



Hamilton County Soil and Water Conservation District
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 Find us on Facebook and You Tube

Working to manage and promote the wise use of natural resources in Hamilton County since 1965.

Board of Directors Meeting Minutes

August 1, 2023

Hamilton County SWCD office, 103 County View Drive, Lake Pleasant NY 12108
 and on Zoom

Board of Directors

Victoria Buyce, Chairperson
 John M. Stortecky, Vice Chairperson
 Betsy Bain, Town Supervisor

Partners

Tom Bielli, District Conservationist,
 Natural Resources and Conservation Service

District Staff

Caitlin Stewart, District Manager
 Marjorie Remias, Clerk and Secretary to the Board
 Katie WhitKovits, District Technician

Absent

Leonard Croote, District Technician
 Jacob Vander Pyl, Seasonal Technician
 Chris D. Rhodes, Town Supervisor
 Shawn Hansen, Member-at-Large
 Ryan Cunningham, Associate Environmental
 Analyst, New York State Soil and Water

- I. Call to order with introductions** – Buyce called the meeting to order at 9:36 a.m.
- II. Pledge of Allegiance**
- III. Roll Call** conducted.
- IV. Reading and approval of the July 5, 2023, meeting minutes** – The minutes were provided in advance of the meeting. A change in wording regarding entering last month's executive session was requested by Stortecky. The change was agreed upon, executed, and minutes were approved.
 - **A motion was made by Bain, seconded by Stortecky to approve the July 5, 2023, meeting minutes. All voted in favor, motion carried.**
- V. Treasurer's Report** – Remias reviewed the Treasurer's Report.

Balance	6/30/23	\$448,224.30
Receipts		9,900.51
Disbursements		33,905.26
Balance	7/31/23	\$424,219.55

- **A motion was made by Buyce, seconded by Bain to accept the Treasurer’s report, and approve the bills to be paid. All in favor, motion carried.**

VI. Executive Session to discuss 2024 staff salaries.

- **A motion was made by Bain, seconded by Stortecky to enter Executive Session to discuss 2023 staff salaries at 9:58 a.m. All in favor, motion carried.**
- **A motion was made by Stortecky, seconded by Bain to exit Executive Session at 10:05 a.m. All in favor, motion carried.**

The Board of Directors reported their findings, and approved a 5% increase for the Clerk / Secretary to the Board, and two Technicians, and a 7% increase for the District Manager.

VII. Executive Session to discuss lawsuits.

- **A motion was made by Buyce, seconded by Stortecky to enter Executive Session to discuss lawsuits at 10:06 a.m. Stewart, Whitkovits and Remias were invited to attend. All in favor, motion carried.**
- **A motion was made by Buyce, seconded by Bain to exit Executive Session at 10:24 a.m. All in favor, motion carried.**

The Board of Directors reported their findings to draft a proposal to be reviewed by the County Attorney and subsequently sent to the contractor.

VIII. Caring Through Conservation Mini Grant application approval – no applications received this past month.

IX. Conservation Skills Workshop - Stewart requested approval for Lenny Croote and Katherine Whitkovits to attend the annual Conservation Skills Workshop that will be held September 18-21 in Auburn. The registration fee is \$100.00 per person and lodging is \$120.00 per night.

- **A motion was made by Buyce, seconded by Stortecky to approve the cost for Croote and Whitkovits to attend the 2023 Conservation Skills Workshop. All in favor, motion carried.**

X. District Activities

- a. Japanese Knotweed Injector Tool Rental Program – Whitkovits reported that we received the 3 Japanese knotweed injector tools that were ordered and that she sent the completed landowner agreement, based on Adirondack Park Invasive Plant Program’s (APPIP’s) language, to county attorney Charles Getty for review. Whitkovits reported his comments and**

concerns to the Board. Discussion ensued and the Board recommended looking into an owner's liability release form before proceeding with the program.

- b. July storm update** – Stewart shared the following update from Croote: Croote and intern Vander Pyl assessed the Towns of Long Lake and Indian Lake for storm damage. Assessments included road wash outs, culverts, bridges, and stream channels. Croote enacted several emergency authorized permits through DEC, primarily for the Town of Long Lake, allowing for temporary fixes if criteria are met. Croote met with the Department of Homeland Security (state liaison with Federal Emergency Management Agency) to determine the cost of damage to see if it met FEMA thresholds. He met with engineering firms who also assessed damage at Jennings Pond Dam. Croote also met with District Conservationist NRCS Tom Bielli to assess Shaw Brook with the possibility of Emergency Watershed Protection funding. Bielli outlined this program for the Board. He stated that the EWPP can only work with town or county municipalities and does not repair infrastructure. The program does provide repairs for impairments to stream channels and waterbodies. Bielli and two NRCS engineers walked from Route 30 to Shaw Brook to assess damage to the stream channel and there will be a meeting this Thursday with New York State's Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Services to report these findings. A letter from a sponsor at a town or county level is needed to go to step 2 in this process which is a damage survey report. The sponsor must contribute 25% of the funds or in-kind funds needed for the project.
- c. Lake Monitoring Program** – Stewart reported that the June rotation was successfully completed, and samples were delivered to AWI for analysis. She reported that they hosted Dr. Paul Bukaveckas of Virginia Commonwealth University, who is studying acidity, Dissolved Organic Carbon, and water clarity in Adirondack lakes. There was a challenge with the trailer lights. The cables were severed and blew fuses. Special thanks to the Hamilton County Department of Public Works for helping us with repairs!
- d. Trail Stewardship Program** – Stewart reported that District work is complete on Buck Mountain. Vander Pyl has continued work on the Adirondak Ecotrail and a new spur trail to old growth trees. Croote contacted DEC to coordinate trail work.
- e. Sediment and Erosion Control Program** – Stewart reported that he ordered materials and work has begun on the Upper Hudson River Roadside Remediation Program Phase II in Indian Lake. The hydroseeder is running well.
- f. Agricultural Environmental Management** – Whitkovits went with Bielli to a farm for a preliminary high tunnel visit and reported that Hamilton, Oneida, and Warren Counties are planning a group visit to different farming operations.

- g. Conservation Field Day** - Whitkovits has secured all presenters and invited the teachers and special guests for this year's Conservation Field Day.
- h. Water Testing Program** – Thirty samples were received on the July 17th collection day. They were transported to the Mohawk Valley Water Authority for testing. Staff refilled test kits throughout the county.
- i. Invasive Species Program** – Stewart reported that Vander Pyl reared the *Galerucella* beetles collected with Warren County SWCD, and he and WhitKovits released them to three locations in Hamilton County as biocontrol of invasive purple loosestrife. They were released at Adirondack Lake in Indian Lake, a Blue Mountain Lake wetland area and at Elliot Lane in Speculator.
- j. Conservation Education Program** – Stewart presented Elbow Creek: The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly at the Friends of Lake Algonquin annual meeting and picnic for 50 attendees. Whitkovits, with Vander Pyl educated Lake Pleasant Youth Recreation attendees on Tracks and Scat on July 25th at the District office. They also educated Wells Youth Recreation on the importance of Pollination on July 26th at the Wells Community Hall.
- k. Watershed partnership update**
1. **FLLOWPA** – Nothing new to report.
 2. **Upper Hudson River Watershed Coalition** – Submitted information for WQIP grants to Lake Champlain Lake George Regional Planning Board.
 3. **St. Lawrence River Watershed Project** – Nothing new to report.
 4. **Mohawk River Watershed Coalition** – Nothing new to report.
 5. **Black River Watershed** – Nothing new to report.
- l. Other**
- Stewart disseminated the 2nd quarter annual plan of work report and said all staff have worked hard to implement projects and programs per the plan. The quality of work is excellent, and staff perform efficiently and professionally.
 - Stewart and WhitKovits attended the Lake Adirondack Weed Committee Meeting on July 12 and provided information about carp, water quality and funding opportunities with Lake Champlain Lake George Regional Planning Board.
 - Stewart reported that two requests for reimbursement for the septic replacement program were received for Round 1, and 1 application was received for Round 2. She answered numerous inquiries.

- XI. Staff reports** – Stewart disseminated and emailed copies of the staff reports. They are also appended to the minutes.
- XII. District Conservationist’s report** – Bielli reported that he has been working on the Emergency Watershed Protection Program that he explained to the Board earlier in the meeting. NRCS has a new Soil Conservation Technician based in Ballston Spa. There are two high tunnel applications for Hamilton County. Please send any forestry, energy, or high tunnel interest in programs his way.
- XIII. New York State Soil and Water Conservation Committee report** – appended to minutes.
- XIV. Correspondence** – APIPP PRISM update. Hamilton County Soil and Water Conservation District is a listed partner on their 2022 Partner Accomplishments Update, contributing to two of their four goals.
- XV. Next meeting date** – Tuesday September 5, 2023, 9:30 AM, Hamilton County SWCD office, 103 County View Drive, Lake Pleasant NY 12108 and virtually on Zoom.
- XVI. Adjournment** – A motion was made by Buyce, seconded by Stortecky to adjourn the meeting at 11:19 a.m. All in favor, carried.

Respectfully Submitted



Marjorie Remias
Secretary to the Board/Treasurer

**District Manager’s report
Submitted by Caitlin Stewart**

- **Administration**
 - Board of Directors meeting preparation
 - Staff meetings
 - Reviewed budget with Marj
 - Preliminary 2023 budget
 - Assisted Tim Ellifritz with computer maintenance and updates
 - Prepared Senior Technician Civil Service position
 - Researched time trackers

- **Technical Assistance**
 - Disseminated information to Hamilton County officials regarding the Emergency Watershed Protection Program on behalf of District Conservationist Tom Bielli NRCS
 - Lake Eaton landowners – snails – referred to APIPP
 - Coordinated lake monitoring with a Dr. Paul Bukaveckas
 - Septic System Replacement Fund inquiries – 2
 - Terrestrial invasive plants – Barbara McIlroy
 - Attended Lake Adirondack Weed Committee Meeting with Katie – answered their water quality and carp inquiries
 - Budget and admin questions from Cayce Salvino, District Manager, St. Lawrence County Soil & Water Conservation District
 - Lake Pleasant Sacandaga Association invited me to attend board meetings to coordinate educational programs
 - Commercial Pesticide Applicator inquiry - Patrick M. Crast, Executive Director, Jefferson County SWCD
- **Watershed Coalitions**
 - FLOWPA – Nothing new to report.
 - Upper Hudson River Watershed Coalition – Submitted information for WQIP grants to Lake Champlain Lake George Regional Planning Board.
 - St. Lawrence River Watershed Project – Nothing new to report.
 - Mohawk River Watershed Coalition – Provided quote to Katherine Czajkowski, Mohawk Watershed Coordinator for her grant press release
 - Black River Watershed – Provided update to DEC on member item funds grant for milfoil harvesting in Sixth Lake.
- **Caring Through Conservation Mini Grant** – sent acceptance letters to grant recipients
- **Invasive Species**
 - Discussed herbicide application on forest preserve lands with APIPP
 - Assisted Katie with Japanese knotweed stem injector program
- **Conservation Education**
 - Elbow Creek: the Good, the Bad, and the Ugly – Friends of Lake Algonquin,
- **Conservation Field Day** – meetings with Katie to review event logistics
- **Lake Monitoring Program**
 - Completed the July rotation.
 - I completed the Chain of Custody, and Jacob delivered samples to AWI for analysis.
 - We hosted Dr. Paul Bukaveckas of Virginia Commonwealth University, who is studying acidity, DOC, and water clarity in Adirondack lakes.
 - We had a challenge with the trailer lights. The cables were severed and that blew some fuses. Special thanks to the Hamilton County DPW for helping us!
- **Press Releases**
 - Road salt, conservation projects hot topics at Black River Watershed Conference
- **Water Testing Program**

- Program promotion
- **Septic System Replacement Fund**
 - Replied to 5 inquiries
- **Caring Through Conservation Mini-Grant Program**
 - Program idea discussion with *Jake* Dunkley, Warren County SWCD
 - Prepared application and ranking sheet for board review
- **Hamilton County Trail Stewardship Program**
 - Oversaw program logistics
- **Trainings**
 - Clear Touch
 - Website
- **New York State Conservation District Employees Association**
 - Prepared for and hosted the July meeting
 - Conservation Skills Workshop – reviewed and commented on registration packet
 - New York Association of Conservation Districts – submitted CDEA report for their annual meeting packet
 - Working with Soil and Water Conservation Committee on a shared support system

**District Technician’s report
Submitted by Lenny Croote**

Project Permits

7/10/23 Storm event

Damage Assessment

Emergency Authorization Permits

Meetings with Engineers and FEMA

Buck Mountain

Hydroseeding

Cold Stream Streambank stabilization permits

Fawn Lake Road Culvert Replacement

Office Cleaning

**District Technician’s report
Submitted by Katie WhitKovits**

- Lake Monitoring
 - Completed our 2nd rotation for 2023
 - Input field data and ProDSS data into master data spreadsheet
 - Created a new field data survey using Survey123
- Conservation Field Day

- Sent save the dates to teachers & invitations for special guests
- All 15 minute presenters are secured, need to finalize the final presentation
- I will be requesting ticket donations for prizes from local businesses next
- Mobile Interactive Display – ClearTouch
 - Caitlin and I completed a 3 hour virtual training session
- Agricultural Environmental Management
 - Not much new – but I have ArcGIS desktop and online now so I can do mapping work & research farms
 - Working with Warren and Oneida SWCDs to do some farm visits in early October
 - Visited Hedgehog Hollow farm with Tom Bielli
- Japanese Knotweed
 - Spoke with county attorney, APIPP, and our insurance provider
 - See request in board packet
- Attended Lake Adirondack Weed Committee meeting with Caitlin
- Released the galerucella beetles for Purple Loosestrife control with Jacob in Long Lake and Indian Lake
- Assisted in IDing fish flies, fishing spider, and determination of beetles vs. ticks
- Educated Lake Pleasant Youth Rec on Tracks and Scat with Jacob (4 attendees 7/25)
- Educated Wells Youth Rec on the importance of Pollination with Jacob (36 attendees 7/26)
- Boat plastic, Septic visit, Pond site visit, RRAMP, culvert assessments, and dry hydrant survey with Lenny & Jacob
- Cold Stream in Piseco and Big Brook in Indian Lake meeting with DEC with Lenny & Jacob
- Facebook posts by myself & Caitlin: Fishfly and Milfoil ID, dry hydrant and pond investigation, #MindfulMomentMonday, Hamilton State of Emergency due to flooding, Ferns from tree & shrub sale, flood damage assessments, water testing drop off dates, Weed Committee meeting, water testing program, Black River Watershed Conference recap, Lake monitoring, bug ID and invasive species, Lake Pleasant Youth Rec, Wells Youth Rec

**New York State Soil & Water Conservation Committee
Region 4 Report – April 2023**

Submitted by: Ryan Cunningham – Region 4 Associate Environmental Analyst

NYS SWCC News

State Aid to Districts Forum: A State Aid to Districts Forum will be held on **August 16th, from 10:00 AM to 1:00 PM**. In-person meeting locations will be in Albany (Department of Agriculture and

Markets, 10 B Airline Dr., Albany, NY 12235) and Syracuse (NYS Fairgrounds Agriculture Office, 581 State Fair Blvd, Syracuse 13209). A virtual WebEx option will also be available. Space is limited in Syracuse so if you plan to attend in person at this location, please contact your Regional AEA for more information.

2024 Annual Plan of Work (APOW): It's time to start updating your APOW for 2024. The deadline for submittal to your AEA is November 1, 2023. This will allow time to review, provide feedback, and recommend to the SWCC for approval by the end of the calendar year. Please don't hesitate to discuss with your Regional AEA if there are any questions or concerns.

SWCC Operations Sub-Committee: The SWCC is preparing to re-establish the Operations Sub-Committee. The sub-committee is normally tasked with discussing various SWCD operations issues as they arise, assisting SWCDs with the development of various operational policies, and defining a set framework to illicit good operational practices. A major component of the sub-committee's focus is directed at the upkeep of the SWCD Office/Operations Manual. The SWCC is currently looking for interested SWCD staff to help serve on the Operations Sub-Committee. We anticipate the first meeting to occur in the Fall of 2023. If you are interested in serving on the sub-committee, please contact your Regional AEA.

August SWCC Meeting: The State Committee meeting will not meet in the month of August. They will reconvene with a regular meeting in September. Further details and an agenda for the September meeting will be available soon.

SWCC CAA Training: The CAA trainings on basic conservation practices are being updated and transferred to Youtube. The Hydrology, Culverts and Fence courses are all updated with more on the way. They are a great way to get new employees up to speed on basic design skills. Check them out at: <https://www.youtube.com/@nysdepartmentofagriculture9462/playlists>.

Status of Existing Contracts: As a reminder, all contracts between the State of New York and SWCDs must be closed out in a timely manner. Final written reports must be filed with the Department no later than sixty (60) days from the contract end date. Once the work under an Agreement is complete, the SWCD must provide a complete close out packet to their Regional AEA to begin the review process. If the close out packet is not received within 60 days from the contract end date, the Department reserves the right to require ALL funds to be returned.

Please take stock of the end dates of your currently held contracts and plan to begin the closeout process for those grants nearing their expiration. Your Regional AEA's are available to answer any questions or concerns about the closeout process and to discuss the options available to a SWCD for contract extensions.

Reminder, Applications are Taken on a Rolling Basis: The following NY AGM funding opportunities accept applications on a rolling basis.

- The goal of the **Source Water Buffer Program** is to protect public drinking water and to enhance water quality protection. The program funds the purchase of conservation easements and projects that establish riparian buffers on farmland that borders critical water sources. Approximately \$5 million is available to support the purchase of conservation easements and the implementation of buffer systems. <https://agriculture.ny.gov/soil-and-water/rfa-0181-source-water-buffer-program>
- The intent of **Round 19 of the Farmland Protection Implementation Grants (FPIG) Program – Agricultural Conservation Easement Projects**, is to fund the implementation of certain farmland protection activities intended to maintain the economic viability of the State’s agricultural industry and its supporting land base. Specifically, AGM seeks applications that will enable eligible applicants to cover a portion of total eligible project costs for Agricultural Conservation Easement Projects with owners of viable agricultural lands that are at risk of conversion to non-farm uses. <https://agriculture.ny.gov/land-and-water/rfa-0294-farmland-protection-implementation-grants-round-19-agricultural>

Other Events

2023 NY Soil Health and Climate Resiliency Field Days: The NY Soil Health Alliance Group will convene a series of Soil Health & Climate Resiliency Field Day’s throughout the State during 2023. Registration is now live for the **August 16th event at the Miner Institute, the August 24th event in Penn Yan and the August 31st event in Le Roy.** Visit, <https://www.newyorksoilhealth.org/fielddays/> for more information and to register.

2023 Conservation Skills Workshop – The 2023 Conservation Skills Workshop will be held **September 18 – September 21** in Auburn, NY at the Holiday Inn (75 North St, Auburn, NY). This workshop is sponsored by the NYS CDEA, USDA NRCS, and NYS SWCC. This year there will be several classes that cover multiple days. Please read each class description carefully and be aware that classes will overlap. This year’s registration rate is \$100 per person. To register online, please visit: <https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLScUwGi-RgLOm-OAIyJJ8wTkSqw46LH5sgxCucwDZIQtVkrqYA/viewform> before the registration deadline **August 14th, 2023.**

Other Funding

Consolidated Funding Application Requesting Proposals: [Round XIII of the Consolidated Funding Application \(CFA\) is open](#) and applications are requested by **4:00 p.m. on Friday, August 11th, 2023.** More than \$750,000,000 in funding will be made available under this year’s CFA. Grant programs of interest to SWCDs offered via the CFA include:

- Water Quality Improvement Project (WQIP) Program - <https://www.dec.ny.gov/pubs/4774.html>
- Non-Agricultural Nonpoint Source Planning and MS4 Mapping Grant - <https://www.dec.ny.gov/pubs/116725.html>

Restoring Fish Passage through Barrier Removal Grants: Nearly \$175 million in funding is available for fish passage projects under the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law and Inflation Reduction Act. This funding will support projects that reopen migratory pathways and restore access to healthy habitat for fish around the country. Proposals must be received through www.grants.gov by **11:59 PM Eastern time on October 16, 2023**. <https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/grant/restoring-fish-passage-through-barrier-removal-grants>