



HAMILTON COUNTY

Soil & Water Conservation District

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Lake Pleasant NY 12108

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Find us on Facebook, Instagram, and Vimeo

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

Board of Directors Meeting Minutes January 6, 2026

Hamilton County SWCD: 103 County View Drive, Lake Pleasant, NY 12108
Inlet Highway Department: 65 Limekiln Lake Rd, Inlet, NY 13360
Town of Wells Municipal Office Building: 1438 State Rte. 30, Wells NY 12190
Zoom

Board of Directors

Victoria Buyce, Chairperson
John M. Stortecky, Vice Chairperson
Betsy Bain, Town Supervisor
Beth Hunt, Town Supervisor

District Staff

Caitlin Stewart, District Manager
Marjorie Remias, Secretary to the Board
Katherine WhitKovits, Technician

Absent

Lenny Croote, Senior Technician
Shawn Hansen, Member-at-Large
Ryan Cunningham, Associate Environmental Analyst, Soil and Water Conservation Committee
Katherine Girard, District Conservationist, Natural Resources and Conservation Service
Blanche Hurlbutt, Executive Director, New York Association of Conservation Districts

I. Call to order and Pledge of Allegiance – Buyce called the meeting to order at 9:30 a.m. Pledge of Allegiance conducted.

II. Roll call – Buyce conducted roll call.

III. Reading and approval of the December 2, 2025, meeting minutes – The minutes were provided in advance of the meeting.

- **A motion was made by Buyce, seconded by J.M. Stortecky to approve the December 2, 2025, meeting minutes. All in favor, motion carried.**

VI. Treasurer's Report – Remias distributed the Treasurer's Report and expenses for Board review and approval for payment. The report was provided in advance of the meeting. She reported that we earned a total of \$8,625.10 in interest through NYCLASS in 2005.

Balance	11/30/25	\$278,742.83
Receipts		10,427.91
Disbursements		87,393.08
Balance	12/31/25	\$201,777.66

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

V. 2026 Organizational Items - Stewart provided the 2026 Organizational Items in advance of the meeting and summarized it. A copy is appended to the minutes.

- A motion was made by Buyce, seconded by J.M. Stortecky to approve the 2026 Organizational Items. All in favor, motion carried.

VI. 2025 Risk Management Plan - Stewart provided the 2025 Risk Management Plan in advance of the meeting and summarized it. A copy is appended to the minutes.

- A motion was made by J.M. Stortecky, seconded by Hunt to approve the 2026 Organizational Items. All in favor, motion carried.

VII. Seasonal Technician – Stewart reported that Finger Lakes – Lake Ontario Watershed Protection Alliance (FOLLOWPA) funds can support salaries, and we budgeted \$7,000.00 for a Seasonal Technician to assist with field work, projects, and programs.

- A motion was made by J.M. Stortecky, seconded by Hunt to permit District Manager Caitlin Stewart to proceed with advertisement and hiring a 2026 Seasonal Technician, with an hourly rate of \$18.00 to \$19.50 commensurate with experience. All in favor, motion carried.

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

DATED: JANUARY 6, 2026

BY: Mr. J.M. Stortecky

WHEREAS, the term of office of Betsy Bain, Director of the Hamilton County Soil and Water Conservation District, terminates on December 31, 2025, now, therefore, 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 appointment to the above said District Board:

Betsy Bain to succeed herself as a Supervisor Representative for a term of one year, commencing January 1, 2026, and terminating December 31, 2026.

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

AYES: Ms. Buyce, Mr. J. M. Stortecky, and Ms. Hunt

NAYES: None.

ABSENT: Mr. Hansen, Ms. Bain

ABSTAIN: None

9:47 am- Director Bain arrived at the meeting.

IX. 2026-2030 Agricultural Environmental Management Strategic Plan - Stewart provided the Round 19 Agricultural Environmental Management Action Plan in advance of the meeting, and WhitKovits reviewed it. A copy of the plan is appended to the minutes.

- **A motion was made by Hunt, seconded by J.M. Stortecky to approve the Round 19 Agricultural Environmental Management Action Plan. All in favor, motion carried.**

X. District Activities

a. 2025 4th quarter Annual Plan of Work – Stewart disseminated the 2025 4th quarter Annual Plan of Work and congratulated the Board of Directors and staff for executing the plan with expertise and professionalism.

b. 2026 Insurance Renewal – Stewart reported that she and Remias reviewed and submitted the 2026 insurance renewal. We declined supplemental spousal liability and terrorism insurance. The renewal premium is coming in at \$9,776.81, an increase of \$1,359.15 over the expiring and consistent to what we are seeing in the market again this year. Some of the increase is also due to increased exposure: contents value increased (inflationary), and updates to the IM schedule.

c. Autumn update to the Hamilton County Board of Supervisors - Stewart reported that she, Croote, and WhitKovits provided an Autumn update to the Hamilton County Board of Supervisors on December 18. She disseminated the info graph and reported that the program update and Shaw Brook Restoration Project video were very well received. Town of Inlet Supervisor John Frey said during the meeting that Hamilton County is a better place to live because of the work we accomplish.

d. Sediment and Erosion Control Program – Nothing to report.

e. Adirondack Tree and Shrub Sale – Stewart reported that Croote has ordered the trees for the 2026 sale, and he will be updating the order form with Stewart. The pickup date is Saturday April 25 at the Brown Shed on South Shore Road, Lake Pleasant, and at the Blue Mountain Lake Fire Hall in Blue Mountain Lake.

f. Agricultural Environmental Management – WhitKovits reported that she completed and submitted the 2026-2030 AEM Strategic Plan, and is also working to close out Round 18.

g. Lake Monitoring Program – Nothing to report.

h. Invasive Species Program – WhitKovits reported that she attended the Adirondack Park Invasive Plant Program's year end meeting. She thanked the APIPP team for creating signage for our boot brush station that we will install at the entrance to our Adirondack EcoTrail.

i. Conservation Education Program – Nothing to report.

j. Conservation Field Day – WhitKovits reported that she will host the last awards ceremony this Friday and Stewart will write and send a press release announcing the essay and poster contest winners to local papers.

k. Septic System Replacement Fund – All team members continue to answer inquiries from the public about future funding. We have also had multiple inquiries from applicants that have completed their projects and documentation regarding when to expect their reimbursement checks. We continue to review close-out paperwork and have 7 completed requests to submit for reimbursement.

l. Hazard Mitigation – Stewart reported that she made revisions required to comply with current FEMA guidance and priorities, and submitted to DHSES. She revised the sub application and scope of work to exclude any activities that explicitly indicate or relate to climate change, Social Vulnerability Index (SVI), economically disadvantaged rural community, underserved, socially vulnerable populations.

m. Watershed partnership update

- FLOWPA – Stewart reported that she and Remias have begun work on the 2023-24 contract close-out document and that it is due January 31. Stewart and WhitKovits registered for FLOWPA Legislative Day to be held in the beginning of February.
- Upper Hudson River Watershed Coalition – Croote reported that no meeting was held in December. He is collecting DPW time sheets to close out Phase II of the WQIP Roadside Erosion Remediation Program grant.

- St. Lawrence River Watershed Project – Stewart reported that she is preparing for the January 8 meeting and emailed the agenda. Elections to fill Executive Board vacancies will be held.
- Mohawk River Watershed Coalition – Croote and WhitKovits are working on a stream sediment and debris removal plan. Stewart and Croote submitted the 4th quarter report and request for reimbursement.
- Black River Watershed – WhitKovits reported that the coalition held a Working Group meeting led by Sunita Halasz of the Adirondack Council to set priorities.

XI. Other

a. Caring Through Conservation Mini Grant – WhitKovits reported that all 2025 disbursements have been made. We funded 7 conservation projects across the county totaling \$11,941.59. Grant recipients were happy and we hope to continue receiving applications for the coming year. We received more applications than we could fill this past year.

b. Ecosystem Based Management Stream Corridor Management Program grant application – The entire team wrote, created maps, proofread, and submitted the grant application for the \$100,000 Forked Lake Road Culvert Replacement Project.

c. Lake Management Plan Review - At the request of the Lake Pleasant Sacandaga Association, Stewart and WhitKovits reviewed and commented on their Lake Management Plan. They also provided information regarding copper sulfate use in lakes, contacts for the Moffitt Beach Campground wastewater treatment system, and plant recommendations for shorelines and erosion prevention.

XII. Directors' comments – Director Stortecky alerted the Board and District to a proposed lithium battery plant for an adjacent county and the prospective harms to the environment it could bring. He also requested that Caitlin as a partner to the New York Association of Conservation Districts ask them for an update regarding the proposed changes to their by-laws.

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

XIV. Partner reports

a. New York State Soil and Water Conservation Committee Associate Environmental Analyst's report – Appended to the minutes.

b. Natural Resources Conservation Service District Conservationist's report – No report.

c. New York Association of Conservation Districts Executive Director report – Appended to minutes.

XV. Correspondence – none.

XVI. Next meeting – February 3, 2026, 9:30 a.m., Hamilton County SWCD office (103 County View Drive, Lake Pleasant, NY 12108), Inlet Highway Department (65 Limekiln Lake Rd, Inlet, NY 13360), Town of Wells Municipal Office Building (1438 State Rte. 30, Wells NY 12190) and Zoom.

XII. Adjournment

- **A motion was made by Bain, seconded by J.M. Stortecky to adjourn the meeting at 10:35 a.m. All in favor, motion carried.**

Respectfully Submitted



Marjorie Remias
Secretary to the Board/Treasurer

Organizational Items 2026

Designation of:

A. Official Bank and Newspaper: That NBT Bank, Speculator is the official bank of the District, and the *Hamilton County Express* is the official newspaper of the District.

B. That the treasurer be authorized to pay the following for the calendar year 2026:

1. Salaries
2. Social Security contributions
3. Medicare contributions
4. Health insurance premiums and health insurance stipends
5. New York State Retirement contribution
6. New York State Deferred Compensation contribution
7. New York State Income Tax
8. Federal Withholding Tax
9. Telephone bills
10. Fuel charge payments for District vehicles (payable to the county)
11. Straw bale bills from William Lee
12. Automobile insurance premium
13. Liability insurance premium
14. Workman's Compensation payment premium
15. Payment for Blanket Bond
16. Reimbursements for Director's travel

17. Reimbursement for Director's stipend (optional)
18. Public Officials Liability insurance premium
19. Standard mileage rate: 72.5 cents per mile, or most current IRS Mileage Rate
20. In the event of a canceled board meeting, all bills as pre-approved by the Directors
21. Hotel and registration fees for the Conservation Skills Workshop, Administrative Conference, Managers' Meetings, Water Quality Symposium, and New York Association of Conservation Districts Annual Meeting and Legislative Days

C. Board of Directors meetings shall be the first Tuesday of the month at 9:30 a.m. unless otherwise rescheduled.

D. Board meetings shall be hosted in hybrid format in person at the District office, Inlet Highway Department, Town of Wells Municipal Office Building and remotely via videoconference unless otherwise stated.

E. That employees be authorized to spend up to \$300 (\$500 emergency) without prior approval of the Board. Such expenditures would still need Board approval for payment.

F. Authorization for the District to transfer funds between District accounts.

G. Authorization to keep on hand petty cash of \$100 (\$50 for General and \$50 for WRB accounts).

H. Designation of the following:

- Chairperson – Victoria Buyce
- Vice Chairperson – John M. Stortecky
- Treasurer - Marjorie Remias
- Secretary – Marjorie Remias

I. Check Signing Authorization and alternate – Caitlin Stewart or Victoria Buyce (alternate).

J. Contact directory for Directors, staff, and partners.

K. Any District Board member may audit the Secretary to the Board's annual books.

L. Personnel Committee – Vicki Buyce, Betsy Bain, and John M. Stortecky.

The 2026 Organizational Designations were reviewed and established at the January 6, 2026 Board of Directors meeting. A copy is attached to the January minutes.

Hamilton County Soil & Water Conservation District					
Risk Management Plan					
List approved by the Hamilton County SWCD Board of Directors on 5/2/2000					
YEAR 2025					
Objective: To minimize or eliminate potential risk					
Category	Action	Who	When	Status	Comments
Management	Follow District Law.	Staff and Directors	On-going	x	
	District purchases insurance for indemnify employees.	Clerk	Annually	x	
	Update and follow office policies.	Staff	Ongoing	x	
	All District programs will be approved by Board of Directors.	Directors	Ongoing	x	
Personnel	Purchases will be bought according to procurement policy.	Staff	Ongoing	x	
	Update job descriptions and review as needed.	Manager	Annually	x	
	Complete performance appraisals for all employees.	Manager and Directors	Annually	x	
	Develop training and certification plans for staff and Directors.	Manager	Annually	x	
	Complete annual sexual harassment prevention training.	Staff	Annually	x	
	Keep accurate records, books and minutes.	Clerk	Ongoing	x	
Financial	Update resolution book as needed.	Clerk	Ongoing	x	
	Conduct yearly audit of financial records.	Clerk / Directors	Annually	x	
	Review and adjust budget.	Manager and Clerk	Ongoing	x	
	Complete annual report for the New York State Comptroller	Staff	January	x	
	Complete audit and Control Report for the New York State Soil and Water Conservation Committee.	Clerk	January	x	
	Complete state aid reporting and the Treasurer's Report for the New York State Soil and Water Conservation Committee.	Manager and Clerk	February	x	
	Maintain health insurance for District staff.	Clerk	Ongoing	x	
	Maintain security bond for District staff.	Manager	Annually	x	
	Maintain liability, fire, and theft insurance on equipment and building contents.	Manager	Annually	x	
	Maintain proper vehicle insurance.	Staff	Ongoing	x	
Vehicle	All NYS laws will be followed by operators of District vehicles.	Staff	Ongoing	x	
	NYS inspection will be completed each year.	Staff	Annually	x	
	Vehicles will be serviced on a regular basis.	Staff	Ongoing	x	
Safety	Employees are encouraged to take first aid, CPR, boater safety, and defensive driving courses.	Staff	Ongoing	x	
	Ensure that staff receive training on the proper use of all equipment to be used on District projects.	Manager	Ongoing	x	
	Ensure that staff have access to and wear necessary personal protective equipment while on project sites and performing field work.	Manager	Ongoing	x	
Implementation	All conservation applications will be completed under guidance of the Natural Resources Conservation Service. Standards and specs will be followed and documented by proper design procedures.	Staff	Ongoing	x	
	Obtain all necessary permits before construction begins.	Staff	Ongoing	x	

Hamilton County Agricultural Environmental Management Plan (AEM) Strategic Plan 2026 – 2030

Introduction

Small farms and agroforestry operations can be found sprinkled throughout Hamilton County. Hamilton County hosts 5 major watersheds: Black River, Upper Hudson River, Mohawk River, St. Lawrence River, and Oswegatchie. The landscape in these watersheds is primarily forested and state owned. Many upland streams and wetlands are contained within their boundaries, as well as abundant surface waters and the communities that have developed along their shores. These upland streams, wetlands and surface waters are crucial to the water quality of all downstream systems, influencing the supply and transport of water (Alexander, R.B, et. al 2007). By utilizing resources like the Hamilton County Agricultural Environmental Management Program (AEM) along with ample education and outreach efforts to connect with farmers, we feel optimistic about making positive water quality impacts on the integrity of headwater and downstream waterbodies in New York State.

Hamilton County Statistics

3rd largest county in New York State & located fully within the Adirondack Park

Least populated
Population: 5,107

68% state owned land

Encompasses 385 lakes &
5 HUC-8 watersheds

The vision of the Hamilton County Agricultural Environmental Management Program is to support our unique agricultural community while strengthening farmer stewardship, enhancing economic and food system contributions, and maintaining the integrity of our freshwater resources.

The mission of the Hamilton County Agricultural Environmental Management Program is to maintain the integrity of freshwater resources and inspire a sense of environmental stewardship among farmers and producers by building connections and cultivating long-lasting environmental stewardship within the county.

Advisory Committee: The Hamilton County AEM program is guided by the Hamilton County Soil and Water Conservation District's Board of Directors and partners including the Natural Resources Conservation Service, Cornell Cooperative Extension of Hamilton County, and the Hamilton County Board of Supervisors.

Current Water Quality Issues & Opportunities for Improvement

Despite being the least populous county in New York State and heavily forested, Hamilton County (HC) faces water quality issues that are not uncommon in other rural forested landscapes. Water resources in HC have been negatively impacted by both regional phenomenon (atmospheric deposition) and localized impacts (winter de-icing agents, aquatic invasive species, soil erosion, and septic failures). While we cannot directly link water quality degradation to agriculture in HC at this time, the AEM program will allow the District to perform a complete inventory of agriculture operations, including agroforestry and other nontraditional farming pursuits.

Agricultural Statistics and History of AEM in HC

The Hamilton County Soil and Water Conservation District participated in AEM between 2005 and 2010, submitting five Tier 1 worksheets. It is unclear why the program did not continue between 2010, and 2020, but it is suspected that small numbers of agricultural operations in Hamilton County did not yield any natural resource concerns requiring further assistance through the AEM program, or that funding was unlikely to be granted due to farm size and best management practice (BMP) to be implemented. HC has renewed a small AEM program since 2020. The table below shows statistics comparing data from the 2017 Census of Agriculture with the most current 2022 data. From this data, we can see that agriculture has increased in farm abundance and size.

Hamilton County Agriculture Statistics (2022 Census of Agriculture)		
Total and Per Farm Overview, 2022 and change since 2017		
	2022	% change since 2017
Number of Farms	24	71
Land in farms (acres)	1,704	83
Average size of farm (acres)	71	7

Water Resources to be Protected

Because of the extensive ecosystem services provided by upland streams, wetlands, and surface waters, we will prioritize and aim to protect all freshwater systems and landscapes that are being influenced by the presence of agriculture. This will include agroforestry operations such as maple syrup producers, hobby farmers, or those landowners who choose to keep livestock as pets, and more traditional agricultural pursuits such as crop farmers.

Past Agricultural Accomplishments

The District has participated in AEM in the past, and has worked on a number of Tier 1s and Tier 2s. This effort resulted in several Tier 1 worksheets being filed. Although Tier 2s were worked on, no data has been found to suggest that any of these producers advanced up the tiers.

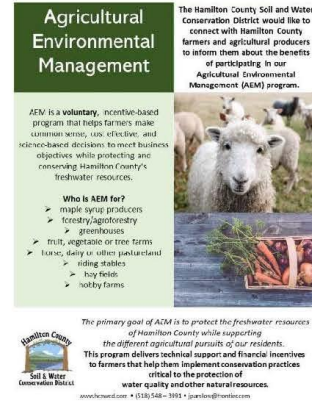
Despite a small turn out of farmers for AEM in Hamilton County, the District has had success working with partners such as NRCS to bring important conservation services to HC through programs like Environmental Quality Incentives Program, Resource Conservation Partnership Program, and others.

Outreach Strategy

Outreach will be conducted via community interaction. The District will utilize partnerships with NRCS, CCE and local and county government officials to promote the AEM program.

Communication Message

- **Priority Audience:** producers and farmers
 - The AEM program will help advance environmental stewardship at producer and farmer operations
 - AEM can assist with identifying water quality concerns and offer plans and funding to help implement projects
- **Secondary Audience:** Hamilton County residents and property owners
 - The AEM program can help HC's residents and property owners reduce water quality impacts which will maintain the overall integrity of our freshwater resources

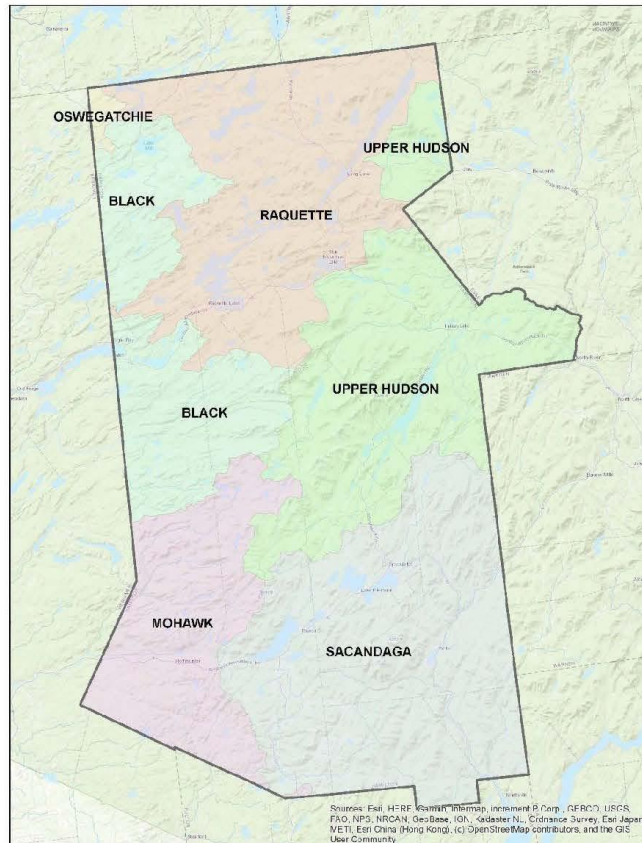


Outreach Materials

The District will use published materials (brochures, posters, and press releases), one-on-one communications (in person, mailings, phone calls, and emails) and social media and the District website to promote the program county-wide.

Priority Watersheds

The District prioritized local watersheds based on specific watershed management plans, the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation priority waterbody lists (PLWs), geographic location of known agricultural operations, and input from the Water Quality Coordinating Committee, Board of Directors, Board of Supervisors, and other community stakeholders. It was the consensus that all major drainage basins within the county should be treated as priority to maintain the integrity of the forested and rural landscapes surrounding them. The adjoining map shows the five major watersheds located in Hamilton County.



The following table provides a breakdown of HUC 12 priority watersheds. Major Watersheds (HUC8)	Suspected Water Quality Issues	Priority HUC 12 Watersheds	Watershed Information Sources	How We Plan to Address Water Quality Issues
Black River Watershed ID 04150101	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Atmospheric deposition ● Contaminants (mercury, PCBs) ● Failing onsite septic and wastewater treatment systems ● Agricultural runoff ● Invasive species ● Climate change ● Flow regulation ● Urban growth ● Flooding, erosion, and stormwater 	Fulton Chain Lakes- Middle Branch Moose River, HUC-12 Sub- watershed ID 041501010503 Limekiln Creek- South Branch Moose River, HUC-12 Sub- watershed ID 041501010406	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Black River Watershed 9E Plan ● NYS DEC PWL ● HCSWCD lake monitoring data 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Assess all farms/agricultural areas within the watershed. ● Complete Tier 1 and Tier 2 paperwork as necessary ● Provide farmers and producers with education and resources to support the implementation of BMPs to protect water quality
Mohawk River Watershed ID 02020004	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Atmospheric deposition ● Contaminants (mercury, PCBs) ● Failing onsite septic and wastewater treatment systems ● Agricultural runoff ● Invasive species ● Climate change ● Flooding, erosion, and stormwater 	Headwaters South Branch West Canada Creek, HUC-12 Sub- watershed Vly Brook-South Branch West Canada Creek, HUC-12 Sub- watershed ID 020200040407	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Mohawk Watershed Management Plan ● NYS DEC PWL ● HCSWCD lake monitoring data 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Assess all farms/agricultural areas within the watershed ● Complete Tier 1 and Tier 2 paperwork as necessary ● Provide farmers and producers with education and resources to support the implementation of BMPs to protect water quality
Raquette River Watershed ID 04150305	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Atmospheric deposition ● Contaminants (mercury, PCBs) ● Failing onsite septic and 	Raquette Lake, HUC-12 Sub- watershed ID 041503050103 Marion River, HUC-12 Sub- watershed ID 041503050102	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● St. Lawrence River Watershed Project (SLRWP), ● NYS DEC PWL ● HCSWCD lake monitoring data 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Assess all farms/agricultural areas within the watershed ● Complete Tier 1 and Tier 2 paperwork as necessary

	wastewater treatment systems <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Agricultural runoff ● Invasive species ● Climate change ● Flooding, erosion, and stormwater 	Raquette River-Long Lake, HUC-12 Sub- watershed ID 041503050303		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Provide farmers and producers with education and resources to support the implementation of BMPs to protect water quality
Sacandaga River ID 02020002	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Atmospheric deposition ● Contaminants (mercury, PCBs) ● Failing onsite septic and wastewater treatment systems ● Agricultural runoff ● Flow regulation ● Invasive species ● Climate change ● Flooding, erosion, and stormwater 	Outlet Piseco Lake, HUC-12 Sub-watershed ID 020200020202	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Upper Hudson River Watershed Revitalization Plan ● NYS DEC PWL ● HCSWCD lake monitoring data 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Assess all farms/agricultural areas within the watershed ● Complete Tier 1 and Tier 2 paperwork as necessary ● Provide farmers and producers with education and resources to support the implementation of BMPs to protect water quality
		Hatchery Brook-Upper Sacandaga River, HUC- 12 Sub-watershed ID 020200020301		
		Cherry Brook-Upper Sacandaga River, HUC- 12 Sub-watershed ID 020200020302		
		Robbs Creek-Upper Sacandaga River, HUC- 12 Sub-watershed ID 020200020304		
		Mill Creek-Upper Sacandaga River, HUC- 12 Sub-watershed ID 020200020306		
		Hunters Creek-Middle Sacandaga River, HUC- 12 Sub-watershed ID 020200020606		
		Bear Creek-East Stony Creek, HUC-12 Sub-watershed ID 020200020506		
		Hatch Brook-West Stony Creek, HUC- 12 Sub- watershed ID 020200020405		
Upper Hudson ID 02020001		Squaw Brook-Jessup River, HUC-12 Sub-watershed ID 020200010205		

Strategy for Addressing Water Quality Issues and to Achieve Our AEM Vision and Mission

Short- and long-term goals and objectives

Over the next five years, District staff will work with key partners to assess all agricultural operations (traditional and non, big or small) for water quality issues. The District will provide educational resources and support the goals of each individual operation. We will strive to fulfil our vision and mission by completing the following objectives.

Objective 1: Complete inventory of agricultural concerns and water quality issues in Hamilton County

January 2026 – December 2026

- Task 1: Conduct road surveys and outreach to locate potential agriculture
 - Deliverable 1.1: Data base containing contact information, location, and description of potential agriculture
- Task 2: Connect with producers to fill out Tier 1 paperwork
 - Deliverable 2.1: Communication with producers in Hamilton County
 - Deliverable 2.2: Work with producers through the AEM program and complete Tier 1 worksheets
- Task 3: Use Tier 1 questionnaire to prioritize the operations
 - Deliverable 3.1: Create a database of Tier 1 worksheet info

Objective 2: Identify and prioritize critical areas in Hamilton County watersheds

January 2027 – December 2027

- Task 4: Conduct Tier 2 assessments of priority operations
 - Deliverable 4.1: Work with producers to complete Tier 2 worksheets
 - Deliverable 4.2: Upload Tier 2 worksheets to AEM database
- Task 5: Compile Tier 2 results into GIS format
 - Deliverable 5.1: ArcPro Map of water quality concerns and locations

Objective 3: Identify and implement appropriate Best Management Practices (BMPs)

January 2028 – January 2030

- Task 6: Complete Tier 3 plans
 - Deliverable 6.1: Complete Tier 3 plans
 - Deliverable 6.2: Upload Tier 3 plans to Hamilton County AEM database
- Task 7: Apply for Round 20 funding to implement Tier 3 workplans
 - Deliverable 7.1: Grant application for funding

Objective 4: Continuously promote AEM program and garner public support

Ongoing 2026 - 2030

- Task 8: Use social media, newspapers, and District newsletter to educate the public about AEM
 - Deliverable 8.1: Number of Facebook posts, news articles, press releases
- Task 9: Attend HC Board of Supervisors and local government meetings to provide updates on AEM and make AEM literature available

- Deliverable 9.1: Create and share meeting minutes, meeting literature, letters, brochures
- Task 10: Host workshops / informational programs for producers and the public
 - Deliverable 10.1: Create and share meeting minutes, number of attendees

Objective 5: Reporting

- Task 11: Complete and submit the following per designated deadline
 - AEM Base Time Log
 - AEM Base Interim Report
 - AEM Base Final Report Spreadsheet
 - AEM Base Close Out Checklist
 - Claim for Payment
- Deliverable 11.1: Close out contracts, and receive technical assistance track reimbursements

Evaluation of AEM

The AEM program in HC will be evaluated based on the success of community engagement and operational participation. The District’s ability to meet the above deliverables will guide future goals and plans related to agriculture in the county. Evaluation of best management practices will be based on local improvements of the watershed and can be measured by water quality testing, participant, and public satisfaction with plan implementations.

Works Cited

Alexander, R.B, et. al 2007

Appendix

Black River Nine Element Watershed Plan: Reducing Phosphorus, Nitrogen, and Sediment Loading in Priority Sub Watersheds website:

https://extapps.dec.ny.gov/docs/water_pdf/9blackriver.pdf

Black River Watershed Management Plan website:

<https://tughill.org/projects/black-river-projects/watershed-initiative/>

Laxson, C., Croote, L., Stewart, C., Regalado, S., and Kelting, D. (2019). The State of Hamilton County Lakes: A 25-year Perspective, 1993 – 2017. Paul Smith’s College Adirondack Watershed Institute. From the Hamilton County Soil and Water Conservation District website: https://hamcoswcd.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/The-State-of-Hamilton-County-Lakes_a-25yr-Pers-1.pdf

Mohawk River Watershed Management Plan. (2015). From the Mohawk River Watershed Coalition website: <http://mohawkriver.org/management-plan/>

Parslow, J. (2019). Hamilton County Soil and Water Conservation District 2019 Water Quality Monitoring Report. From the Hamilton County Soil and Water Conservation District website: <https://hamcoswcd.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/2019-Lake-Monitoring-Report-1.pdf>

St. Lawrence River Watershed Revitalization Plan website:
<https://fcsxcd.org/partnerships/st-lawrence-river-watershed-partnership-slrwp/>

Upper Hudson River Watershed Revitalization Plan. (2020). From the Lake Champlain Lake George Regional Planning website: https://hudsonwatershed.org/wp-content/uploads/FINAL-Upper-Hudson-River-Watershed-Management-Plan_March-2020.pdf

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

- **Administration**
 - Presented an autumn update to the Hamilton County Board of Supervisors on December 18
 - Created an autumn update infograph for the BOS
 - Created the Shaw Brook Restoration Project video
 - Completed and submitted 2026 insurance forms
 - Completed the 4th quarter Annual Plan of Work
 - Held staff meetings to discuss projects, programs, and events
 - Tracked performance measures that ensure our District receives state aid funding
 - Board meeting preparation
 - Reviewed and signed staff time sheets
 - Assisted Tim Ellifritz with computer maintenance and updates
 - Website updates
 - Social media posts

- **Technical Assistance**
 - At the request of the Lake Pleasant Sacandaga Association, reviewed and commented on their Lake Management Plan. I also provided information regarding copper sulfate use in lakes, contacts for the Moffitt Beach Campground wastewater treatment system, and plant recommendations for shorelines and erosion prevention.
 - Letter of support for the Blue Mountain Lake Association's DEC invasive species grant application.

- **Invasive Species**
 - Attended and took minutes for the December Invasive Species Advisory Committee meeting.

- **Grants**
 - Wrote, completed forms, and submitted the grant application for the \$100,000 Forked Lake Road Culvert Replacement Project through the Ecosystem Based Management Program.

- **Hazard Mitigation**
 - Revised and resubmitted the sub application and scope of work to DHSES, excluding any activities that explicitly indicate or relate to climate change, Social Vulnerability Index (SVI), economically disadvantaged rural community, underserved, socially vulnerable populations. These revisions are required to comply with current FEMA guidance and priorities.

- **Septic System Replacement Fund**
 - Replied to inquiries

- **Watershed Coalitions**
 - FLOWPA – submitted the SFY2026-27 survey with the best estimate of how the District will spend an allocation of \$197,200 in the 2027 field season. Mailed the notarized contract and board resolution to Program Director Kristy LaManche.
 - Upper Hudson River Watershed Coalition – Working on the 2025 annual report.
 - St. Lawrence River Watershed Project – Preparing for the January 8 meeting and emailed the agenda, including filling Executive Board vacancies.

- **New York State Conservation District Employees Association**
 - Attended a 4-Way Partnership Meeting
 - After 10 years, preparing my last CDEA News
 - Reviewed the Technical Advisory Committee meeting with Jason Cuddeback
 - Preparing my final CDEA Newsletter
 - Attended the following meetings and provided updates to ensure CDEA's support of and contribution to the 4-Way Partnership and beyond:
 - December 8 CDEA special meeting
 - December 9 CDEA Managers' meeting
 - December 11 New York State Invasive Species Advisory Committee meeting
 - December 16 SWCC meeting
 - December 17 NYACD meeting
 - January 5 CDEA By-Laws Committee meeting
 - Discussed filling the Division VII vacancy with the CDEA Board

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

General

2026 Tree Program plant
2026 Construction Permit
Review Hamilton County Courthouse Green Infrastructure Feasibility Study
SSRF Review
Finished Vogel Pit Renew Survey
Uncas Road Culvert Replacement Wetland Permits
Research new truck options
Attended Warren County Hazzard Mitigation Meeting
Attended Black River Coalition Meeting
Attended Mohawk River Coalition Meeting

District Technician's report
Submitted by Katie Whitkovits

- AEM
 - Submitted our 2025-2030 AEM Strategic Plan
 - **Need a motion to accept 5 year strategic plan at board meeting**
 - Round 18 closeout is due February 2026 and I've been working on the documentation for this

- Black River Watershed Coalition
 - Attended and took minutes for the December working group meeting

- Caring Through Conservation Mini Grant
 - All 2025 disbursements have been made
 - The District funded 7 projects for a total of \$11,941.59 (\$12,000 originally budgeted)

- Conservation Field Day
 - Gave awards presentations to Lake Pleasant CSD and Wheelerville UFS
 - Long Lake CSD awards presentation will be on Jan 9th

- Envirothon
 - Scheduling school presentations around the county to get more teams signed up
 - I will be opening the event up to allow middle school teams to participate this year. They will not be able to attend the state event if they win, but I hope this will draw more interest with high schoolers

- Lake Monitoring
 - Waiting on AWI to send us their data to complete DUAR for DEC

Other

- Attended ArcPro training in Warren County
- Sent out invitations to more than 80 vendors for the annual CDEA Water Quality Symposium Farmers Market & Resource Fair
- Presented at the December Board of Supervisors meeting with Caitlin & Lenny
- Attended the Warren County Emergency Management meeting
- Attended the APIPP Year End Partner Meeting and shared our 2025 successes and future plans
 - Picked up a custom invasive species sign for our EcoTrail
- Registered myself, Caitlin, & John for NYACD Legislative Day in February. Also booked rooms.
- Submitted a letter of support to the Lake Champlain Basin Program for funding for CWICNY to host another North Country Stormwater Tradeshow & Conference

New York State Soil & Water Conservation Committee
Region 4 Report – January 2026
Submitted by: Ryan Cunningham – Region 4 Associate Environmental Analyst

NYS SWCC News

Round 31 Agricultural Non-Point Source Program: The SWCC has made a total of \$25 million available through the AgNPS Round 31 RFP for SWCD's to propose AEM Tier 3 Planning and Tier 4 Implementation projects. This matches the record level of funding from last Round. RFP materials and the Application Form are available now through the Program's SharePoint Site and Department of Agriculture's Funding Opportunities Website (AGM Funding Opportunities). An informational RFP Webinar will be held (and recorded) over Webex on January 20, 2026 from 10:00am-11:30 AM, questions on the RFP are due in writing to Jason Kokkinos (Jason.kokkinos@agriculture.ny.gov) by March 2, 2026, and proposal submission to SharePoint is due **Monday, April 20, 2026 by 4:30 PM.**

2025 State Aid to Districts – DUE 2/15: All 2025 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, 2026. Please contact Bethany.bzduch@agriculture.ny.gov or your Regional AEA with any questions. If you have questions on the Treasurer's Report, it is suggested to contact OSC representative directly. This link (<http://www.osc.state.ny.us/localgov/contact.htm>) will provide regional contact information.

AEM Base Program Round 18 - Options for AEM Base Round 18 Payments: A reminder that the Final Report/Close Out package for Round 18 of the AEM Base Program is due to the State Committee by **February 28th, 2026**, (please upload files to your District's AEM18 folder on SharePoint and email your Regional AEA and Chastity Miller once uploaded). AEM 18 close out packages and their CFPs won't likely be paid until after the Blackout Period if sent after February 20th (depending on the number of Districts submitting and needs for report updates). While it varies, that could mean delays in payments until July 2026. Round 18 documents can be found on SharePoint:

<https://nysemail.sharepoint.com/sites/Agriculture/SWCC/SitePages/AEM.aspx>

AEM Base Program Round 19 - If you have not submitted your Round 19 25% Technical Assistance Claim of Payments, please do so as soon as possible to beat that blackout period. Round 19 documents can be found on SharePoint: <https://nysemail.sharepoint.com/sites/Agriculture/SWCC/SitePages/AEM.aspx>. Questions, please feel free to contact your AEA or Chastity Miller chastity.miller@agriculture.ny.gov.

Claim for Payment Black Out Period Approaching: We are approaching the "Blackout Period" for Fiscal Year 2025-2026. The "Blackout Period" is the time of year (starting April 1st, 2026, lasting until June/July 2026) when payments for programs supported by the Environmental Protection Fund (AGNPS, CRF, EBM, AEM) cannot be processed due to end of

the year reporting/accounting. We encourage Districts to consider what projects may be implemented in 2026 and what projects are eligible for advances or reimbursements. If you will need to request a 25% Advance, 65% BMP Implementation Payment, Subsequent/Interim Payment, or Final Payment prior to the start of the black out period, please email the CFP packet to the appropriate State Committee program manager, regional coordinator and Maureen Irish by **Friday, February 20th, 2026**. **Please remember to only submit claims for payment for contracts that have been fully executed.** Questions can be directed to your Regional Coordinator or appropriate Program Manager.

SWCC Meeting: The next meeting of the NYS Soil and Water Conservation Committee will convene on **February 17th, 2026**. Further details and an agenda for this meeting will be sent out in advance of the meeting. All Districts are encouraged to attend and participate at SWCC meetings. 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.**

SWCD Operations Sub-Committee Recording: A recording of the November 2025, SWCD Operations Sub-Committee meeting has been uploaded to Sharepoint. The next sub-committee meeting will convene **January 29th, 2026**, 1PM – 3PM, via Webex. Details to follow.

[https://nysemail.sharepoint.com/:f:/r/sites/Agriculture/SWCC/Mangers%20Meetings/SWC D%20Operation%20Sub-Committee%20\(2025\)/November%206,%202025%20Meeting?csf=1&web=1&e=0h9d04](https://nysemail.sharepoint.com/:f:/r/sites/Agriculture/SWCC/Mangers%20Meetings/SWC D%20Operation%20Sub-Committee%20(2025)/November%206,%202025%20Meeting?csf=1&web=1&e=0h9d04)

Migrating to ArcGIS Pro - Online Class: The Society of American Foresters (SAF), and LandMark Spatial Solutions, LLC are offering a "Migrating to ArcGIS Pro for Foresters: Basic Short Course." You can start the course at **any time after January 6th, 2026**. The course is designed to be self-paced with an expected completion time of just over 7.5 hours, divided into four sections intended to be completed over four weeks. For more info and to register, visit: https://learn.eforester.org/p/lmss-janfeb-2026?utm_source=Society+of+American+Foresters&utm_campaign=eace66f419-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2024_02_23_01_16_COPY_01&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0-74c5fc6bea-525959153&mc_cid=eace66f419&mc_eid=e9613e17fc#tab-product+tab+overview

Other Events

NACD 2026 Annual Meeting: The National Association of Conservation Districts' (NACD) 80th Annual will take place in San Antonio, TX from **February 14th- 19th, 2026**. Please save the date. To learn more and to register, please visit: <https://www.nacdnet.org/event/2026-nacd-annual-meeting/>

2026 Water Quality Symposium: The New York State Conservation District Employees' Association and Soil and Water Conservation Committee are thrilled to announce the 2026

Water Quality Symposium will convene in Rochester, NY. **March 10th – 13th, 2026**. Please save the dates. Registration information will be available from CDEA shortly.



**New York Association of Conservation Districts
c/o Steuben County SWCD
415 W. Morris Street
Bath, NY 14810
www.nyacd.org**

December 31, 2025

Dear Directors,

December kept NYACD busy with meetings and holiday activities. Having a few days off was welcome, but now it's time to return to important tasks. I'm excited about the year ahead, including plans to attend the NACD annual conference in San Antonio, Texas, Legislative Days in February, the Water Quality Symposium in March, several 4-Way Partners meetings, and fulfilling my responsibilities on the special Great Lakes Commission Committee.

The special Great Lakes Commission committee has nearly completed the development of a survey focused on soil and water conservation. This survey is intended for district directors and staff from each committee's respective state to address their concerns, needs, and related topics. Each participant should expect the survey to take approximately 20 minutes to complete. The goal of this study is to identify obstacles and opportunities affecting the effectiveness of soil and water conservation districts across the Great Lakes states, with an emphasis on recruitment, training, retention, and collaboration among conservation professionals. Participation is voluntary, and all responses will remain confidential. To ensure anonymity, individual responses will not be linked to specific district names.

Division Representation Efforts

At the NYACD December meeting, we discussed the lack of Division III, V, VI, VII, and VIII representation on the board. We are encouraging affected Directors and Districts to appoint representatives and plan to reach out to offer assistance.

NYACD By-law Review Meeting

A by-law meeting is scheduled for January by NYACD to review and propose amendments, which will be communicated after compilation. Additionally, I have contacted other states to gather information on their by-law structures in order to identify and implement necessary improvements to our own.

CDEA Meeting Participation

I plan to join the January CDEA meeting via Zoom and share NYACD updates.

Legislative Days Are Scheduled

Legislative Days are set for Monday, February 9, 2025, and Tuesday, February 10, 2025. I am currently arranging meetings with Legislators, with forty-nine appointments already scheduled and awaiting responses from twenty more. Nineteen districts have registered to participate in the two-day event. NYACD is signed up for the “Taste of New York” on Monday evening, where we will host a display for attendees to enjoy. Soil and Water Conservation Districts that are joining Legislative Days are welcome to attend. On Tuesday, February 10, 2026, appointments run from 8:30 a.m. to the final meeting at 3:30 p.m.

I've finished the 2025 NYACD Legislative booklet, which is currently being printed and should be ready for pick up this week (January 8, 2026). I plan to mail copies to districts and legislators next week and have ordered extras for appointment handouts.

Upcoming NYACD Board Meeting

The next NYACD Board meeting will be held on Wednesday, January 28, 2025, at 7:00 p.m. via Zoom. Directors and staff are welcome to attend and will receive the meeting link if we have their contact information.

Sincerely,

Blanche

Blanche L Hurlbutt
NYACD Executive Director