

Our Owasco

Behavioral Science Approach Towards Soil Health BMP Adoption

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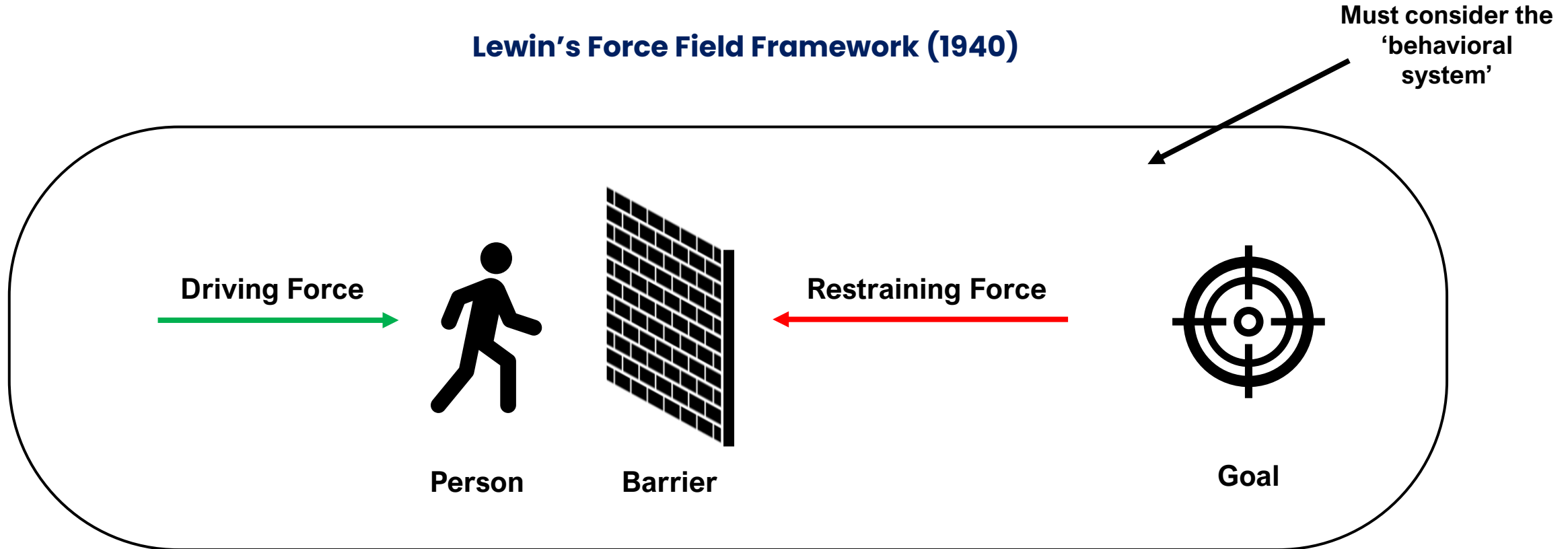
Our Owasco

- Owasco Watershed, Finger Lakes (NYS)
- Funded by The Nature Conservancy (NY)
- Adoption of soil health BMPs by dairy and cash crop farmers
- Focus BMPs –
 - Reduced tillage
 - Cover crops
 - Application of organic amendments (e.g. compost or manure)
 - Diversifying crop rotations
- Project stages –
 - Behavioral Systems Analysis (6 months, 2019)
 - Co-design and pilot-testing (2 years, 2020-2021)
 - Strategy implementation (1.5 years, 2022-2023)

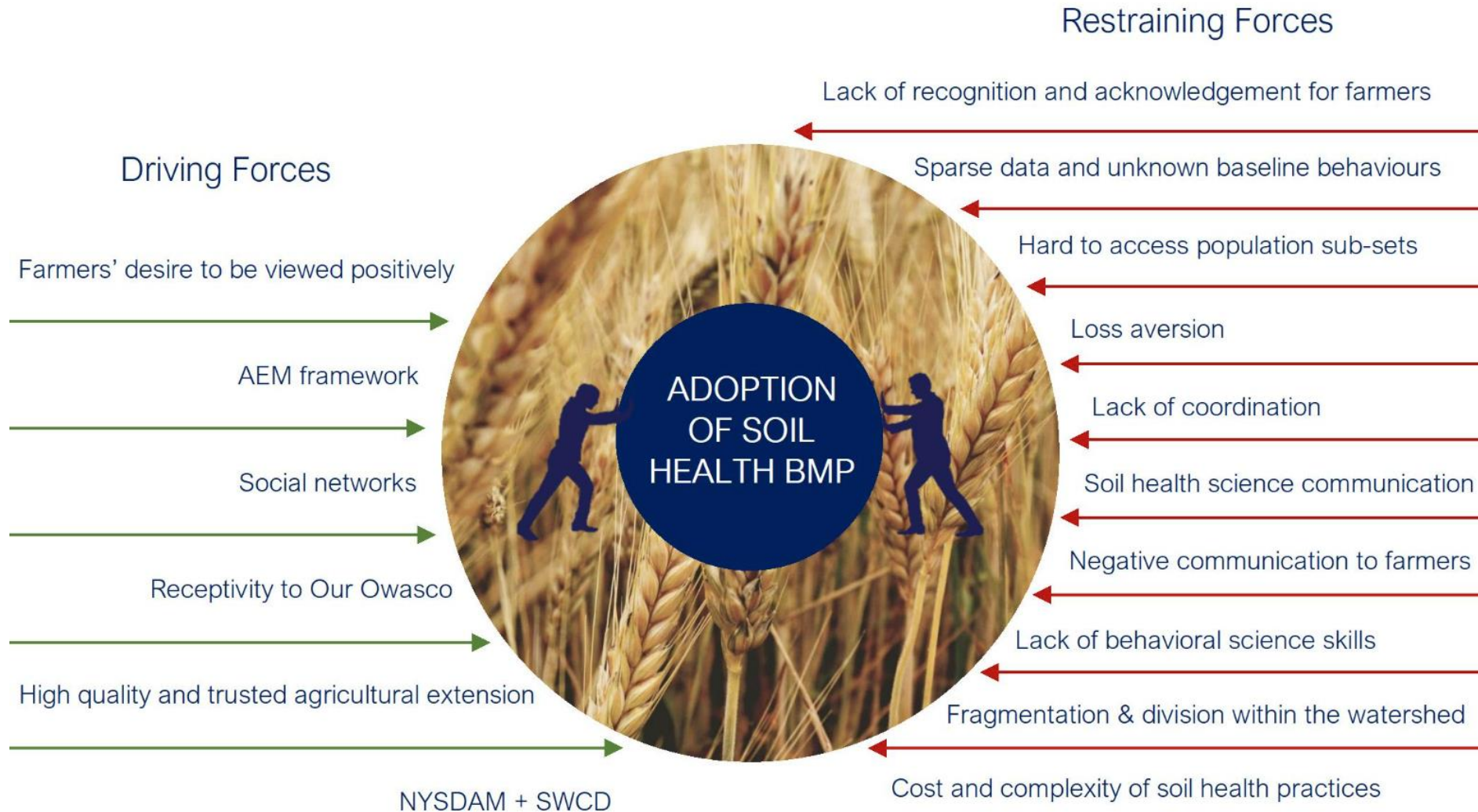


Understanding Behavior Change

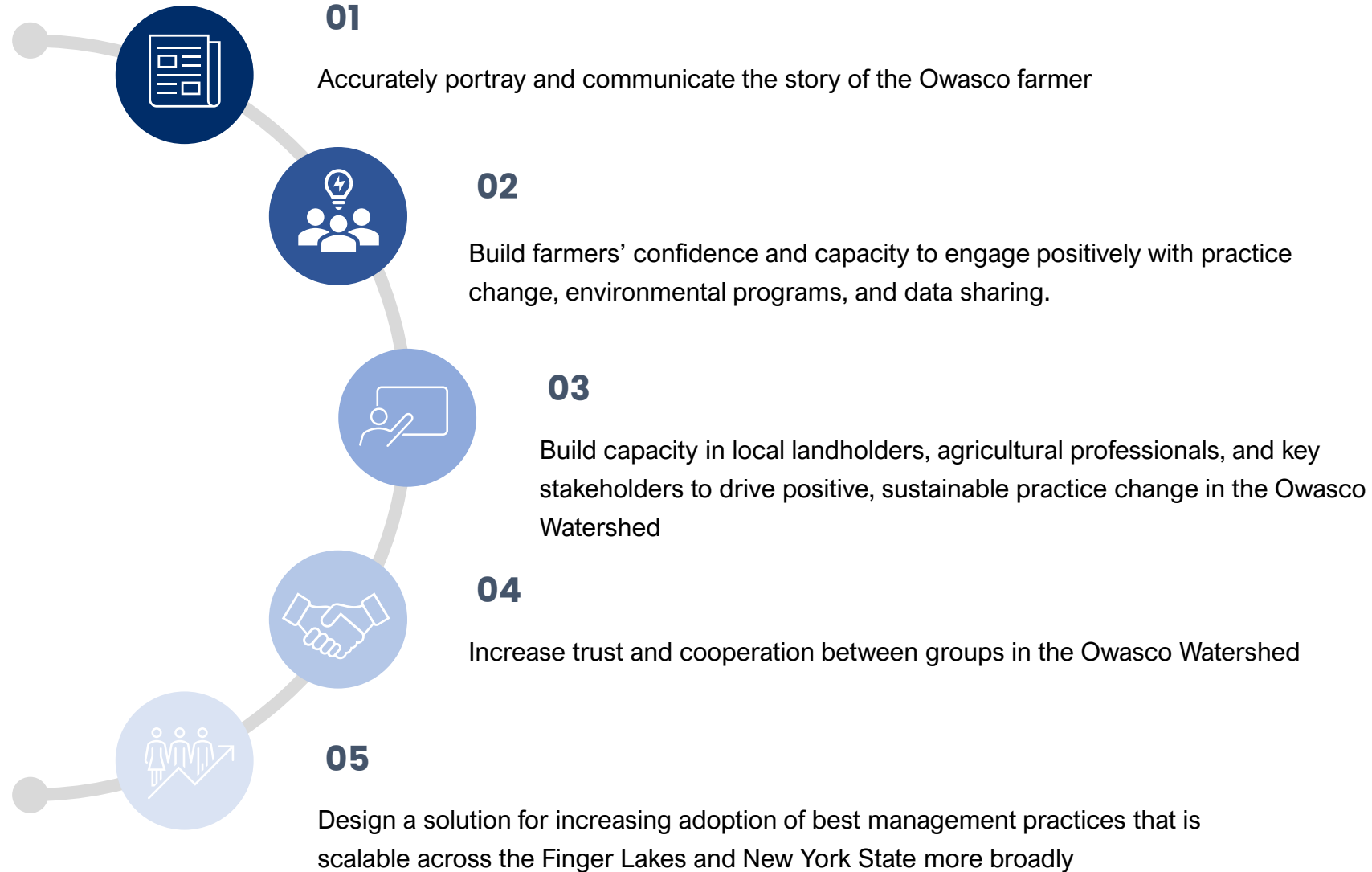
Lewin's Force Field Framework (1940)



DRIVERS & BARRIERS TO ADOPTION



OUR OWASCO PROJECT GOALS



OUR OWASCO PROJECT STRATEGIES



Farmer Innovation Network

A peer-led approach to driving the adoption of soil health practices and engagement in AEM



Community Coaching

Improving the capacity of farmers, agricultural advisors, and civic community to enhance local change efforts



Change Communications

Behavioral change communications aiming to normalize and destigmatize participation in agricultural adoption

Farmer Innovation Network

- Creation of farmer panels comprising local leaders and influencers to host barn meetings with other farmers
- Access to expert speakers and peer-sharing of learnings and experiences implementing soil health practices



Community Coaching



Bridging the Gap Between Communities

Program targeting civic stakeholders to enhance collaboration and create a united watershed identity with farmers



Enhancing Farmer Engagement

Program targeting agricultural advisors to better understand sources of adoption resistance and modify approach with farmers



Farmers Leading Change

Program targeting farmers to develop leadership skills and help navigate AEM and other opportunities

Change Communications

- Farmer case studies and positive news stories to create a call to action
- Optimization of agricultural extension materials and resources to improve reach and engagement
- Reporting of aggregated farm outcome data for more accurate district reporting

OUR OWASCO



PROVIDED PHOTOS

Minturn Farms in Fleming.

Fleming farm embraces watershed-friendly practices

OUR OWASCO
Special to The Citizen

Farmers in Cayuga County are leading the charge toward improving land practices and water quality in the Cayuga Lake watershed. Gary Schenk and his son, Jason, are no strangers to this idea on their 130-acre farm located in Fleming.

Minturn Farms is a third- and fourth-generation beef-producing farming operation. They produce beef for sale to the local community, selling retail cuts as well as bulk packages, and supplying to several local restaurants.

Gary and Jason have seen success when trialing practices beneficial for soil health, such as cover cropping. Cover cropping is the practice of planting crops that benefit the soil, rather than planting crops for harvesting purposes. Benefits of cover crops can be seen when they are used to prevent soil erosion, improve soil health, control weed growth, increase biodiversity and help slow nutrient runoff. Often times, cover crops are planted during the off-season, after the primary crop has been harvested for that growing year.

"Cover crops like rye, if it establishes well, can be an extra source of feed, in addition to helping reduce runoff by keep-



Minturn Farms in Fleming.

"The window to get it in can be a challenge, especially when dealing with the wet falls. We've recently had the most success no-till planting it."

Gary and Jason also have a rotational grazing system in place for his cow-calf pairs. Rotational grazing involves fencing off sections of the pasture and moving animals periodically around the property

ing all the time, but this led to excessive nutrient loading since there was nothing preventing their waste from getting in the water. Rotational grazing is beneficial for restricting animal access to waterways, protecting streams and creeks from excess runoff.

Finding success with industry best management practices is not new for

incentive-based program that helps farmers make cost-effective, evidence-based decisions that help drive business and protect New York's natural resources. The program consists of five tiers that help to identify and address sources of potential environmental threats on farms.

In the future, the Schencks are pursuing a new manure storage project. This project will help reduce nutrient runoff and maximize nutrient efficiency, keeping clean water from mixing with animal manure. This type of infrastructure project helps make sure water coming off the farm is as clean as possible.

Gary feels that education is the key to help the community understand farming and the local supply of food.

"Most people these days are more removed from farming," he said. "They don't know where their food comes from."

Farmers play an important role in the community, providing local business services and protecting the environment for generations to come.

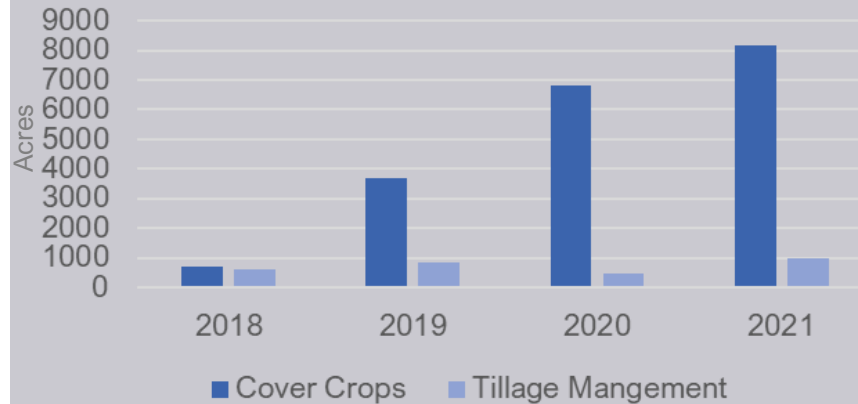
Our Owasco is a project to work with farmers in Cayuga and Tompkins counties to recognize and accelerate their efforts to adopt farming practices that protect Owasco Lake. The project is funded by The

8,376 Acres of BMP implementation

50% Increase in farmer grant application

40 Farmers progressing through AEM

SOIL HEALTH BMP



Soil Health Implementation Rates Across Cayuga County Through State and Federal Grants

“We now recognize that fundamentally addressing non-point source pollution is not just a technical solution, it is a people problem with a human solution and learning from Evidn has fostered my sense of how to better engage [with agriculture groups] and find common ground”

Local watershed leader



400+ stakeholders engaged



25+ project partners and organizations



9 farmer panel leaders elected



16 capacity building workshops delivered



40 farmer articles written



Increased community cohesion



Increased collaboration

A wide-angle photograph of a sunset over a vast field. The sun is low on the horizon, creating a bright glow and casting long shadows. A wooden tower structure is silhouetted against the sun. The foreground is filled with tall, golden-brown grasses, and the background shows a line of trees under a clear sky.

Thank You

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