



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

March 8, 2023

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

Board of Directors

John M. Stortecky, Vice Chairperson
 Betsy Bain, Town Supervisor
 Chris D. Rhodes, Town Supervisor

Absent

Victoria Buyce, Chairperson
 Shawn Hansen, Member-at-Large
 Leonard Croote, District Technician

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

- I. Call to order with introductions** – Stortecky called the meeting to order at 9:30 a.m.
- II. Pledge of Allegiance and Roll Call** conducted.
- III. Reading and approval of the February 7, 2023, meeting minutes** – The minutes were provided in advance of the meeting.
 - **A motion was made by Stortecky, seconded by Bain to approve the January 3, 2023, meeting minutes. All voted in favor, motion carried.**
- IV. Treasurer’s Report** – Remias reviewed the Treasurer’s Report and bills to be paid.

Balance	1/31/23	170,639.56
Receipts		145,627.63
Disbursements		39,817.40
Balance	2/28/23	276,449.79

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

V. **Computer maintenance and networking contract** – Stewart presented a quote comparison from Dell Technologies and Tim Ellifritz for computer maintenance and networking. Discussion ensued. Funding will be supplied by 2023 Part C Carryover (\$43,979.37).

- **A motion was made by Stortecky, seconded by Bain to enter into a contract with Tim Ellifritz for computer maintenance and networking in the amount of \$8,618.46 for computer maintenance and networking, with an hourly rate thereafter of \$90.00 to be billed in 15-minute increments. All voted in favor, motion carried.**

VI. **Interactive Display Board -**

- **Motion made by Stortecky, seconded by Bain to discuss purchasing an interactive display board for meetings and educational presentations.**

Discussion ensued but the decision was tabled until the District receives quotes.

VII. **District Activities**

- a. **New York Association of Conservation Districts Legislative Day review** – Stortecky reported that legislative days were a great experience. He, Caitlin, and Katie spoke with many more people than they thought they would, and he learned a great deal. Stortecky thought that their approach of thanking the legislators for their support and educating them on what we do was productive in relationship building and he came away feeling good about being there. Stewart reported she presented the approximately 10 Assemblymen and Senators they met with folders containing our annual report and infographic. Many of the legislators, especially from the North Country, were already aware of the proposed changes to district law. Overall, she felt their message was heard. Stewart prepared a resolution to take to our County Board of Supervisors to inform them of the proposed legislation and the negative impacts it will create and to ask for their support of this resolution.
- b. **Draft watershed health and farming justice legislation update** – Stewart provided the resolution in advance of the meeting for Director review and feedback.

RESOLUTION 4-2023

OPPOSITION OF THE DRAFT LEGISLATIVE PROPOSAL FOR WATERSHED HEALTH AND FARMING JUSTICE IN NEW YORK STATE THAT AMENDS NEW YORK STATE SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT LAW

DATED MARCH 8, 2023

BY: BETSY BAIN

WHEREAS, the Watershed Health Coalition has drafted legislation proposing sweeping changes to New York State Soil and Water Conservation District Law, Environmental Conservation Law, and Agriculture and Markets Law, and,

WHEREAS, the Hamilton County Soil and Water Conservation District was notified by the New York Association of Conservation Districts of the proposed amendments to New York State Soil and Water Conservation District Law that governs the established bylaws for all 58 Districts in New York State, and

WHEREAS, the Watershed Health Coalition has proposed amendments shifting priorities of Soil and Water Conservation Law by replacing the Grange voting member with a Northeast Organic Farming Association member; the non-inclusionary act of eliminating Grange and Farm Bureau members from Soil and Water Conservation District boards, and moving from two appointed County Supervisor representatives on SWCD boards to an open election, as well as the refocusing of priorities to "Watershed Health" and

WHEREAS, the proposed District law amendments would adversely impact the Hamilton County Soil and Water Conservation District's management of environmental issues, local land and watershed stewardship, and county operations, and

WHEREAS, New York State's Soil and Water Conservation Districts have existed for over 70 years, are governed locally by a Board of Directors with local representation, and were established to implement local needs throughout the diverse geographical regions of the state, and

WHEREAS, Soil and Water Conservation Districts currently provide all counties in New York State with environmental services, including but not limited to, climate resiliency; watershed monitoring; soil health protection; sediment and erosion control; nutrient reduction; stormwater management; invasive species management; forestry health, water quality improvement, education and technical training, green infrastructure; and technical assistance for landowners, municipalities, and the state, and

WHEREAS, Soil and Water Conservation Districts have been and are both inclusionary and equitable in their assistance of farms, landowners, and other beneficiaries of their programs and

WHEREAS, waves of legislation and outside influence continue to increase the level of difficulty faced by agricultural producers in creating food for the population and the ability of Soil and Water Conservation Districts to implement best management practices, programs, and services, and

WHEREAS, altering the structure of Soil and Water Conservation District boards would have a negative impact on the ability to make decisions through informed, local partners on the very issues that these Districts address daily, and

WHEREAS, Conservation District Law was established to provide a framework that allows the County to choose its unique representation, and

WHEREAS, any change to the current form of Soil and Water Conservation Districts and the Soil and Water Conservation Committee as proposed by the Watershed Health Coalition would be detrimental not only to the agricultural community, but to landowners and the larger business community, and

WHEREAS, the New York Association of Conservation Districts passed a resolution mandating their consultation, and that of the New York Conservation District Employees' Association, when an agency or group proposed amendments to District Law, and

WHEREAS, the New York State Grange established policy which is opposed to changing the current make-up of Soil and Water Conservation District boards and is opposed to any regulations that would change the scope of their work, and

WHEREAS, the New York State Farm Bureau opposes any alteration to New York State Law that would change the mission and function of Soil and Water Conservation Districts without input from County Boards of Supervisors, county legislatures, New York Farm Bureau, the New York State Grange, New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets, and the four-way partnership (Natural Resources Conservation Service, New York Association of Conservation Districts, Soil and Water Conservation Committee, and Conservation District Employees' Association) of the Soil and Water Conservation District system, now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Hamilton County Soil and Water Conservation District Board of Directors supports the work of the Soil and Water Conservation District in its current form, and be it further,

RESOLVED, that the Hamilton County Soil and Water Conservation District Board of Directors emphatically opposes the changes to the Soil and Water Conservation Law, Environmental Conservation Law, and Agriculture and Markets Law proposed by the Watershed Health Coalition on the grounds that they would be devastating to producers, landowners, business, and the environment, and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Hamilton County Soil and Water Conservation District Clerk and Secretary to the Board send a certified copy of this resolution to the Hamilton County Board of Supervisors, and others deemed necessary.

SECONDED BY: Chris Rhodes and adopted by the following vote:

AYES: Betsy Bain, Chris D. Rhodes, and John Stortecky

NAYES: None

ABSENT: Victoria Buyce and Shawn Hansen

ABSTAIN: None

- c. **Adirondack Tree and Shrub Sale** – Stewart reported that people are placing orders, advertisements should appear in the Hamilton County and Adirondack Express newspapers, and WhitKovits has been promoting the sale on Facebook.
- d. **Hamilton County Envirothon** – WhitKovits was excited to report that Indian Lake responded to our invitation this year after many years of not participating. There will be three schools participating this year and it is scheduled for May 3rd. She also sent out donation requests and has received positive responses to them as well.
- f. **Lake Monitoring Program** – Stewart reported that WhitKovits has entered all the 2022 data into the master spreadsheet, and Croote is working on the Data Usability Assessment Report and Quality Assurance Project Plan to be submitted to DEC for this year’s program.
- g. **Agricultural Environmental Management** – WhitKovits reported that Bielli sent her a list of producers that he has worked with from Hamilton County, and she is planning to reach out to these people as well as the ones on her inventory.
- h. **Watershed partnership update**
 - 1. **FLLOWPA** – Remias worked on close-out materials, and Stewart worked on educational outreach for legislators.
 - 2. **Upper Hudson River Watershed Coalition** – as president, Stewart facilitated the monthly meeting. She assisted Allison Gaddy, Lake Champlain Lake George Regional Planning Board, with Water Quality Improvement Project Round 17 grant paperwork for Roadside Erosion Remediation Program Phase II. We received a WQIP grant for the Elbow Creek Restoration Plan.
 - 3. **St. Lawrence River Watershed Project** – Nothing new to report.

4. **Mohawk River Watershed Coalition** - As President, Stewart attended Action Agenda meetings with DEC and Fulton County SWCD and commented on the document.
 5. **Black River Watershed** – WhitKovits attended Black River Adaptive Modeling discussions and will be attending a meeting today, time permitting.
- **Conservation Education**
 1. Conservation Field Day – Stewart finalized the press release.
 2. WhitKovits and Stewart have been asked to offer a presentation for the Maintain the Chain event in Inlet.
 3. Long Lake Public Library’s Director Kristel Guimara reached out for summer programming, and WhitKovits and Stewart will develop a pollinator presentation.
 - **Other**
 1. **Game of Logging** – Croote and WhitKovits would like to attend the Game of Logging Certification Workshops. Levels 1, 2, and 3 are offered May 9, 10, and 11. The cost is \$495 per person for all 3 workshops. Stewart mentioned \$6,675.00 is budgeted for staff trainings.
 - **A motion was made by Rhodes, seconded by Bain to permit Technicians Lenny Croote and Katie WhitKovits to register for the Game of Logging Certification Workshops Levels 1, 2, and 3 in the amount of \$990.00. All voted in favor, motion carried.**
 2. **Hamilton County SWCD logo** – Nick Friedman of Adirondack Website Designs provided a quote for a new logo design. The new logo will provide a more official, professional presence for the District, and modernize the image of our organization. Our current logo was designed in 2015, and is expensive and difficult to reproduce because of the many colors and intricacies. Following our procurement policy, no solicitation of written proposals or quotations for goods or services of less than \$2,000.00. Funding will be supplied by 2023 Part C Carryover (\$43,979.37).
 - **A motion was made by Stortecky, seconded by Rhodes to permit Nick Friedman of Adirondack Website Designs to proceed with designing a new Hamilton County SWCD logo in the amount of \$600.00. All voted in favor, motion carried.**
 - **Trail Stewardship Program-** Stewart reported she had a meeting the previous Friday with County Board of Supervisors Chairman Wells and the county would like to once again enter into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the District for the Trail Stewardship Program. The county will provide \$18,000 for one or two interns and \$1,000 for administration for a total of \$19,000. Croote will be foreman of the project. Rhodes

mentioned that there may be an opportunity for DEC funding to support work on DEC trails, and he will keep us informed.

- **Motion made by Bain, seconded by Rhodes to sign an MOU with the County for the Trail Stewardship program in the amount of \$19,000.**

XIII. Staff reports – Stewart disseminated and emailed copies of the staff reports. They are also appended to the minutes.

XIV. District Conservationist’s report – Beilli introduced himself to new board member Rhodes and gave a summary of what his organization does. He reported that this year the US Department of Agriculture’s Natural Resources Conservation Service has changed the way they approve some of their easier projects and it is called Act Now. Two high tunnel projects in Hamilton County have been approved under the Act Now application process. One grazing project is still under review. A cutoff date of April 3 has been announced for the Conservation Stewardship Program. A second round of funding has been announced as there weren’t that many applications. They have also received funding through the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) that is available statewide for climate smart practices. The practices best suited for Hamilton County are tree and shrub plantings, wildlife habitat management, forest stand improvement and energy efficiency upgrades.

XV. New York State Soil and Water Conservation Committee report – appended to minutes.

XVI. Correspondence – None received.

XVII. Next meeting date – Tuesday April 4, 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 Rhodes to adjourn the meeting at 10:56 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
 - Marj, Lenny, and I completed and submitted the 7 SWCC Annual Reports
 - Reviewed budget with Marj
- **Technical Assistance**
 - Assisted the public with other conservation inquiries
- **Watershed Coalitions**
 - Upper Hudson River Watershed Coalition - as president, I facilitated our monthly meeting. WQIP Round 17 grant paperwork to Regional Planning for Roadside Erosion Remediation Program Phase II. We received a WQIP grant for the Elbow Creek Restoration Plan.
 - Finger Lakes/Lake Ontario Watershed Partnership Alliance – legislation discussions, Marj and I worked on close out materials.
 - Mohawk River Watershed Coalition – as president, I attended Action Agenda meetings with DEC and Fulton County SWCD.
 - Black River Watershed – Black River Adaptive Modeling discussions
 - St. Lawrence River Watershed Project – participation ensures Hamilton County's watershed priorities are maintained.
- **Conservation Field Day** – finalized press release
- **Adirondack Tree and Shrub Sale** – assisted Katie with advertisements, email blitz
- **Hamilton County Envirothon**
 - Explained to Katie how to run the event
- **Conservation Education**
 - Main the Chain event support – emailed our list of Waterfest vendors, working to offer presentation
 - Long Lake Public Library – summer programming discussions
- **Hamilton County Trail Stewardship Program** – program facilitation discussions with Lenny, meetings with Betsy, Chris, and Chairman Wells. The county requested that we again facilitate the program for 2023, with a focus on town, village, and county trails and other conservation priorities.
- **Septic System Replacement Fund**
 - Reviewed current contract, replied to inquiries, submitted request for reimbursement
- **New York State Conservation District Employees Association**
 - Water Quality Symposium – participation record for the 2023 event that returns to Syracuse March 14 through 17 with 333 attendees! Thirty-four classes focusing on ag, non-ag, forestry, clerk / admin, and education will enhance knowledge and facilitate partnership discussions. Entertainment will include the Farmers Market and Resource Fair, game night, corn hole, a poker tournament, karaoke, inflatable ax throwing, and a

St. Patrick's Day party. I answered instructor, class facilitator, and attendee inquiries; met with hotel catering staff, updated awards banquet program, reviewed annual meeting packet, submitted Vice President's and ISAC report. Thank you Katie and Chastity Miller of Franklin County SWCD for your time and support!

- **Lake Monitoring Program** – discussed Data Usability Assessment Report and Quality Assurance Project Plan with Lenny, assisted Katie with data entry
- **NYACD Legislative Day** – prepared Hamilton County SWCD information packet for legislators, attended event with John and Katie
- **Events, Meetings, and Partnerships**
 - Assisting Adirondack Park Invasive Plant Program with their new Tier 1 species list
 - Met with Dell Technologies and Tim Ellifritz to discuss maintenance for SWCD computers
 - Researched Mobile Interactive Display technology for Zoom meetings and conservation education presentations
 - Met with Nick Friedman to discuss newsletter email blitzes, Adirondack Ecotrail improvements to meet Accessibility standards and our new logo

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

Assisted with the Hamilton County SWCD Annual Report
Hamilton County DUAR Report
Permits
Worked on Rhodes Pit Renew
Assisted with efforts with Hamilton County Trail Program
Tree and Shrub
Stormcrete research
GIS/GPS Snowmobile trail mapping.
Attend a stormwater training

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

- Set the date for the 1st WQCC meeting (June 5th) at the Lake Pleasant Library 9am-12pm
- Attended Black River Adaptive Modeling (BRAM) planning meeting
- Water Quality Symposium
 - Ordered CDEA pint glasses
 - Coordinated entertainment
 - Farmers Market Resource Fair contacts and planning
 - Anything else requested by Caitlin!

- Lake Monitoring Data
 - Organized AWI and Field Data into Master Spreadsheet with lots of help from Lenny and Caitlin
- I'm interested in taking the Chainsaw course – “Game of Logging Workshop” 3 days, \$165 per day in May
- Worked with Dell and ESRI (ArcGIS) for quotes on computer and software needs, ordered & received laptops for myself and Lenny
- Attended an Environmental Education Foundation meeting
- Attended Legislative Day with Caitlin and John
- Facebook posts about Tree & Shrub order forms, Conservation Valentines, Red Osier Dogwood & White Pine Tree & Shrub, National Groundwater Awareness Week, and Legislative Day, plus many more from Caitlin!
- Researching proper way to create and connect a Hamilton County SWCD Instagram account
- Tree & Shrub
 - Updated and sent the ad for the newspaper
 - Put up order forms and fliers with Lenny
- Envirothon
 - INDIAN LAKE is participating this year!
 - Sent out sponsorship requests
- Mobile Interactive Display for meetings and educational outreach– obtained a quote from Clear Touch: connects to a laptop or smart phone – Larger version used in all classrooms in Little Falls
 - Clear Touch display 43” or 65”, convertible mobile stand, and zoom calling camera/audio
- Agricultural Environmental Management
 - 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
- Attended multiple APIPP Zooms
- Septic Improvement Zooms
- Coordinated Maintain the Chain presentation with Herkimer SWCD 8/5-8/6 with Herkimer’s staff and Stream Table

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

Submitted by: Ryan Cunningham – Region 4 Associate Environmental Analyst

NYS SWCC News

2023 Comprehensive Nutrient Management Planning for AEM: The AEM Partners are pleased to announce that the CNMP Training, a prerequisite class for AEM and NRCS Level II CNMP Planner Certifications, is scheduled for **April 4-6, 2023**, on the Cornell Campus in Ithaca, NY. The registration deadline is **March 10th, 2023**. To register please visit:

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLScTGa6JTacmdUSKOC1GzCW2sSL97NrFQsOIF2Zy9Pp8_CjMg/viewform For more information or questions, please reach out to me at ronald.bush@agriculture.ny.gov or (315) 314-0352.

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>

March SWCC Meeting: The next SWCC meeting is scheduled to convene at **10:00 AM on March 21st**. 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.

NCDEA Don Aron Scholarship Announcement: The NCDEA Scholarship was established in the memory of Don Aron for his foresight of a National Conservation District Employees Association. The scholarship application is open to any conservation district employee or their immediate family member along with a few other eligibility requirements; and applicants may request up to \$1,000 in assistance. The deadline to submit is **March 15th, 2023**. For more information, please visit <https://www.ncdea.us/dascholarship>. Questions can be sent to the NCDEA Executive Director at executivedirector@ncdea.org.

Other Events

Freedom of Information Law & Open Meetings Law Virtual Training: In recognition of Sunshine Week, the Committee on Open Government will be presenting a virtual Freedom of Information Law information session on **Tuesday, March 14th from 10AM – 11:30AM** and a virtual Open Meetings Law information session on **Tuesday, March 14th from 2PM – 3:30PM**. Each program will consist of a one-hour overview of the statute, followed by 30 minutes of Q & A. Pre-registration is required, FOIL registration at:

<https://meetny.webex.com/weblink/register/r9f4c15a559c76aec5ad9b29988c4418a>. Open Meetings Law registration at: <https://meetny.webex.com/weblink/register/r3c711e07efc0c7269a0de6efe53f1d00>

2023 NYS Wetlands Forum Annual Conference: Save the Date. The 2023 NYS Wetlands Forum Annual Conference will take place at the DoubleTree Hotel in Niagara Falls on **April 25th and 26th**. To register, please visit: <http://www.wetlandsforum.org/registration.html>

Other Funding

Great Lakes Sediment and Nutrient Reduction Program: The Great Lakes Sediment and Nutrient Reduction Program (GLSNRP) Request for Proposals was recently announced, for projects that reduce nutrients and sediments entering the Great Lakes. This year's program will focus on helping nonfederal units of government, tribes, or incorporated nonprofit organizations reduce phosphorus contributions to waters within the Great Lakes basin. Applicants are invited to submit proposals for sediment and nutrient reduction activities associated with one of two project types: 1) agricultural non-point; and 2) shoreline or streambanks. The due date for applications is **5:00 p.m. Eastern on April 21st, 2023**. <https://www.glc.org/work/sediment/apply-2023>

NRCS Conservation Innovation Grants (CIG) Funding: NRCS is announcing the availability of Conservation Innovation Grants (CIG) State Program funding to stimulate the development and adoption of innovative conservation approaches and technologies. A total of up to \$500,000 is available for the New York CIG competition in FY 2023. Applicants must submit their applications via Grants.gov by 11:59 pm Eastern Time on **April 23rd, 2023**. Please read the full announcement at https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/search-grants.html?keywords=New+york&utm_medium=email&utm_source=govdelivery

NRCS Funding Opportunity for Resource Conservation Partners in New York: The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is announcing the availability of funding for conservation work in New York. Awards will go to partners to provide direct technical services to address water quality, soil health, wildlife and plant health, as well as other key conservation objectives. All applications must be submitted through Grants.gov by **April 27th 2023**. Please read the full announcement at https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/search-grants.html?keywords=New+york&utm_medium=email&utm_source=govdelivery