



Hamilton County Soil and Water Conservation District

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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 November 6, 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

John M. Stortecky, Vice Chairperson

Beth Hunt, Town Supervisor - Zoom

Betsy Bain, Town Supervisor

Shawn Hansen, Member-at-Large

District Staff

Caitlin Stewart, District Manager

Katie WhitKovits, District Technician

Absent

Marjorie Remias, Secretary to the Board

Victoria Buyce, Chairperson

Leonard Croote, District Technician

Ryan Cunningham, Associate

Environmental Analyst, Soil and Water

Conservation Committee

District Conservationist

Katherine Girard, Natural Resources and

Conservation Service

I. Call to order and Pledge of Allegiance – J.M. Stortecky called the meeting to order at 9:37 a.m. Pledge of Allegiance conducted.

II. Roll call – J.M. Stortecky conducted roll call.

III. Reading and approval of the October 8, 2024, meeting minutes – The minutes were provided in advance of the meeting.

- **A motion was made by Bain, seconded by Hunt to approve the October 8, 2024, meeting minutes. J.M. Stortecky abstained. All in favor, motion carried.**

IV. Treasurer’s Report – Stewart reviewed the Treasurer’s Report and distributed the expenses for Board review and approval for payment.

Balance	9/30/24	\$363,607.07
Receipts		21,591.91
Disbursements		61,285.69
Balance	10/31/24	\$323,913.29

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

- V. **Review and approve the 2025 proposed budget** – Stewart provided the 2025 proposed budget in advance of the meeting and reviewed it line by line. Discussion ensued.
- **A motion was made by J.M. Stortecky, seconded by Hunt to adopt the 2025 Proposed Budget. All voted in favor, motion carried.**
- VI. **Resolution authorizing the signing of a contract with the Oswego County Soil and Water Conservation District for transfer of funding for Finger Lakes – Lake Ontario Watershed Protection Alliance SFY2024-25 funding** – Stewart reported that DEC approved the District’s SFY 2024-25 workplan. Grant funds total \$137,200.00, and now the contract must be signed. The allocation we receive from Hamilton County is essential because the DEC withholds the FLOWPA 25% final payment in the amount of \$34,300.00 until our final report and close out documents are submitted, reviewed, and approved. We efficiently use our Hamilton County allocation to leverage FLOWPA grant funds, and this is one reason why the county allocation is essential to District work.

RESOLUTION #5-2024

**RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE SIGNING OF A CONTRACT
WITH THE OSWEGO COUNTY SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT FOR
TRANSFER OF FUNDING FOR FINGER LAKES-LAKE ONTARIO WATERSHED PROTECTION
ALLIANCE SFY2024-25 FUNDING**

DATED NOVEMBER 6, 2024

BY: Mr. J.M. Stortecky

WHEREAS, the Hamilton County Soil and Water Conservation District, as one of twenty-five (25) voting members of the Water Resources Board of the Finger Lakes – Lake Ontario Watershed Protection Alliance, has been allocated NYS Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC) funds for its water quality program under the Finger Lakes – Lake Ontario Watershed Protection Alliance (FLOWPA); AND

WHEREAS, NYSDEC has agreed to transfer funding for the twenty-five (25) member Programs to the Oswego County Soil and Water Conservation District via a single contract between NYSDEC and the District; NOW THEREFORE BE IT

RESOLVED, that Caitlin Stewart, District Manager be, and hereby is, authorized and directed to sign a contract between the Hamilton County Soil and Water Conservation District and the Oswego County Soil and Water Conservation District for the Finger Lakes – Lake Ontario Watershed Protection Alliance as specified in said contracts; and to act as the official representative of the Hamilton County Soil and Water Conservation District in connection with any and all

contracts between the Hamilton County Soil and Water Conservation District and the Oswego County Soil and Water Conservation District for FLOWPA funds, AND FURTHER, BE IT

RESOLVED, that a signed, certified copy of this resolution be submitted to Mr. Joe Chairvolotti, District Manager of the Oswego County Soil and Water Conservation District along with said contract, AND FURTHER BE IT

RESOLVED, that this resolution take effect immediately.

SECONDED BY: Ms. Bain and adopted by the following vote:

AYES: Mr. J.M. Stortecky, Ms. Bain, Ms. Hunt, Mr. Hansen

NAYES: None

ABSTAIN: None

ABSENT: Ms. Buyce

VII. Purchase waders – WhitKovits reported that her and Lenny’s waders leak, have gashes, and need to be replaced to safely conduct field work.

- **A motion was made by J.M. Stortecky, seconded by Bain to approve the purchase of 2 neoprene fishing chest waders in the amount of \$221.88 including shipping. All voted in favor, motion carried.**

VIII. NYCLASS application – Stewart reported that Remias completed the application and would like board approval to sign submit it.

- **A motion was made by J.M. Stortecky, seconded by Hunt to permit all required District and board employees to sign the NYCLASS application for submission by Clerk and Secretary to the Board Marjorie Remias. All in favor, motion carried.**

XI. Caring Through Conservation Mini Grant application approval – WhitKovits reported that we tabled the Town of Wells Community Garden application at our October board meeting because we lacked a quorum due to Director Hunt’s abstention because the project is from her town.

- **A motion was made by J.M. Stortecky, seconded by Hansen to accept the Caring Through Conservation Mini Grant application for the Town of Wells Community Garden in the amount of \$313.65, omitting the ineligible personnel expense of \$2,000.00. J.M. Stortecky, Baine, and Hansen voted in favor; Hunt abstained, motion carried.**

IX. District Activities

- a. **NYACD Annual Meeting Review** – J.M. Stortecky reported that progress was made. Two new division directors stepped up. Now NYACD has 5 out of 8 division representative positions filled. J.M. Stortecky has high hopes for the future of NYACD and hopes the new directors will put constraints on upper management and will seek input from other directors statewide. Stewart reviewed the following resolutions that were not reported on in the executive directors November letter to directors: Resolution for the New State Conservation District Employees' Association and New York Association of Conservation District Representatives to Promote and Support Efforts for Reform of the NYS and Local Retirement System, and Resolution to Urge USDA-NRCS New York to Prioritize Cultural Resources Reviews and Take Action to Address Backlog. Our District won 2 competitive District in the Media awards.

- b. **Sediment and Erosion Control Program** – Stewart shared Croote's report. All Shaw Brook Bridge (Long Lake) permits have been approved by DEC, APA, and the Army Corps of Engineers. Because NRCS rescheduled the required archaeological study from July to Spring 2025, Croote has requested a fall site visit to keep the project moving forward. George Henry has 1 or 2 more field days remaining for the Elbow Creek Corridor assessment grant (Wells), and then will have collected all the necessary data to complete the report. The Robbs Creek Bridge Repair (Wells) should be completed by the County DPW by the end of December. The County highway crew members installed the bridge stringers and are waiting for the deck boards to be delivered. The District's trash pump was utilized at the project site. Croote determined the bridge span size, set grade control to prevent scouring along the new abutments, and reformed the stream to the appropriate width ratio. Croote is acting as a liaison between Trout Unlimited (TU), DEC, and Hamilton County for the Moose River Plains Culvert Project. TU prioritized 8 to 13 culvert sites for replacement, but limited funding is preventing the project from moving forward. Croote completed culvert site assessments and provided input. Croote and Remias finished the hydroseeding season and stabilized priority roadsides and ditches to prevent erosion and protect water quality. Croote winterized the new hydroseeder and reported that it ran very well.

- c. **Agricultural Environmental Management** – WhitKovits mentioned that there is nothing new to report.

- d. **Invasive Species Program** - WhitKovits reported that she continues to promote the Japanese knotweed stem injector loaner program. Stewart serves as Secretary for the New York State Invasive Species Advisory Committee and finalized and submitted draft minutes for the joint Invasive Species Council meeting held in October.

- e. **Conservation Field Day** – WhitKovits reported that all schools submitted essays and posters, and she scheduled a judging date with Buyce to rank the submissions.

- f. **Conservation Education Program** – Stewart reported that she, and SWCC AEs Ryan Cunningham, and P.J. Emerick prepared for and presented the Director Orientation class at the NYACD Annual Meeting. Stewart and WhitKovits attended the Town of Wells Board meeting to provide an update. WhitKovits attended the Hamilton County Health and Benefits Day and spoke with 20 attendees about our programs and services.
- g. **Lake Monitoring Program** – WhitKovits and Stewart completed the October rotation, and Remias delivered the samples to Paul Smith’s College Adirondack Watershed institute. They also worked together to provide feedback on DEC’s audit comments and questions. DEC accepted the final audit report and shared it with the Bureau of Water Assessment and Management Director, the FLOWPA Program Director, and DOW Quality Assurance program staff. Croote and WhitKovits are working with the Lake Pleasant Marina to winterize the boat. WhitKovits is currently reviewing 2024 field notes and data for reporting.
- h. **Septic System Replacement Fund** - Stewart reported that she and WhitKovits continue to respond to email and phone call inquiries. Croote, WhitKovits, and Stewart meet with DEC and Environmental Facilities Corporation staff on October 18 to discuss Round 4 program logistics. While they received beneficial recommendations that clarified the program, they are still waiting for responses to inquiries before they can launch the new round. We received a close-out application for Round 3.
- i. **Hamilton County Hazard Mitigation Plan Update** – Croote, WhitKovits, Remias, Stewart, Tim O’Neil, and Don Purdy worked together to update and submit the Request for Information from the Department of Homeland Security and Emergency Services. Stewart thanked Warren County SWCD Manager Jim Lieberum for his assistance. The DHSES is now reviewing the Hamilton County Hazard Mitigation Plan Update grant application, and all partners are hopeful that funds will be awarded for this essential project. Stewart stated that Tim O’Neil was a pleasure to work with.
- j. **Watershed partnership update**
 - 1. **FLOWPA** – Stewart reported that she and Remias are overseeing the closeout for FY2022-2023, which is due in December. Stewart attended the full board meeting on October 15, where voting members decided to request \$5 million for the SFY 2025-26 program. DEC partners presented Regulatory Floodways and No Rise Encroachment Reviews, and Stewart debriefed Croote. DEC also provided an update for the Finger Lakes Water Hub. Contract closeout and advance information was discussed. Stewart and WhitKovits will attend the 2025 trip to Albany in February.
 - 2. **Upper Hudson River Watershed Coalition** – As President, Stewart canceled the October meeting and is preparing for the November 7 meeting. Staff are implementing the Water Quality Improvement Project grant for the Upper Hudson River Roadside

Erosion Remediation Phase II and the Non-Ag Nonpoint Source Planning grant for the Elbow Creek Assessment. Remias oversees the financial report for Phase II Roadside Erosion Remediation Program grant. She entered required information into the new SFS Grant System for grants and signed a contract for website creation through the Alfred Z. Solomon Trust grant written by Warren County SWCD's Natural Resource Specialist Nick Rowell.

- 3. St. Lawrence River Watershed Project** – As President, Stewart canceled the October and November meetings due to scheduling conflicts. She finalized and submitted a press release about the Watershed Revitalization Plan that was published in the *Hamilton County Express*.
 - 4. Mohawk River Watershed Coalition** – As President, Stewart canceled the October meeting and is preparing for the November 13 meeting. She met with Fulton County SWCD's Resource Conservationist Jacob Hart to review the Mohawk River Watershed Coalition Capacity contract with DEC in the amount of \$1,500,000.00. She will work with the Coalition members to review their scope of work priorities. She also attended a Mohawk River Basin Steering Committee meeting to maintain lines of communication and learn about new partner priorities.
 - 5. Black River Watershed** – Nichelle Swisher, Lewis County SWCD, is preparing materials to form the coalition. WhitKovits will attend the upcoming November 7 meeting. Stewart submitted a Hamilton County Lake Monitoring Program article and photos to the Black River Initiative Newsletter.
- k. Logo** – Stewart reported that Aubrey Zegstroof provided a nice selection of fonts and is sketching some possibilities on taking mood board 1 to the next level. She will add more detail to the curl of the fiddlehead fern.
 - l. Other** – Croote and WhitKovits will take the Civil Service exam on December 7th for Senior District Technician and District Technician respectively.
 - m. Executive session to discuss Cornell Cooperative Extension.**
 - **A motion was made by J.M. Stortecky, seconded by Hunt to enter executive session at 10:45 a.m. to discuss Cornell Cooperative Extension. WhitKovits and Stewart were invited to attend.**
 - **A motion made by J.M. Stortecky, seconded by Bain to exit executive session at 10:54 a.m.**
 - **The Board of Directors reported that no action will be taken.**

- n. **Directors' comments** – J.M. Stortecky reported that 10 DEC agents entered a home in Pine City and euthanized a squirrel and a raccoon that were raised by Mr. Longo.

XI. Staff reports – Stewart disseminated and emailed copies of the staff reports.

XII. Partner reports

- a. **New York State Soil and Water Conservation Committee report** – appended to minutes.
- b. **District Conservationist's report** – Stewart reported that the Natural Resources Conservation Service backfilled Tom Bielli's position. Katherine (Kate) Girard has been selected as the new District Conservationist for the NRCS NY Northeast Area Team 3, replacing Tom Bielli following his retirement last year. Kate's duty location will be Ballston Spa and she will start as DC on December 2, 2024. Kate will lead the NRCS team which includes the Ballston Spa, Fultonville and Greenwich offices, covering Fulton, Hamilton, Montgomery, Saratoga, Warren and Washington Counties. Kate hopes to attend our December meeting. Stewart shared her report, appended to the minutes.
- c. **New York Association of Conservation Districts** – Stewart contacted NYACD Executive Director Blanche Hurlbutt to inquire if she would like to share an update with the board. Stewart distributed hard copies at the meeting, and information is appended to the minutes.

XIII. Correspondence

- a. We received a thank you message from Don Purdy for overseeing the Hazard Mitigation Plan Update grant that read, "I am so glad the Hazmit program is finally under your auspices, you will do great with it."
- b. Croote received a thank you from a landowner for an erosion control project that read, "Thanks a lot for helping me out, you did a great job. The only thing is the darn turkeys ate a lot of the seed!"
- c. Email from NRCS: selection of NRCS Northeast Team 3 Division Conservationist Katherine (Kate) Girard
- d. Thank you note to the Board of Directors from CDEA Division V Rep and Warren County SWCD Senior District Technician Maren Stoddard. She thanked WhitKovits and Croote for demonstrating invasive plant management during the Division V meeting and thanked our Directors for attending.

XIV. Next meeting date – Rescheduled to the following date due to the SWCC's Manager Meeting: Tentatively December 11, 2024, 9:30 a.m. to be confirmed by the directors, Hamilton County SWCD office, Inlet Highway Department, and Zoom.

XV. Adjournment – A motion was made by J.M. Stortecky, seconded by Bain to adjourn the meeting at 11:08 a.m. All in favor, carried.

Respectfully Submitted

Katie WhitKovits, Acting Secretary and District Technician

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

- **Administration**
 - Completed the 2025 preliminary budget with Marj
 - Submitted the 2025 Annual Plan of Work to SWCC AEA Ryan Cunningham, who reviewed and approved it on his end.
 - Submitted the 2025 Part B Project Request and Claim for Payment for the Morehouse Rec Center Stormwater Management Project in the amount of \$6,000.00 to SWCC AEA Ben Luskin
 - Coordinated new printer installation
 - New logo – provided feedback
 - Staff meetings
 - Tracked performance measures that ensure our District receives state aid funding
 - Reviewed the 2024 budget with Marj
 - Board meeting preparation
 - Assisted Tim Ellifritz with computer maintenance and updates
 - Website updates
 - Social media posts
- **Technical Assistance**
 - Foam on Blue Mountain Lake
 - DEC requested our involvement with ADK Action's Capped Landfill Restoration grant: soil survey and plantings
 - Coordinated partnership between Croote and the Montgomery, Fulton Hamilton Farm Service agency to assist a Hamilton County producer with storm damage from the July tornado.
- **Hamilton County Hazard Mitigation Plan**
 - Met with Lenny and Tim O'Neil to review the budget and project status of the previous plan
 - Completed Appendix A Scope of Work, ensured SOW, timeline, and budget aligned, updated the budget, completed the Non-Construction Budget and Non-Construction Assurances forms, submitted all requirements listed in the Department of Homeland Security and Emergency Services Request for Information before the deadline.
- **Lake Monitoring Program**

- Assisted Katie with the October rotations
- **Conservation Education**
 - Conservation Field Day – briefed Katie on the essay and poster contests
 - Coordinated a migration challenge presentation with middle school classes
 - Invited to present on the Elbow Creek grant at the Friends of Lake Algonquin 2025 Annual Meeting
- **Septic System Replacement Fund**
 - Responded to 1 landowner inquiry
 - Attended meeting with DEC and EFC
- **Invasive Species**
 - Finalized and submitted minutes for review for the joint Invasive Species Advisory Committee and Invasive Species Council meeting held in October
- **Watershed Coalitions**
 - **FLLOWPA** – Overseeing the closeout for FY2022-2023, which is due in December, attended the full board meeting on October 15. Assisted Katie with DEC Lake Monitoring Program audit feedback.
 - **Upper Hudson River Watershed Coalition** – Preparing for the November 7 meeting. Entered required information into the new SFS Grant System, assisting with oversight of the Water Quality Improvement Project grant for the Upper Hudson River Roadside Erosion Remediation Phase II and the Non-Ag Nonpoint Source Planning grant for the Elbow Creek Assessment. Reviewed and signed a contract for website creation through the Alfred Z. Solomon Trust grant.
 - **St. Lawrence River Watershed Project** – Preparing for the December meeting. Finalized and submitted a press release about the Watershed Revitalization Plan that was published in the *Hamilton County Express*.
 - **Mohawk River Watershed Coalition** – Preparing for the November 13 meeting. Met with Fulton County to review the Mohawk River Watershed Coalition Capacity contract with DEC in the amount of \$1,500,000.00. Attended a Mohawk River Basin Steering Committee meeting to maintain lines of communication and learn about new partner priorities.
 - **Black River Watershed** – Submitted a Hamilton County Lake Monitoring Program article and photos to the Black River Initiative Newsletter.
- **New York State Conservation District Employees Association**
 - Preparing for the November meeting
 - CDEA By-Laws subcommittee meeting
 - Attended a meeting with the Upper Susquehanna Coalition to discuss opportunities to partner on housing the event coordinator

- Attended a meeting to discuss lobbying opportunities and inquiries
- Attended the October SWCC meeting
- Attended the October Special Programs Advisory Committee meeting and assisted Jennifer Kelly with compiling feedback
- Brought forward a Technical Advisory Committee member suggestion to Bethany Bzduch
- Worked with SWCC to develop statewide survey
- Attended the NYACD Annual Meeting and provided a CDEA update
- Presented Director Orientation at the NYACD Annual Meeting with SWCC AEA's Ryan Cunningham and P.J. Emerick
- Assisted Herkimer County SWCD with the retirement system resolution for the NYACD Annual Meeting and made 100 copies
- Met with St. Lawrence County SWCD's new manager
- Preparing for Managers' Meeting to be held at the Admin Conference
- Working on the October CDEA Newsletter is hot off the press, and back issues are available at <https://www.nyscdea.com/>
- Charing the Education Track for the 2025 Water Quality Symposium, submitted course descriptions and instructor registration forms to Vice President
- Preliminary work to schedule a 4-Way Partnership meeting
- Information requests: paid family leave policy, civil service, insurance opt out, raised concerns on renewable energy, civil service exam reviews, NAACC transfer to SARP, DEC permitting, NYSESCCP

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

General

7/10/23 Storm event
 Shaw Brook Bridge Permits
 Elbow Creek Corridor assessment
 Robbs Creek Bridge Repair
 Surveyed Culverts in Moose River Plains
 Hydroseeding
 Vehicle and equipment maintenance
 Winterized equipment
 Erosion site inspections
 Trail Maintenance
 2025 Tree and Shrub Program
 Researched new GPS/ GNSS Surveying equipment
 Research Trash Pumps

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

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- Caring Through Conservation Mini Grant
 - **1 application for review**
 - **Wells**
 - We've had lots of interest in this program. We have allocated \$10,000 to fund 5 projects up to \$2,000 each. We've been able to fund 7 projects while only going over budget \$229.55 which is covered by Part C.
- 45th Annual Lynn Glausha Conservation Field Day
 - Vicki & Katie will grade the posters and essays
 - Katie will schedule award ceremonies with each of the schools
- Lake Monitoring
 - Caitlin & I finished out the year with the brisk but beautiful October rotation
 - All field and YSI data has been downloaded and I am working on organizing everything for reports and the 2024 Master Data spreadsheet
 - Dropped off boat to be winterized
- NYACD Annual Meeting
 - Attended with Caitlin & John on 10/21 & 10/22
 - Took "A Paperless Office" and "E-records Disaster Response"

Other

- Held a follow up Rural Roads Active Management Program meeting to build a new app usable state-wide
- Attended North County Stormwater Tradeshow with Lenny
- Town of Wells October meeting for a District update with Caitlin
- Met with DEC and EFC on the septic system replacement fund
- 2 dry hydrant surveys with Lenny on Lake Pleasant
- 1 dry hydrant survey with Lenny on Fawn Lake Rd
- Tabled at the Counties Benefits Day
 - Provided info on many programs including knotweed injector tool rental program, water testing, septic inspection, tree & shrub sale and more

Submitted by: Ryan Cunningham – Region 4 Associate Environmental Analyst

NYS SWCC News

November SWCC Meeting: The next meeting of the NYS Soil and Water Conservation Committee will be on Tuesday, **November 12th starting at 10:00 AM**. Further details and an agenda for this meeting will be sent out in advance of the meeting. Reminder – participation at a SWCC meeting is eligible toward PM1, Part C of State Aid to Districts.

2024 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.

Reminder of Open Funding Opportunities: A reminder that these funding programs are accepting rolling applications.

- **Source Water Buffer Program:** Funding is available to support the purchase of development rights on agricultural land to support the protection of active public drinking water sources. More information can be found here, <https://agriculture.ny.gov/soil-and-water/rfa-0181-source-water-buffer-program>
- **County Agriculture and Farmland Protection Planning Grants:** Counties are eligible for grants up to \$50,000 for developing a county agriculture and farmland protection plan. Any county that has established an agricultural and farmland protection board and has not had an agricultural and farmland protection plan approved in the last 10 years is eligible for funding. For more information and to assess your Counties eligibility, please visit: <https://agriculture.ny.gov/land-and-water/rfa-0262-county-agriculture-and-farmland-protection-planning-grants>

Other Events

Great Lakes Action Agenda Sub-Basin Work Group Meetings: DEC Great Lakes program staff are excited to announce the next round of Great Lakes Action Agenda (GLAA) Sub-Basin Work Group meetings will be held this fall to provide opportunities to learn updates from NYSDEC Great Lakes Program and partners. <https://dec.ny.gov/nature/waterbodies/lakes-rivers/great-lakes/action-agenda>

- Lake Erie: **Wednesday, November 6th, 1 – 4 PM**
- Southwest (SW) Lake Ontario: **Friday, November 8th, 1 – 4 PM**
- Southeast (SE) Lake Ontario: **Thursday, November 14th, 2024; 1 - 4:00 PM**
- Northeast Lake Ontario-St. Lawrence River (LOSLR): **Friday, November 15th, 1 – 4 PM**

2024 Annual Meeting of the Soil and Water Conservation Society – Empire Chapter will be held remotely on **Nov. 7th from 9:00am to 12:15 PM** (business meeting at 8am). “Learn the Science Behind What We Do” when implementing cover crops, riparian forest buffers and tackling HAB’s in the Finger Lakes. Speakers include representatives from the Stroud Water Research Center, Cornell CAL’s and the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation. CCA CEU’s are offered. The event is free and remote. Register here: <https://bit.ly/EmpireSWCS2024> Meeting here: <https://us06web.zoom.us/j/86104155526>
Contact Scott Fickbohm with any questions scott.fickbohm@agriculture.ny.gov

2024 Northeast Region Agribusiness & CCA Conference: Including the Basic Training track for those preparing to take the CCA exams as well as the Advanced Training track for current CCAs. An in-person track will commence at the Doubletree Hotel, East Syracuse, NY on **November 19th-20th, 2024**, followed by a virtual track will commence on **December 10th-11th, 2024**, when additional programming will be offered. More information and a registration link can be found here, <https://www.nysaba.com/about-3>

NACD 2025 Annual Meeting: Registration for The National Association of Conservation Districts' (NACD) 79th Annual Meeting is now open! The 2025 Annual Meeting will take place in Salt Lake City, Utah, from **February 8th –12th, 2025**. To learn more and to register, please visit: <https://www.nacdnet.org/news-and-events/annual-meeting/>

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 by **12/16/24**.

Other Funding

Establishing Large Forests (ELF) Grant Program: DEC announced that \$4.5 Million is available for private landowners to establish new forests. ELF expands on New York State's popular Regenerate NY Forestry Cost Share Grant Program and is designed to support the creation of new forests crucial for mitigating climate change, providing wildlife habitat, protecting air and water quality, and supplying timber, an important renewable resource. Applications will be accepted until **3 p.m. on Tuesday, Jan. 7, 2025**. Applications must be submitted through the SFS Grants Management System (SFS). Those wishing to apply need to establish an account in SFS. Once registered, search SFS for "Establishing Large Forests" or "ELF."

<https://dec.ny.gov/news/press-releases/2024/10/dec-announces-45-million-in-new-grant-funding-to-establish-large-forests>

United States Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service Submitted by: Katherine Girard, District Conservationist

- Currently working on annual payments for the Conservation Stewardship Program, there are 5 in Hamilton Co. Work includes tree and shrub planting and snag and den tree creation.
- We received 1 EQIP application for Hamilton Co. for fiscal year 2025, will be evaluating it over the winter.
- I start as the District Conservationist covering Hamilton County 12/2. I plan to attend an upcoming board meeting to introduce myself to the board. I would also like to schedule a time (or times) once I am settled to meet with district staff to discuss projects and possible opportunities for NRCS involvement/partnership in Hamilton Co.

New York Association of Conservation Districts

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Submitted by: Blanche Hurlbutt, Executive Director

November 1, 2024

Dear Directors:

2024 NYACD Annual Meeting/Training: Overall the annual meeting and training went off without a hitch. It was held at the Hampton Inn, Penn Yan, NY on the lake shore. The setting was great, and the weather was beautiful. This year we changed things up a little bit and had a two-day full event with a tour provided by Yates County, which was enjoyed by over forty-five folks. There were great training sessions on Monday morning and Tuesday there was the annual meeting and luncheon. Even though the attendance was down we are hoping that in the future we can change things up a bit, change location, provide new and different training sessions, and have more people able to attend.

2025 NACD NE/NYACD Event: NYACD will be hosting the NACD NE annual event along with NY's annual session in 2025. The dates have been set for Sunday, September 21-24, 2025. It will be held at the DoubleTree Hilton, East Syracuse, NY. This event will be full of training sessions, annual meetings, and so much more. More information will follow as we move forward in the planning process.

2024 NY Envirothon: The NYS Envirothon will be held on Wednesday, May 28th and Thursday, May 29th, 2025. Once again it will be at SUNY Cortland, Cortland, NY. The NYS Envirothon website is updated with all new pdf references. The oral presentation problem will be added to the NYS Envirothon website in January 2025 on the current issue topic "Roots and Resiliency: Fostering Forest Stewardship in a Canopy of Change." The NYS Envirothon website is www.nysenvirothon.org. Check out the website.

2025 Legislative Days: Legislative days is scheduled for Monday, March 3rd, and Tuesday, March 4th, 2025. Additional information will be provided soon.

Great Lakes Commission: I will be attending a meeting with other Executive Directors in Ann Arbor, Michigan on November 19-22, 2024. With the help of Chastity Miller, a PowerPoint was created regarding NY's soil and water districts to be presented during this meeting. The first meeting will be an organizational meeting, so more information will be provided.

Sincerely,

Blanche

Mrs. Blanche L. Hurlbutt,
NYACD Executive Director