

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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NYS Maple Returns to Catskills Annual Conference Held at SUNY Cobleskill

COBLESKILL, NY — After a 25-year absence from the Catskill region, maple producers from across New York State, the Northeast, and Canada gathered at SUNY Cobleskill for the 2026 New York State January Maple Conference. The day-and-a-half event brought together more than 400 maple producers, educators, students, and industry partners for an engaging program centered on education, innovation, and community.

Hosted for the first time at SUNY Cobleskill's College of Agriculture and Technology, the conference marked a successful return to the Catskills. The campus provided an ideal setting for the long-running annual event, which began more than a quarter century ago and has become a cornerstone of the maple industry calendar.

Despite mild winter weather and a brief January thaw, attendance remained strong, with participants traveling from nine states and Canada. Held each January, the conference traditionally signals the start of the maple production season and is widely regarded as the industry's premier educational and networking event. The 2026 conference met — and exceeded — expectations in its new home.

A highlight of the conference was a robust educational program featuring 30 maple-focused workshops presented by leading experts from across the maple industry. Sessions covered a wide range of topics, including production techniques, marketing strategies, emerging products, business planning, and equipment management. Attendees gained practical insights, observed industry demonstrations, and learned about the latest trends shaping modern maple production.

Greg Zimpfer, who presented a workshop on the development of maple water as a beverage product, noted, *"The winter maple conference is back to where it was pre-COVID. Great vendors, great classes, awesome turnout."*

The conference also featured New York's largest maple trade show, with 50 tables, booths, and displays representing 37 manufacturers, distributors, dealers, and support organizations. All vendors were located within the SUNY Cobleskill ballroom, creating a centralized and immersive experience for attendees seeking the latest in maple equipment, supplies, and services.

Tom Denman of the New York Farm Bureau praised the event, stating, *“Fantastic event; looking forward to next year.”* He added, *“I really enjoyed the strong educational focus of the conference.”* Farm Bureau was among the many organizations supporting the maple industry through trade show participation.

Youth engagement was another standout aspect of the conference. More than 50 FFA students from nine schools attended, participated in workshops, and assisted with trade show setup and teardown. Members of the Mount Markham FFA chapter, led by advisor Eric Bugbee, played a key role in supporting vendors as thousands of dollars’ worth of equipment and displays were assembled and dismantled.

The popularity of maple among young producers was further underscored by the Maple Career Development Event (CDE), one of New York FFA’s most well-attended competitions. In a workshop offered exclusively to FFA members, Bugbee reviewed CDE rules and encouraged students to engage fully in the conference’s educational opportunities.

Assemblyman Chris Tague, ranking member of the New York State Assembly Agriculture Committee, addressed conference attendees and shared his vision for the future of maple production in the state. Following his remarks, Tague commented, *“I am so proud of our maple producers, who rank number two in America — and soon to be number one. Our quality of products can’t be matched.”* Reflecting on the event, he added, *“It was my pleasure to speak at this year’s conference at SUNY Cobleskill with such a large crowd and an outstanding agenda.”*

Catskill Maple Producers Association (CMPA) President Matt Scobie echoed that optimism. After the state maple association declined to host a statewide event in 2026, Scobie and a committee of CMPA members stepped forward last June to organize the conference. Looking back on the successful January 9–10 event, Scobie remarked, *“We look forward to the future and plan for an even larger event next year.”* From all accounts, the local association has established a new standard for New York’s annual maple conference, with SUNY Cobleskill emerging as its permanent home.

SUNY Cobleskill President Marion Terenzio concurred with Scobie by extending an invitation to the maple industry for next year. *“On behalf of our community, we were very pleased and honored to host this event, and we look forward to our continued partnership”* President Terenzio commented to the CMPA planning committee. She went on to state, *“I also look forward to other ways our partnership can continue to foster the Maple Industry’s growth”*.

Given the huge success of the '26 conference, overwhelming industry support, and welcoming invitation from the hosts, the New York January Maple Conference will now be scheduled for January 8th and 9th, 2027 at SUNY Cobleskill, marking the 30th anniversary of the event. As awareness continues to grow, organizers anticipate attendance to increase significantly, reflecting both the expanding maple industry and a renewed enthusiasm for in-person education and collaboration.

Pictured

1. The SUNY Cobleskill ballroom filled with exhibitors and vendors during the 2026 NYS January Maple Conference trade show.
2. Kevin Lawyer of H2O/Leader demonstrates the efficiency of an H2O/Leader evaporator to conference attendees.
3. Dwayne Hill of Shaver Hill Maple showcases the latest sap spouts and fittings at the trade show.
4. For the first time in conference history, *The Tapped-In Podcast* broadcast live from the event. Bennett Schoonover interviews presenter and Mount Markham FFA advisor Eric Bugbee. (*L to R: Bennett Schoonover, Eric Bugbee, Dan Bolton of Crestview Maple Farms, Corey Schoonover*)
5. Members of the Mount Markham FFA pose for a group photo at the H2O/Leader booth. H2O/Leader sponsored hooded sweatshirts for the students who assisted vendors with trade show setup and teardown.

For More Information

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