



Hamilton County Soil and Water Conservation District

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www.hamcoswcd.org

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

Board of Directors Meeting Minutes February 7, 2024

Hamilton County SWCD office: 103 County View Drive, Lake Pleasant NY 12108

Inlet Highway Department: 65 Limekiln Lake Rd, Inlet, NY 13360

Zoom

Board of Directors

Victoria Buyce, Chairperson
John M. Stortecky, Vice Chairperson
Betsy Bain, Town Supervisor
Shawn Hansen, Member-at-Large

District Staff

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

Absent

Chris D. Rhodes, Town Supervisor
Ryan Cunningham, Associate
Environmental Analyst, Soil and Water
Conservation Committee
Vacant, District Conservationist,
Natural Resources and
Conservation Service

- I. Call to order and roll call** – Buyce called the meeting to order at 9:30 a.m. Roll call conducted.
- II. Pledge of Allegiance** conducted.
- III. Reading and approval of the January 2, 2024, meeting minutes** – The minutes were provided in advance of the meeting.
 - **A motion was made by Bain seconded by Buyce to approve the January 2, 2024, meeting minutes. All voted in favor, motion carried.**
- IV. Treasurer’s Report** – Remias reviewed the Treasurer’s Report and distributed the expenses for Board review and approval for payment.

Balance	12/31/23	\$214,371.27
Receipts		29,407.21
Disbursements		64,412.47
Balance	1/31/24	\$214,371.27

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

- V. **Source Well** – Stewart reported that Hamilton County DPW utilizes Source Well, and Tracy Eldridge highly recommended that we enroll. Source Well is a cooperative purchasing being “Procurement conducted by, or on behalf of, one or more Public Procurement Units” as defined by the American Bar Association Model Procurement Code for State and Local Governments. Sourcewell’s analysts streamline the procurement process by developing requests for proposals (RFPs) and invitations for bids (IFBs) for national, competitive solicitations that meet or exceed local requirements. Their rigorous process is continually refined to best meet the needs of participating agencies and allows them to offer exceptional products from nationally acclaimed suppliers. This will streamline our procurement policy and save staff time when purchasing items. Sign-up is free, and Source Well will assign us an identification number. Discussion ensued.

- **A motion was made by Buyce, seconded by J. M. Stortecky to permit the Hamilton County Soil and Water Conservation District to enroll in Source Well. All voted in favor, motion carried.**

- VI. **Hydroseeder purchase** – Stewart reported that the Finn T75 hydroseeder was purchased in 2016, and is approaching its 8th season. The District would like to size up machines for increased power and pump discharge distance. Croote would be able to hydroseed hard to reach, steep, and tall banks that he cannot currently access. Finn is on Sourcewell, and the quote reflects a discount. Finn T90 hydroseeder quote - \$85,440.50. \$100,200 was budgeted for field equipment. Croote will investigate trade in and resale values for our old machine.

- **A motion was made by Buyce, seconded by Hansen to purchase a Finn T75 hydroseeder in the amount of 85,440.50, and sell or trade in old hydroseeder.**

- VII. **Hydrocad purchase** – Stewart reported that Hydrocad is stormwater modeling software that Croote will use for green infrastructure project design and stormwater control. Croote is registered for a HydroCad course at the Water Quality Symposium where he will learn how to run the program. We can purchase additional nodes if needed. Croote explained nodes are project modules.

- **A motion was made by J. M. Stortecky, seconded by Bain to purchase Hydrocad and 5 nodes (projects) in the amount of \$295.00. All in favor, none opposed, motion carried.**

- VIII. **Insurance** – Stewart reported that Hamilton County is increasing the 2024 health stipend to \$3,200.00. The District’s current health stipend is \$3,050, and increase totals \$150.00 per employee.

- **A motion was made by J. M. Stortecky, seconded by Buyce to increase the Hamilton**

County Soil and Water Conservation District health stipend to \$3,200. All in favor, none opposed, motion carried.

IX. Advance payment to Ausable River Association for Elbow Creek Stream Corridor

Assessment – Stewart reported that Gary Henry, Ausable River Association, requested advance payment in the amount \$14,085.00 to complete desktop assessment and site reconnaissance and initial survey. The advance would be helpful because ARA is a small non-profit and the state won't pay out the full contracted amount until 2025, possibly several months after ARA submits the final report by March 1. NYSDEC issued an advance of \$18,750.00 to the District for this grant.

- **A motion was made by Hansen, seconded by Bain to issue an advance payment to the Ausable River Association for the Elbow Creek Stream Corridor Assessment in the amount of \$14,085.00 to complete desktop assessment and site reconnaissance and initial survey. All in favor, none opposed, motion carried.**

X. AEM MOA with Franklin County SWCD –

Agreement between Franklin County and Hamilton County Soil and Water Conservation Districts for Agricultural Environmental Management

This Agreement is to be between the Franklin County Soil and Water Conservation District and the Hamilton County Soil and Water Conservation District beginning January 1, 2024, and continuing for a maximum period of two (2) years.

Franklin County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) will provide assistance to the Hamilton County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) for their Agricultural Environmental Assessment Program (AEM) or other programs as needed.

Franklin County SWCD will allow two staff members, Devin Normandeau and Kristin Ballou, to assist Hamilton County SWCD with their programs. Franklin County SWCD will maintain all the payroll and benefits for staff provided. They will also maintain Workers Compensation Insurance for the staff members.

Hamilton County SWCD agrees to pay Franklin County SWCD the current AEM rate per hour for each hour provided in assistance. Franklin County SWCD will be responsible for any office supply materials needed and mileage.

Payment shall be made to Franklin County SWCD monthly based on the number of hours incurred for that given period. Franklin County SWCD will submit to Hamilton County SWCD a bill of hours incurred prior to Hamilton County SWCD's monthly board meeting.

Either party may terminate this Agreement for convenience upon giving thirty (30) days written notice to the other party. Either party may terminate this Agreement for cause upon giving one (1) days written notice.

_____ Date
District Manager Franklin County Print

_____ Date
District Manager Hamilton County Print

- **A motion was made by Hansen, seconded by J. M. Stortecky to permit District Manager Caitlin Stewart to sign the agreement between Franklin County and Hamilton County Soil and Water Conservation Districts for Agricultural Environmental Management. All in favor, none opposed, motion carried.**

XI. 2023 Soil and Water Conservation Committee annual reports submission – Stewart reported that she and Remias have begun work on the 2023 annual reports that are required for state aid funding. Stewart requested permission to submit reports when completed.

- **A motion was made by Buyce, seconded by J. M. Stortecky to permit District Manager Caitlin Stewart to submit the 2023 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, 2021 Annual Report, and 2021 Annual Report of the Treasurer to the New York State Soil and Water Conservation Committee and Office of the State Comptroller. All in favor, none opposed, motion carried.**

XII. District activities

- a. **2023 budget review** – Stewart will present at next meeting.
- b. **2023 Year in Review video and annual report** – Stewart showed the video and commended the Directors and staff on another excellent year. She also disseminated hard copies of the annual report.
- c. **July and December 2023 storm update** – Croote reported that the projects implemented over the summer have held up beautifully.
- d. **Sediment and Erosion Control Program** - Croote reported that there is nothing actively happening for this program at this time of year.
- e. **Adirondack Tree and Shrub Sale** - Croote reported that the informational flyers have been distributed to sites around the county and that they have been upgraded with a QR code. Stewart

reported that the online store is live on the website and a printable, fillable form is also available for downloading for those who prefer to pay with check or cash.

- f. Agricultural Environmental Management** – WhitKovits reported that she is investigating implementing an initiative that others have used called Buy a Beer Plant a Tree. She is also working with Chambers of Commerce to have a booth at all the Farmer’s Markets in the county this summer to promote AEM.
- g. Hamilton County Envirothon** - WhitKovits reported that the Envirothon will be held Thursday May 2, this year. Board members J. M. Stortecky and Buyce agreed to volunteer for this event once again. Registration information has been sent out to the schools and invitations to local officials and state legislators have been sent.
- h. Invasive Species Program** - WhitKovits reported that she and Croote worked on and sent in the invasive species report required by the Department of Environmental Conservation. WhitKovits will be taking a Forest Pest training from the Adirondack Park Invasive Plant Program and a winter Hemlock Wood Adelgid Survey is scheduled for district staff this month.
- i. Conservation Education Program** – WhitKovits mentioned that she is scheduled to take a course that will be an overview of Project WET (Water Education Today). Project WET is dedicated to teaching the world about water by providing hands-on, science-based water education resources to educators.
- j. Lake Monitoring Program** – Stewart reported that AWI has not yet sent the 2023 lake monitoring results.
- k. Trail Stewardship Program** – Nothing to report.
- l. Septic System Replacement Fund** – Croote and WhitKovits queried 871 waterfront landowners with a septic system survey mailing, and 318 people responded. WhitKovits submitted data to DEC, and Stewart will proceed with Round 4 with support from Hamilton County Board of Supervisors Chairperson Brian Wells.
- m. Septic Replacement Fund**
- n. Watershed partnership update**
 - 1. FLOWPA** – Stewart and WhitKovits will attend legislative day on February 13.
 - 2. Upper Hudson River Watershed Coalition** – Stewart ran the January organizational meeting and is preparing for the February meeting.
 - 3. St. Lawrence River Watershed Project** – Nothing new to report.

4. **Mohawk River Watershed Coalition** – Stewart ran the January organizational meeting and is preparing the 2023 annual report. The coalition is still waiting on the 1.5-million-dollar action agenda from DEC.
 5. **Black River Watershed** – Stewart attended the 2024 Black River Watershed Conference planning committee meeting to discuss event logistics.
- o. Other –**
- As NYSCDEA president Stewart facilitated statewide meetings with all 58 SWCDs and DEC to collect District feedback on the draft bridge and culvert guidance document and the New York State Reforestation Plan.
- p. Directors’ comments** – Board member JM Stortecky complimented Chairperson Buyce on her exemplary job running the monthly board meetings.
- XIII. Staff reports** – Stewart disseminated and emailed copies of the staff reports.
- XIV. District Conservationist’s report** – No report.
- XV. New York State Soil and Water Conservation Committee report** – appended to minutes.
- XVI. Correspondence**
1. Black River Initiative newsletter
 2. Donation from Mark and Elsa for Youth Education programming in natural resource management
 3. 2023 iMAP Invasives recap and thank you.
 4. 2024 NYACD Legislative Day “Conservation at Work: Board Mmmember JM Stortecky and District Manager Stewart will be traveling to Albany to speak with our legislators on March 4th and 5th.
- XVII. Esri maintenance renewal** – Croote requested permission to renew our upcoming annual Maintenance fee for our Esri GIS mapping software.
- **A motion was made by Hansen, seconded by J. M. Stortecky to renew our Esri ArcGIS maintenance for two. All in favor, none opposed, motion carried.**
- XVIII. Next meeting date** – March 6, 2024, 9:30 AM, at the Hamilton County SWCD office (103 County View Drive, Lake Pleasant NY 12108) and virtually on Zoom.
- XIX. Adjournment** – **A motion was made by Hansen, seconded by J. M. Stortecky to adjourn the meeting at 10:30 a.m. All in favor, carried.**

Respectfully Submitted



Marjorie Remias
Secretary to the Board/Treasurer

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

- **Administration**
 - Reviewed the Governor's State of the State
 - Wrote letter of support for ADK Action's grant
 - Completed PERMA and insurance forms, attended new member orientation and safety committee meeting
 - Staff appraisals
 - DEC member item close out for Sixth and Seventh Lake aquatic invasive plant harvesting
 - Board of Directors meeting preparation
 - Staff meetings
 - Reviewed budget with Marj
 - Assisted Tim Ellifritz with computer maintenance and updates
 - Began work on SWCC Annual Reports
 - Website updates
 - Social media posts
- **Technical Assistance**
 - Long Lake Association – dam and Environmental Impact Statement inquiries
 - Beth Hunt, Town of Wells – septic systems
 - SWCDs – civil service
 - Lake Pleasant Central School – erosion field trip
- **Watershed Coalitions**
 - FLOWPA - Will attend legislative day with Katie on February 13.
 - Upper Hudson River Watershed Coalition – Ran the January organizational meeting and is preparing for the February meeting.
 - St. Lawrence River Watershed Project – Nothing new to report.
 - Mohawk River Watershed Coalition – Stewart ran the January organizational meeting and is preparing the 2023 annual report.
 - Black River Watershed – Stewart attended the Black River Watershed Conference planning committee meeting to discuss event logistics.
- **Septic System Replacement Fund**
 - Staff meeting about mailing and survey
- **Adirondack Tree and Shrub Sale**
 - Reviewed order form, updated website online store
- **New York State Conservation District Employees Association**
 - Water Quality Symposium
 - Held February meeting

- Hosted Managers' Meeting
- Soil and Water Conservation Committee staff call
- New York Association of Conservation Districts meeting
- Assisted new Division VIII Representative
- Updated By-Laws
- Revised 4-Hour Fund Policy
- Budget meeting with Chastity and Katy
- Civil Service – working to improve exam frequency and streamline job descriptions

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

General

7/10/23 Storm event
 Beginning steps of Shaw Brook Restoration
 Culvert Assessment
 H & H Study for Culvert for Inlet
 Lake Adirondack Development Erosion and Sediment Plan
 GPS Arietta Snowmobiles trails
 Permits for 2024 construction season
 Trail Maintenance
 Vehicle maintenance
 2024 Tree and Shrub ordering and order form
 Office Work
 Research new equipment purchases

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

- Envirothon – Thursday May 2nd, 2024
 - Sent presenter invitations
 - Sent Envirothon registrations to all schools and homeschools
 - Invited Campstore to host hotdog lunch again
 - Invited Assemblymen Smullen, Senator Walczyk, and Chairman Wells
- Japanese Knotweed
 - will work on obtaining signed agreements and homeowners' insurance to have on file for the next treatment season
 - ordered additional parts for injector tool kits
- Lake Monitoring
 - Waiting for AWI's data to add to master data sheet
- Agricultural Environmental Management
 - Working on AEM Round 17 closeout – Due February 29th
- NYS DEC Septic System Replacement Fund

- DEC asked the District to estimate the # of septic systems within 250' of most waterbodies throughout Hamilton count
 - Sent out 871 letters with a septic survey & created online google septic survey
 - Compiled responses into DEC's requested spreadsheet
- Water Quality Symposium
 - Registered for full week of Water Quality Symposium, will also go Monday to help with setting up
 - Held planning meetings and emails for CDEA Fish-On Challenge
 - Contacted potential farmers market and resource fair vendors for WQS

Other

- Attended DEC Meeting 2024 Draft Bridge & Culvert Guidance hosted by Caitlin
- Surveyed culverts in Inlet with Lenny
- Attended Black River Adaptive Modeling planning meeting
- Attended virtual regional Aquatic Organism Passage meeting to help prioritize culvert & bridge replacement projects with Lenny
- Attended APIPP Forest Pest Hunters zoom
- Submitted pesticide usage report to DEC with Lenny

New York State Soil & Water Conservation Committee

Region 4 Report – February 2024

Submitted by: Ryan Cunningham – Region 4 Associate Environmental Analyst

NYS SWCC News

2023 State Aid to Districts – DUE 2/15: All 2023 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, 2024**. Please contact ben.luskin@agriculture.ny.gov or your Regional AEA with any questions.

Payments and Blackout Period: We are approaching the Blackout Period for Fiscal Year 2023-2024. To have payments processed in a timely manner this winter/early spring, please email Claims for Payment (CFPs), the State Committee Coversheet, and any other required program reports by **Friday, February 23rd, 2024**, to the appropriate State Committee program manager and Maureen Irish (Maureen.irish@agriculture.ny.gov). Once the claim is approved by the program manager, they'll send an email with instructions for submittal to the Business Service Center. Please remember to only submit claims for payment for contracts that have been fully executed. Additionally, please note that this does not apply to State Aid to Districts/Performance Measure payments as those are processed separately. If you have any questions, please contact Maureen Irish or your Regional AEA.

AEM Base Program - Options for AEM Base Round 17 Payments: A reminder that the Final Report/Close Out package

for Round 17 of the AEM Base Program is due to the State Committee by **February 29th, 2024**, (please upload files to your District's AEM17 folder on SharePoint and email your Regional AEA and Greg Albrecht once uploaded). AEM17 close out packages and their CFPs won't likely be paid until after the Blackout Period if sent after February 23rd (depending on the number of Districts submitting and needs for report updates). While it varies, that could mean delays in payments until July 2024.

Any District that would prefer a portion of their reimbursements made this winter/early spring could submit an AEM17 interim report and CFP to reimburse for technical assistance hours and testing services and/or a CFP for a 90% project payment (unless they've already been sent to us for all Tier 4 projects) for work performed during the AEM17 contract period (January 1, 2022 – December 31, 2023). Both are simpler reporting efforts/packages than the entire close out and can be reviewed, updated if needed, and approved for payment if sent by February 23rd.

Districts choosing this approach would then submit their AEM17 final report / close out package by February 29th with a final CFP that reflects all the prior amounts requested (including any interim report or project payment CFPs described, above). Please contact greg.albrecht@agriculture.ny.gov or your Regional AEA with any questions.

State Programs Advisory Committee Meeting: Please save the morning of **February 20th, 2024**, for the next meeting of the State Programs Advisory Committee (SPAC). This meeting will take place via Webex from 10:00 AM to 12:00 PM. Further details and an agenda for this meeting will be sent out shortly. Questions can be directed to Bethany Bzduch (Bethany.bzduch@agriculture.ny.gov) or your Regional AEA.

February SWCC Meeting: The next SWCC meeting is scheduled to convene at **10:00 AM on February 27th**. 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.**

District Operations Sub-Committee: The SWCC will be re-establishing the District Operations Sub-Committee to engage with SWCD partners on all matters relating to District Operations. We are tentatively planning to hold a meeting in April 2024 to start working on updating the District Operations Manual. As we prepare for an April meeting, we first need to develop a list of SWCD representatives. Ideally, we are hoping to find at least two SWCD representatives per CDEA Division that are willing to participate on this committee, so all regions of the State can be represented. Any interested candidate can reach out to Victor DiGiacomo (victor.digiacom@agriculture.ny.gov) and Ben Luskin (ben.luskin@agriculture.ny.gov) by **March 1, 2024**.

AEM Leopold Conservation Award 2024: 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. Formal announcements and application materials will be emailed to Districts the first week of February 2024. The deadline for applications is **May 15th, 2024**.

Tools and References Wiki Update: The Tools and References Wiki has just been updated for 2024. 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/>

Statewide E-mail Distribution: The SWCC maintains separate e-mail distribution lists that are used to distribute information and notices to SWCDs, NYS SWCC Voting and Advisory Members, and other SWCC partners. If you would like an e-mail to be distributed, please send your request to Melissa Gordon (melissa.gordon@agriculture.ny.gov). In your request, please be sure to specify who the intended audience should be, and we will get it sent out to the correct distribution list.

New York State Grants Management Transition: New York State (NYS) has transitioned grants management activities that were previously performed in the Grants Gateway to the Statewide Financial System (SFS). SFS is NYS government's accounting and financial management system used to manage contracts and payments. Beginning January 2024, Grants Gateway will cease operations and entities with grant agreements must use the SFS Vendor Portal to perform business functions for grant programs. Grantees doing business with NYS will access SFS through the SFS Vendor Portal, <https://www.sfs.ny.gov/>. Training materials, including videos and step-by-step instructions for various topics on grants management-related tasks in SFS, are available within the SFS Vendor Portal. For questions or assistance using SFS, contact the SFS Help Desk at helpdesk@sfs.ny.gov.

2024 NCDEA Don Aron Scholarship Announcement: If you're thinking about expanding your knowledge and professional growth with college/university classes, here's a great opportunity for you. The NCDEA Don Aron Scholarship Award application is open to any conservation district employee or their immediate family member, along with a few other eligibility requirements. Applicants may request up to \$1,000 in assistance. Applications must submit all required documents to be eligible for review along with active/accessible contact information. Deadline to apply is **March 15th, 2024**. <https://www.ncdea.us/dascholarship>

Other Events

Webinar: Effectiveness of Nutrient Management for Reducing Nutrient Losses from Agricultural Fields: The US EPA Water Research Webinar Series will host a webinar to discuss two investigations focused on nitrogen (N) and phosphorus (P) and emphasizes the need for government agencies to work together to address potential economic losses due to implementation of lower fertilizer rates for water quality improvement. **February 28th, 2024 02:00 PM**
https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_u_pA8zrgTPihqh7T-FWWpw#/registration

Other Funding

SOGL 2024 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 \$10.6 million in grants in 2024 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 14th, 2024**. <https://www.nfwf.org/programs/sustain-our-great-lakes-program/sustain-our-great-lakes-request-proposals-2024>