problems. Not only is there more direct road damage from increased traffic on these gravel roads, but new house lots along the roads disrupt the established drainage network resulting in over tasking of existing culverts, water diversions, and drainage ditches.

Recognizing the severity of the road erosion problem, Maine DEP has provided grant money which has allowed FCSWCD to purchase seven Front Runner/Graders that were placed soil and water conservation districts in Maine’s southwestern counties. FCSWCD also purchased adaptors to make them usable on half ton as well as three-quarter ton trucks.

Participants will also take home many do-it-yourself hints that they can apply to their roads immediately. For more information on the Front Runner/Grader or the training, call 778-4279 or go to www.franklincswcd.org

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