



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 February 7, 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
 Chris D. Rhodes, Town Supervisor (via Zoom)
 Shawn Hansen, Member-at-Large (via Zoom)

Guest

Tim Ellifritz

Partners

Ryan Cunningham, Associate
 Environmental Analyst, Soil and Water
 Conservation Committee

District Staff

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

- I. Call to order with introductions** – Buyce called the meeting to order at 9:41 a.m.
- II. Pledge of Allegiance and Roll Call** conducted.
- III. Welcome Chris Rhodes** – Stewart welcomed new Director Chris Rhodes.
- IV. Reading and approval of the January 3, 2023, meeting minutes** – The minutes were provided in advance of the meeting.
 - **A motion was made by Buyce, seconded by Stortecky to approve the January 3, 2023, meeting minutes. All voted in favor, motion carried.**
- V. Treasurer’s Report** – Remias reviewed the Treasurer’s Report and bills to be paid.

Balance	12/33/22	213,449.91
Receipts		6,076.56
Disbursements		48,886.91
Balance	1/31/23	170,639.56

- **A motion was made by Buyce, seconded by Stortecky to accept the Treasurer’s report and approve the bills to be paid. All voted in favor, motion carried.**
- VI. Computer maintenance and networking contract discussion** – Tim Ellifritz shared his technology upgrade proposal. Stewart mentioned that, following the procurement policy, she contacted Managed IT Solutions in Utica and StoredTech IT Consulting in Queensbury for quotes. Stewart Zoomed with Matthew from StoredTech It Consulting, and he mentioned that the firm does not provide services for a small organization like our SWCD. Discussion ensued and Mr. Ellifritz answered questions the Board had.
- VII. Insurance** – Stewart reported that the District’s health insurance needs to be adjusted from spouse to single for employee taking insurance. She proposed that single member insurance be paid for by the employee for year one at 20% of the cost, for year two at 10%, and thereafter the District pay in full. The 2 Person policy will remain the same at 20% for the entire time an employee has the policy. Stewart additionally requested the board consider increasing the cash stipend in lieu of benefits to reflect the current Hamilton County benefits package.
- **A motion was made by Bain, seconded by Stortecky to adopt the single member health insurance policy to be paid for by the employee at a rate of 20% for year one, 10% for year two, and 0% thereafter and to increase the cash stipend in lieu of receiving medical benefits to \$3,050.00.**
- VIII. 2022 Soil and Water Conservation Committee annual reports submission** – Stewart reported that the staff has begun work on the 2022 annual reports due to the Soil and Water Conservation Committee and the Office of the State Comptroller by February 15. The seven reports make our District eligible to receive state aid funding.
- **A motion was made by Bain, seconded by Buyce to permit District Manager Caitlin Stewart to submit the 2022 Annual Reports including Part A, Hourly Rates for Grant Work, Part B, Performance Measure Evaluation Report, Part C – Performance Measure Financial Assistance Project Final Report, 2022 Annual Report, and 2022 Annual Report of the Treasurer to the New York State Soil and Water Conservation Committee and Office of the State Comptroller. All in favor, motion carried.**
- IX. New York Association of Conservation Districts Legislative Days** – Stewart sought approval for herself, WhitKovits, and board member Stortecky to attend the event February 27 – 28, including an overnight stay and food.
- **A motion was made by Bain, seconded by Buyce to permit John M. Stortecky, Katie WhitKovits, and Caitlin Stewart to attend Legislative Days hosted by the New York**

Association of Conservation Districts February 27 – 28, including payment for hotel rooms and food totaling \$228.00. Stortecky abstained, all others voted in favor, motion carried.

X. District Law presentation – Cunningham presented District Law to the Directors.

XI. District Activities

- a. **2022 Year in Review video** – Stewart showed the video.
- b. **Draft watershed health and farming justice legislation update** – Discussion ensued.
- c. **2022 budget review** – Stewart reported that Marj balanced the budget, and Stewart reviewed the 2022 final budget.
- d. **Adirondack Tree and Shrub Sale** – Stewart thanked Croote, WhitKovits, and Remias for finalizing the order form and updating the Pay Pal codes for the website. Croote reported that he will be putting out brochures and order forms at businesses around the county the following day and that our website is up and running for orders. We will be advertising through Facebook and the county paper soon.
- e. **Hamilton County Envirothon** – WhitKovits reported that she has sent out invitations for all the schools and has confirmed all the instructors as well.
- f. **Trail Stewardship Program** – Croote reported that he has been in contact with the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation and they provided him with a list of projects that would provide two people approximately eight weeks of work. Stewart asked the Directors for support if the County issues a 2023 Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for the Trail Stewardship Program.
 - **A motion was made by Bain, seconded by Stortecky to allow Stewart to seek approval by email from the Directors to sign the Trail Stewardship Program MOU with the County and to begin the hiring process should the County issue a MOU this year.**
- g. **Agricultural Environmental Management** – WhitKovits reported that Kristin Ballou from the Franklin County Soil and Water Conservation District came to the Lake Pleasant District and spent a whole day going over the AEM process, eligibility, and our program and files with her. She said it was an invaluable learning experience and Kristin will accompany her on her first AEM visit once scheduled. Kristin has also invited WhitKovits on future visits with her for experience. WhitKovits will be meeting with Ryan Cunningham about AEM after this meeting and she is continuing to review and rework the Hamilton County Strategic Plan.

h. Watershed partnership update

- i. **FOLLOWPA** – The Governor listed FOLLOWPA for \$2.5 million (again) instead of the requested \$3 million. She kept the EPF at \$400 million. Stewart is educating legislators about the importance of this program, and the Executive Director is asking for an allocation increase in the Environmental Protection Fund to \$3.0 million, a modest \$500,000 increase.

- **A motion was made by Bain, seconded by Stortecky to permit Chairperson Buyce to sign and mail a letter to Assemblyman Smullen in support of an increase to the FOLLOWPA Request totaling \$3.0 million.**

- ii. **Upper Hudson River Watershed Coalition** – As President, Stewart facilitated the January meeting including Organizational Items. We did not receive the 9 Element grant. Stewart is working on the annual report and has been re-elected as President.

- iii. **St. Lawrence River Watershed Project** – Meeting canceled.

- iv. **Mohawk River Watershed Coalition** - As President, Stewart facilitated the January meeting including Organizational Items.

- v. **Black River Watershed** –WhitKovits presented the District’s Lake Monitoring Program and Stormwater Pollution / Green Infrastructure Project during the Black River Adaptive Modeling stakeholder meeting on January 25.

i) Conservation Education

1. Conservation Field Day – Stewart and WhitKovits presented awards at Wheelerville and Wells Central Schools to fifth and sixth graders.

j) Other

1. **2023 Planning Meeting** – Staff met to discuss priorities and deadlines, and set dates for upcoming programs and events.
2. **Septic System Replacement Fund** – WhitKovits and Stewart met with Clean Water Advocate Blake Neuman to discuss the program.
3. **Division V Meeting Review** – Croote, WhitKovits, and Stewart attended the Division V meeting facilitated by Division Representative Kristin Ballou of Franklin County SWCD. DEC and partners spoke on the General Permit. Lenny developed and gave an excellent presentation showcasing how he uses the GP to implement streambank stabilization projects.
4. **Zoom/Educational Enhancements** – The Board and staff discussed current and past meeting difficulties with Zoom and researching quotes for enhancements for both

meetings and education use was recommended.

- XIII. Staff reports** – Stewart disseminated and emailed copies of the staff reports. They are also appended to the minutes.
- XIV. District Conservationist’s report** – No report.
- XV. New York State Soil and Water Conservation Committee report** – appended to minutes.
- XVI. Correspondence** – Thank you note from Wheelerville Union Free School for Conservation Field Day.
- XVII. Next meeting date** – Wednesday March 8, 2023, 9:30 AM, Hamilton County SWCD office, 103 County View Drive, Lake Pleasant NY 12108 and virtually on Zoom.
- XVIII. Adjournment** – A motion was made by Bain, seconded by Stortecky to adjourn the meeting at 11:22 a.m. All in favor, carried.

Respectfully Submitted



Marjorie Remias
Secretary to the Board/Treasurer

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

- **Administration**
 - Updated health insurance policy
 - Facilitated 2023 planning meetings with team
 - Board of Directors meeting preparation
 - Marj, Lenny, and I began work on the 7 SWCC Annual Reports
 - Facilitated new email addresses for the team
 - Completed staff appraisals
 - Researched grants for the Mohawk River Watershed
- **Technical Assistance**
 - Assisted the public with other conservation inquiries
 - Emailed 2022 lake monitoring results to lake associations
- **Watershed Coalitions**

- As president, I facilitated the Upper Hudson and Mohawk River Watershed Coalitions by holding meetings and assisting with grants.
- Participated in the St. Lawrence River Watershed Project, Finger Lakes/Lake Ontario Watershed Partnership Alliance, and the Black River Watershed to ensure Hamilton County's watershed priorities are maintained.
- **Conservation Education**
 - CFD awards for Wheelerville and Wells
 - 2022 Year in Review video
- **Septic System Replacement Fund**
 - Reviewed current contract, replied to inquiries, submitted request for reimbursement
- **New York State Conservation District Employees Association**
 - Prepared for and attended January meeting
 - Facilitated Media Committee meeting
 - Completed January CDEA Newsletter, working on March
 - Water Quality Symposium – met with hotel staff, replied to registration inquiries, organizing entertainment
- **Events and Meetings**
 - AEM meeting with Katie and Ryan
 - Met with Abigail, SWCC, to discuss ways to partner together on outreach efforts
 - Met with Tim Ellifritz and Stored Tech, IT to discuss computer maintenance
 - Met with Clean Water Advocate Blake Neuman to discuss educational outreach opportunities and the Septic System Replacement Fund
 - Attended and gave a CDEA update at the the Division V Meeting
 - Black River Adaptive Modeling planning meeting

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

General

Project Permits
 County Snowmobile Trails
 Straw
 Franklin County SWCD
 AG Assessment Training
 Computer Research
 Annual Report
 Stormcrete Research
 Hamilton County Trails meeting with DEC
 Rhodes pit renewal
 Tree and Shrub 2023
 Office Cleaning

District Technician's report
Submitted by Katie WhitKovits

- Attended Black River Adaptive Modeling (BRAM) planning meeting & stakeholder meeting
- Attended another Social Media meeting
 - I will be working on creating an Instagram account for the District
- Prepped and presented Conservation Field Day Awards with Caitlin at Wheelerville and Wells
 - Created and shared a video on the 2022 Conservation Field Day
- Attended Agricultural Assessment training hosted by Franklin SWCD with Lenny
- Conducted culvert assessments with Lenny
- Attended Hemlock Woolly Adelgid Zoom Training hosted by APIPP
- Worked on Water Quality Symposium Farmers Market & Resource Fair sign-ups with Caitlin
- Attended an Environmental Education Foundation meeting
- Facebook posts about cutting energy costs, Ag Assessment training, Ag Assessment open enrollment & requirements, Conservation Field Day video, culvert assessments with Lenny & Katie, Squirrel Appreciation Day, Hemlock Woolly Adelgid field training, and Groundhogs Day – plus many from Caitlin!
- Reviewed and updated some images on the Tree & Shrub order form, updated pricing in PayPal, and created a list of items and PayPal links for our website
- Contacted instructors and schools for the 2023 Envirothon (Wednesday, May 3rd) sent updated information to be added to our website
- Agricultural Environmental Management
 - Kristin Ballou from Franklin SWCD spent a whole day going over the AEM process, eligibility, our program and files with me. It was an invaluable learning experience. She will tag team my first AEM visit with me once scheduled, and will invite me to go with her on her future visits for experience.
 - Continuing to organize and review files
 - Created spreadsheet for farms and tier worksheets completed
 - Created individual farm folders for existing/completed tier 1's
 - Reviewing and reworking the Hamilton County Strategic Plan
- Set the date for the 1st WQCC meeting (June 5th)
- Submitted pesticide usage report to DEC for 2022
- Attended Division V meeting with Caitlin and Lenny
- Attended 2 Septic System Replacement Fund meetings

Region 4 Report – November 2022
Submitted by: Ryan Cunningham – Region 4 Associate Environmental Analyst

NYS SWCC News

2022 State Aid to Districts – DUE 2/15: All 2022 annual reporting documents (State Aid, Treasurers Report, Annual Report, etc.) are now available on the SWCC SharePoint <https://nysemail.sharepoint.com>, under Resources for Districts – State Aid to Districts. All reports are due to the State Committee by **February 15, 2023**. Please contact ben.luskin@agriculture.ny.gov or your Regional AEA with any questions.

Payments and Blackout Period: We are fast approaching the annual blackout period during which time EPF funds are not available to process payments. Claim for Payments need to be submitted by **Friday, February 17th, 2023** to meet the cut-off date. Any Claim for Payment received during the Blackout period will be included on the next fiscal year EPF list with payments processed the following month. If projects will begin this Spring/Summer and you still have not submitted a CFP for necessary advance or implementation payments, it is advisable that you submit these vouchers with applicable supporting documentation ASAP. If you have any questions, please contact Maureen Irish (Maureen.irish@agriculture.ny.gov) or your Regional AEA.

February SWCC Meeting: The next SWCC meeting is scheduled to convene at **10:00 AM on February 28th**. Further details and an agenda for this meeting will be sent out shortly. Reminder – participation at a SWCC meeting is eligible toward PM1, Part C of State Aid to Districts.

AEM Leopold Conservation Award 2023: NYSAGM is partnering once again with the Sand County Foundation to present the AEM Leopold Conservation Award to recognize landowners who inspire others with their dedication to ethical land, water, and wildlife habitat management on agricultural land. New York's award recipient will be presented with the \$10,000 award provided by the Sand County Foundation, in partnership with the Department, American Farmland Trust, and Cornell Cooperative Extension. The deadline for applications is **May 27th, 2023**. More information can be found at <https://www.sandcountyfoundation.org/uploads/NY-CFN-23.pdf>

Tools and References Wiki Update: The Tools and References Wiki has just been updated for 2023. This is a useful resource for new employees to learn about resources used in New York State conservation planning and design and related fields. Check it out! <https://www.nyscdea.com/useful-resources/>

Other Events

Fruit Tree and Raspberry Pruning & Maintenance Workshop: Franklin County SWCD and Franklin County CCE are hosting this workshop from 10am-4:30pm on Friday February 17th, 2023 in

Malone, NY. Topics will include pruning, scouting and treatment of disease and pest damage, seasonal maintenance, food safety recommendations and more. Register at <https://franklin.cce.cornell.edu/events> or by contacting the Franklin County SWCD at 518-651-2097.

Soil Health & Nutrient Management Workshop: Ontario County SWCD is hosting a Soil Health & Nutrient Management Workshop on **Wednesday, March 1, 2023** from 8:00am to 3:00pm. Focal topics will include weather impacts, soil testing, tackling tough weeds, erosion control, manure management and much more. Pre-registration is \$15 and walk-ins will be \$20. This fee also includes refreshments, lunch, raffle prizes, and exhibits. DEC Pesticide Applicator and CCA credits available. For more information and to register: <https://www.canandaiguakeassoc.org/2023-soil-health-workshop/>

Other Funding

SOGL 2023 Funding Opportunity: The Sustain Our Great Lakes (SOGL) program is soliciting proposals to benefit fish, wildlife, habitat and water quality in the Great Lakes basin. The program will award up to \$18.7 million in grants in 2023 to improve and enhance: 1) stream, riparian and coastal habitats to benefit species; 2) water quality in the Great Lakes and its tributaries. Details about this funding opportunity are provided in the Request for Proposals. The submission deadline for **pre-proposals** is **February 14, 2023**. Additional application information is available at www.nfwf.org/greatlakes.

Great Lakes Basin Small Grants Program: New York Sea Grant, in partnership with DEC, has announced that funding is now available for projects that apply an ecosystem-based management approach to address local watershed challenges. A total of \$460,000, with up to \$50,000 per project, in New York Great Lakes Basin Small Grants will be awarded. Applications are due by **4:30 p.m. on March 1, 2023**. For more information, contact New York Sea Grant at 716-645-3611. <https://small-grants-program-ccegeomaps.hub.arcgis.com/>