



**Hamilton County Soil and Water Conservation District**  
 103 County View Drive, PO Box 166  
 Lake Pleasant NY 12108  
 518-548-3991  
[www.hamcoswcd.org](http://www.hamcoswcd.org)

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

**Board of Directors Meeting Minutes  
 December 5, 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  
 Chris D. Rhodes, Town Supervisor  
 Shawn Hansen, Member-at-Large

**District Staff**

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

**Partners**

Tom Bielli, District Conservationist,  
 Natural Resources and Conservation Service

**Absent**

Leonard Croote, District Technician  
 Betsy Bain, Town Supervisor  
 Ryan Cunningham, Associate Environmental  
 Analyst, New York State Soil and Water  
 Conservation Committee

- I. **Call to order** – Buyce called the meeting to order at 9:30 a.m.
- II. **Pledge of Allegiance**
- III. **Roll Call** conducted.
- IV. **Reading and approval of the November 8, 2023, meeting minutes** – The minutes were provided in advance of the meeting.
  - **A motion was made by Rhodes, seconded by J.M. Stortecky to approve the November 8, 2023, meeting minutes. All in favor, motion carried.**
- V. **Treasurer’s Report** – Remias reviewed the Treasurer’s Report, requested transfers and distributed November expenses for Board review and approval for payment.

<b>Balance</b>	<b>10/31/23</b>	<b>\$357,792.61</b>
<b>Receipts</b>		<b>4,048.08</b>
<b>Disbursements</b>		<b>42,040.44</b>
<b>Balance</b>	<b>11/30/23</b>	<b>\$319,800.25</b>

- **A motion was made by J.M. Stortecky, seconded by Buyce to accept the Treasurer’s Report, to approve the requested transfers of \$115,000 from General Savings to General checking**

**account and \$1,099.11 from General Checking to VERF account and bills to be paid. All in favor, motion carried.**

**VI. Re-appointments of Hamilton County Supervisors Bain and Rhodes to the SWCD Board**

**RESOLUTION # 2023-6**

**RESOLUTION RECOMMENDING THE RE-APPOINTMENT OF BETSY BAIN AND CHRIS D. RHODES TO THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE HAMILTON COUNTY SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT**

**DATED: DECEMBER 5, 2023**

**BY: Mr. Stortecky**

WHEREAS, the terms of office of Town Supervisors Betsy Bain and Chris D. Rhodes, Directors of the Hamilton County Soil and Water Conservation District, terminate on December 31, 2023, be it

RESOLVED, that the Hamilton County Soil and Water Conservation District Board of Directors does recommend to the Hamilton County Board of Supervisors the following re-appointments to the above said District Board:

Betsy Bain and Chirs D. Rhodes to serve as Supervisors' Representatives for terms of one year, commencing January 1, 2024, and terminating December 31, 2024.

Seconded by: Ms. Buyce and adopted by the following vote:

AYES: Mr. Stortecky, Ms. Buyce, Mr. Hansen

NAYES: None

ABSTAIN: Mr. Rhodes

ABSENT: Ms. Bain

**VII. Caring Through Conservation Mini Grant application and reimbursement approval -**

Stewart reported that the remaining applicants successfully closed out their grants and completed all requirements. Feedback was positive, and comments included: "The next round can be improved by adding a dollar amount for repair and upkeep of the project so that

municipalities can continue to keep going forward with these salt reduction cutting edge systems.” “It was a very positive and pleasant experience, and no improvement is necessary! The Indian Lake Theater is greatly appreciative of the response and generosity of the HCSWCD.” “The process is very easy to navigate, and the District is a pleasure to work with.” “We were very appreciative of the grant we received from HCSWCD. The raise and release sites provided in kind contributions. This was truly a town-wide project.” “This was a very pleasant experience in grant writing. While thorough, it was not over complicated. Help was given when needed.” Stewart reported that the pilot was a tremendous success, and would like to offer mini grants for 2024. Stewart reviewed the budget below.

Budget	
2023 Mini Grant (\$2,000 for 5 projects)	\$10,000.00
Total grant funds awarded	\$6,927.50
Remaining funds	\$3,072.50

- **A motion was made by Rhodes, seconded by J.M. Stortecky to approve the Caring Through Conservation Mini-Grant reimbursement requests for the following: Town of Lake Pleasant salt reduction cutting edges: \$2,000.00; Town of Inlet two stage snowplow carbide edges trying to reduce road salt usage: \$1508.78; Indian Lake Theater -The Monarch Report: \$607.56; and the Town of Lake Pleasant Community Garden Fencing: \$1,189.00. All in favor, motion carried.**
- **A motion was made by J.M. Stortecky, seconded by Buyce to allocate \$10,000.00 to the 2024 Caring Through Conservation Mini-Grant Program, for a maximum of 5 projects at \$2,000.00 each. All in favor, motion carried.**

**VIII. Sign FLOWPA SFY 2023-24** – Stewart reported that the SFY 2023-24 Finger Lakes – Lake Ontario Watershed Protection Alliance contract will be in the amount of \$107,200.00. The contract should be issued by December 31 for signing.

- **A motion was made by J.M. Stortecky, seconded by Buyce to authorize District Manager Caitlin Stewart to sign the FLOWPA SFY 2023 – 24 Contract #C311775-2324. All in favor, motion carried.**

**IX. Approve 2024 Board of Directors’ meeting schedule** – Stewart provided the meeting schedule in advance of the meeting and rescheduled the November meeting to accommodate Election Day.

- **A motion was made by J.M. Stortecky, seconded by Buyce to approve the 2024 Board of Directors' meeting schedule to include the following dates: January 2, February 6, March 5, April 2, May 7, June 4, July 2, August 6, September 3, October 1, November 6, and December 3. All in favor, motion carried.**

**X. Adirondack Ecotrail Improvement Project** – Stewart is waiting on more quotes.

**XI. Purchase accessiBe** – Stewart reported that she has been researching American with Disabilities Act website compliance. She reached out to Warren County SWCD, who purchased this widget for their website with positive feedback. AccessiBe streamlines the process of achieving Americans with Disabilities Act and Web Content Accessibility Guidelines compliance, and offers audits for website compliance. Part C funds will support the annual fee.

- **A motion was made by J.M. Stortecky, seconded by Buyce to purchase accessiBe in the annual fee amount of \$490.00. All in favor, motion carried.**

**XII. Approve PERMA Pay Plan** – Stewart reviewed the benefits of the District joining PERMA, including claims management, risk analytics, training programs, and facilities risk assessment. She continued that the 2023 Workers Compensation Renewal was \$1,653.00, and PERMA quoted \$3,155.00, a \$1,502.00 difference. She budgeted \$12,000 for auto, liability, employee dishonesty, and PERMA coverage in the 2024 budget.

- **A motion was made by J.M. Stortecky, seconded by Buyce to approve the PERMA Pay Plan in the amount of \$3,155.00. All in favor, motion carried.**

**XIII. CD** - Remias researched CDs. NBT has a 5-month CD with a 5.05% interest rate to offer.

- **A motion was made by Buyce, seconded by J.M. Stortecky to discuss allowing Hamilton County Soil and Water Conservation District's Board of Director's Secretary, Marjorie Remias, to purchase with District funds a 5-month Certificate of Deposit with a 5.05% interest rate in the amount of \$50,000 at NBT Bank in Speculator. Rhodes recommended a lower return CD with no penalties for early withdrawal that the Piseco Ambulance and Fire Department has. Motion tabled until further information on options for District is obtained.**

#### **IX. District Activities**

- Gilmantown Road Bank Stabilization Project** – Stewart showed video at end of meeting.

- b. **July storm update** – Stewart reported that Croote mentioned that the County Line Flow dam embankment breached during the July storm. The breach caused severe head cutting and streambank erosion. USFWS Carl Schwartz gave his approval of Croote’s design, and DEC approved the general permit. Croote designed grade control to limit erosion and head cut. Croote installed a series of step pools from the flow down to the newly formed stream bed. During storm events, a tributary flowing off Blue Mountain jumps its banks and flows down the ditch line of Wells Road, Indian Lake. This scours the ditch line and causes damage to Wells Road. With the cooperation of the Hamilton County DPW, Town of Indian Lake Highway Department, and the landowners, the channel was diverted away from Wells Road, and during high water, infrastructure damage is much less likely to occur.
- c. **Lake Monitoring Program** – Stewart reported that “Effects of climate change and variability on thermal regime and dissolved oxygen resources of oligotrophic lakes in the Adirondack Mountain region” by Paul A. Bukaveckas, Liz Buikema, and Caitlin Stewart was accepted 27 October 2023 and published in *Aquatic Sciences*. The Adirondack Watershed Institute is completing lake sample analysis, and we are waiting for the bill.
- d. **Trail Stewardship Program** – Nothing new to report.
- e. **Sediment and Erosion Control Program** – Nothing new to report.
- f. **Agricultural Environmental Management** – WhitKovits is working on the Round 17 close out and reported that she submitted the round 18 action plan, and it was accepted by the State Committee. Stewart thanked WhitKovits for taking over this program.
- g. **Invasive Species Program** – Stewart was nominated to serve as Secretary of the Invasive Species Advisory Committee and attended the November 30 meeting. WhitKovits responded to a landowner inquiry about jumping worms and referred them to APIPP.
- h. **Conservation Education Program** – WhitKovits is scheduling Conservation Field Day awards ceremonies. Stewart gave the District’s Annual Report during the November 17 Hamilton County Board of Supervisors meeting. Many Town Supervisors thanked Croote for his assistance with flood mitigation and permits.
- i. **Watershed partnership update**
  - 1. **FLLOWPA** – Stewart attended the full board meeting on November 15 and noted contract closeout deadlines. We are asking for \$137,200.00 per county for the SFY 2024 – 25 contract.
  - 2. **Upper Hudson River Watershed Coalition** – Stewart is working on the annual report and preparing for the December meeting. Croote and Allison Gaddy, Lake Champlain Lake

Geroge Regional Planning Board, wrote and emailed a RFP for the Elbow Creek Assessment grant.

**3. St. Lawrence River Watershed Project** – Nothing new to report.

**4. Mohawk River Watershed Coalition** – Stewart attended the Mohawk River Basin Research Workgroup meeting on December 1, and participated in the water quality group. She detailed the District’s Lake Monitoring Program and made some great connections with other professionals in the watershed. She voiced the Coalition’s research priorities and provided feedback on the Research Initiative document that DEC will review.

**5. Black River Watershed** – Nothing new to report.

j. **Other** - WhitKovits attended the Crosswalking Climate Smart Communities meeting, and Hamilton County is categorized as a CSC. WhitKovits reported that individual municipalities may be eligible for competitive funding. Some requirements to be a CSC include a plan, task force, and a legislative person on the board. All funding opportunities are a 50/50 match.

k. **Directors’ comments** – Board member Hansen commended Lenny on the culvert replacement and stream grading work he did in Inlet. He was impressed with the results and Lenny’s hands-on approach and dedication.

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

**X. District Conservationist’s report** – Bielli reported he will be retiring at the end of the month. He currently has 3 applications in Hamilton County for High Tunnels. NRCS is on the second round for the Conservation Stewardship Program and so far, no applications from Hamilton County have been submitted. He has one Forest Management plan in place. Bielli reported on the status of the Emergency Water Protection program. This program funds restoring stream channels to pre-storm conditions. The Town of Long Lake has applied for this and will receive funds to remove gravel and debris and stabilize stream banks on Shaw Brook. The town must contribute 25% in shared services. If the District has an agreement with the Town of Long Lake, Croote’s time can be counted toward the town’s shared services. Funds are also being offered to the Town of Long Lake for engineering services because NRCS currently does not have any on staff.

**XI. New York State Soil and Water Conservation Committee report** – appended to the minutes.

**XII. Correspondence** –

a) SWCC 2022 Annual Report

b) Thank you note from Highway Superintendent Shawn Hansen commending the District team, especially Lenny

- XIII. Next meeting date** – Tuesday January 2, 2024, 9:30 AM, Hamilton County SWCD office, 103 County View Drive, Lake Pleasant NY 12108 and virtually on Zoom.
- XIV. Adjournment** – A motion was made by J.M. Stortecky, seconded by Buyce to adjourn the meeting at 10:40 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
  - Assisted Tim Ellifritz with computer maintenance and updates
  - Prepared 2023 infographic and presented District accomplishments at Board of Supervisors meeting
  - Researched Workers' Compensation
  - Researched ADA compliancy
  - Completed SWCC's performance measure survey
  - Website updates
- **Technical Assistance**
  - APIPP review for DEC
  - Coordinated 2024 lake monitoring with Dr. Paul A. Bukaveckas
- **Watershed Coalitions**
  - FLOWPA – attended the full board meeting on November 15 and noted contract closeout deadlines.
  - Upper Hudson River Watershed Coalition – Working on the annual report and preparing for the December meeting.
  - St. Lawrence River Watershed Project – Nothing new to report.
  - Mohawk River Watershed Coalition – Attended the Mohawk River Basin Research Workgroup meeting on December 1, and participated in the water quality group.

- Black River Watershed – Nothing new to report.
- **Invasive Species**
  - Attended and took minutes for the November Invasive Species Advisory Committee meeting
- **Conservation Field Day**
  - Assisted Katie with awards ceremony
- **Conservation Education**
  - Germantown Road video
  - 2023 accomplishments infographic for Board of Supervisors
- **Septic System Replacement Fund**
  - Submitted disbursement request to county, answered inquiries
- **Caring Through Conservation Mini-Grant Program**
  - Budget review
  - Answered applicant inquiries
  - Closed out 2023 pilot program
- **New York State Conservation District Employees Association**
  - Water Quality Symposium – Chaired Education Track, submitted ed classes
  - Coordinated and facilitated November meeting
  - CDEA News
  - Soil and Water Conservation Committee meeting
  - Recruitment and Retention – job fair
  - Corresponded with new Division VIII Representative
  - Updated By-Laws
  - Revised 4-Hour Fund Policy
  - Civil Service – working to improve exam frequency and streamline job descriptions
  - Bond Act – created survey and disseminated to all Districts

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

**General**

7/10/23 Storm event

Fishing Brook Stabilization

Meeting with NRCS and Town of Long Lake about EWP

Shaw Brook survey

Wells Road Runoff Trib Diversion

South pond outlet bridge stabilization

Parkhurst Road Culvert Replacement

2024 Tree and Shrub ordering

Office Work



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

- Conservation Field Day
  - Graded posters and essays with Marj
    - Scheduling award ceremonies with 4 schools
- Japanese Knotweed
  - Working on finalizing the manual with input from the rest of our staff
  - will work on obtaining signed agreements and homeowners' insurance to have on file for the next treatment season
- Lake Monitoring
  - Working on organizing the data into our master data spreadsheet as time permits
    - LPSA requested info and had many questions about our program, complimented the District on great work throughout the years
- Agricultural Environmental Management
  - Working on AEM Round 17 closeout
- Attended Environmental Education Foundation meeting
  - Submitted an application for \$50,000 towards the 2024 NY National Envirothon from the Alfred Z Solomon Charitable Trust
    - Waiting to hear back on results sometime this month

Other

- Attended APIPP regional Aquatic Invasive Species roundtable zoom meeting
- Attended Crosswalking Climate Smart Communities (CSC) meeting in Watertown organized by NYS Sea Grant
  - All NYS counties are signed up for the program but not all are active
  - Municipalities and other organizations can also sign up to be CSC
    - Must create a CSC taskforce
    - All funding is 50/50 match for climate smart projects
      - Ex) upgrading streetlights, sidewalks, municipal building heating, wellhead protection program, low income housing projects
- Met with Carl Schwartz of USFWS with Lenny for several stream stabilization projects in Blue Mountain and Long Lake
- Field survey of Shaw Brook with Lenny for 2 days
  - Also met with NRCS for EWP funding
- Signed up to take NYS Notary prep class in Cortland on Dec 13<sup>th</sup>
- Our Facebook page is still on Lockdown
  - Will be creating a new District Facebook page that ties directly to the Instagram page

**New York State Soil & Water Conservation Committee**  
**Region 4 Report – December 2023**  
**Submitted by: Ryan Cunningham – Region 4 Associate Environmental Analyst**

**NYS SWCC News**

**Happy Holidays & Merry Christmas!** The holiday season is here again, a time for remembering our family and friends. Wishing you and all those close to you, a joyous holiday season and a new year of happiness! Travel safe and party smart.

**Climate Resilient Farming (CRF) Program Round 7:** Congratulations to those Districts who will be receiving funds to help farms via the Climate Resilient Farming Program! Nearly \$16 million will be divided between 31 Districts to implement projects on 116 farms. The funding will help protect and preserve NY's natural resources by supporting farms and addressing the unpredictable conditions and challenges of climate change. Information about Plan of Work development will be available shortly. More info about the Round 7 awards can be found here:  
[https://agriculture.ny.gov/system/files/documents/2023/11/projectdescriptions\\_round7\\_climateresilinetfarming.pdf](https://agriculture.ny.gov/system/files/documents/2023/11/projectdescriptions_round7_climateresilinetfarming.pdf)

**New State Programs Advisory Committee Meeting:** Please save the morning of **December 15<sup>th</sup>, 2023**, for the inaugural meeting of the State Programs Advisory Committee! This meeting will take place via Webex from 10:00 AM to 12:00 PM. This will be a sub-committee of the SWCC that will be comprised of SWCDs and SWCC staff. Our vision for this group is to create more opportunities to discuss SWCC programs, gather program ideas and feedback, identify priority focus areas and much more. Further details and an agenda for this meeting will be sent out shortly. Questions can be directed to your Regional AEA.

**December SWCC Meeting:** The next SWCC meeting is scheduled to convene at **10:00 AM on December 19<sup>th</sup>**. Further details and an agenda for this meeting will be sent out shortly. All Districts are encouraged to attend and participate in the meeting. Each meeting agenda provides an opportunity for Conservation Districts to provide reports, updates, or feedback to the SWCC.  
**Reminder – participation at a SWCC meeting is eligible toward PM1, Part C of State Aid to Districts.**

**2023 Part C Performance Measures:** The end of the year is rapidly approaching, and you should be checking to make sure that your District is fulfilling its Performance Measure goals. Please contact your Regional AEA with any specific questions.

**CREP Annual Progress Report:** It's that time of year again when New York State reports to USDA on outreach, success stories, challenges and provides suggestions related to the Conservation Reserve

Enhancement Program (CREP). Please send anything you would like to share or any questions to [Scott.Fickbohm@agriculture.ny.gov](mailto:Scott.Fickbohm@agriculture.ny.gov) by **12/25/23**.

**NYS Conservation Storyboard:** The SWCC Conservation Storyboard has been updated and is accessible through the SWCC website: <https://agriculture.ny.gov/soil-and-water/soil-water-conservation-committee>. The interactive experience map includes SWCD contact information and conservation project highlights. SWCC encourages districts to submit recently completed conservation projects to highlight the important work being completed every year. A submission form can be found at: <https://arcg.is/4ymXS>. To update district contact information please reach out to [Tyler.Knapp@agriculture.ny.gov](mailto:Tyler.Knapp@agriculture.ny.gov).

### **Other Events**

**2023 CCA Training:** Advanced Training track for current CCAs. This virtual training track will commence on **December 12<sup>th</sup> – 13<sup>th</sup>, 2023**. More information and a registration link can be found here, <https://www.nysaba.com/educational-meetings>

**NACD 2024 Annual Meeting:** Registration for The National Association of Conservation Districts' (NACD) 78<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting is now open! Hosted in partnership with the California Association of Conservation Districts, the 2024 Annual Meeting will take place in San Diego, California, from **February 10<sup>th</sup> – 14<sup>th</sup>, 2024**. To learn more and to register, please visit: <https://www.nacdnet.org/news-and-events/annual-meeting/>

### **Other Funding**

**Five Star and Urban Waters Restoration Program 2024 Request for Proposals:** The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation and partners are requesting proposals for the 2024. This program seeks to develop community capacity to sustain local natural resources by providing financial assistance to diverse local partnerships focused on improving water quality, watersheds and the species and habitats they support. Full proposals are due by **January 31<sup>st</sup>, 2024**. To learn more about the grant program and the application guidelines, please go here, <https://www.nfwf.org/programs/five-star-and-urban-waters-restoration-grant-program/five-star-and-urban-waters-restoration-grant-program-2024-request-proposals>

**NOAA 2024 Great Lakes Bay Watershed Education and Training Grant Funding Available:** The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA's) 2024 Great Lakes Bay Watershed Education and Training (B-WET) federal funding opportunity is now open. This competitive funding opportunity supports projects that provide Meaningful Watershed Educational Experiences (MWEEs) for youth and related professional development for teachers, while advancing regional Great Lakes watershed education priorities. For more information, please visit [www.grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov) and search **NOAA-NOS-ONMS-2024-2008201**. Applications are due by **11:59 pm EST on February 29, 2024**.