



HAMILTON COUNTY

Soil & Water Conservation District

103 County View Drive
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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 March 3, 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
Betsy Bain, Town Supervisor
Shawn Hansen, Member-at-Large - Zoom

District Staff

Caitlin Stewart, District Manager
Marjorie Remias, Secretary to the Board

Absent

Lenny Croote, Senior Technician
Katherine Whitkovits, Technician
John M. Stortecky, Vice Chairperson
Beth Hunt, Town Supervisor
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 9:31 a.m. Pledge of Allegiance conducted.

II. Roll call – Buyce conducted roll call.

III. Reading and approval of the February 3, 2026, meeting minutes – The minutes were provided in advance of the meeting. Motion tabled as no quorum to approve because Bain was not in attendance at the meeting.

IV. 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 noted that three bank accounts at NBT were closed out and asked the Board's approval to move \$100,000 of General and \$50,000 of FLOWPA funds to our respective NYCLASS investment accounts.

Balance	1/31/26	\$73,669.97
Receipts		201,851.77
Disbursements		40,657.40
Balance	2/28/26	\$234,864.34

- **A motion was made by Bain, seconded by Buyce to accept the Treasurer’s report, approve the transfer of funds to NYCLASS, and approve the bills to be paid. All in favor, motion carried.**

V. Hire a full-time Technician - Stewart reported that the team continues to be oversubscribed by their work loads, grants, and new programs, and sought board approval to hire an additional technician and to advertise for it. FLOWPA and Part C funds are available to support this full-time position including salary and benefits.

- **A motion was made by Bain, seconded by Buyce to permit District Manager Caitlin Stewart to advertise for a technician position, set the salary range at \$38,000 - \$45,000, commensurate with experience, vet applications, and proceed with candidate interviews. All in favor, motion carried.**

Director Hansen left the meeting at 9:40 a.m.

VI. District Activities

a. FLOWPA and NYACD Legislative Day review – Stewart reported that she and WhitKovits attended the Finger Lakes Lake Ontario Watershed Protection Alliance and New York State Conservation Districts Legislative Day events and met with 14 Assemblymembers and Senators. They missed J.M. Stortecky as he was unable to attend this year. FLOWPA is listed at level funding for the second year in a row in the proposed SFY 2026-27 Environmental Protection Fund at \$3.5 million, and the request is \$5 million. Senator Walczyk, Assemblyman Miller, and Assemblymember Kelles were willing to champion a FLOWPA budget support letter. Legislators anticipate that federal cuts will hit us during next year’s budget cycle. Some legislators are not seeking re-election, and relationship building is essential with newly elected officials. During NYACD Legislative Day, Stewart and WhitKovits met with Assemblymember Mikulin of Nassau County, who was unfamiliar with Conservation Districts. His meeting was an excellent educational opportunity. Stewart commended the NYACD Board for making improvements to the Legislative Day booklet; the document looked professional and was well edited.

b. Sediment and Erosion Control Program – Nothing new to report.

c. Adirondack Tree and Shrub Sale and Fish Stocking Program – Stewart worked with Go Daddy and Pay Pal to set up online payments through the website. She created a poster at Croote’s request, and submitted a press release. WhitKovits updated the

advertisement and emailed it to the *Hamilton County Express*. Croote posted the flyer county wide. He hopes to have prices for the Fish Stocking Program by the end of the week. The deadline for Tree & Shrub orders is March 13th.

d. Agricultural Environmental Management – WhitKovits submitted the AEM Round 18 close out, including \$5,661.00 for the technical assistance track.

e. Lake Monitoring Program – WhitKovits is still waiting for the Adirondack Watershed Institute to send her the 2025 water data.

f. Invasive Species Program – Nothing new to report.

g. Conservation Education Program – Stewart and WhitKovits presented H2Olympics to 9 seventh graders at the Lake Pleasant Central School.

h. Hamilton County Envirothon – The event will be held Thursday May 7, 2026. WhitKovits met with Hunt and Wells Town Board Member Mark Hodgkins to discuss potential team advisers for the Wells Central School team as the science teacher is unable to participate. Unfortunately, the principal and superintendent decided not to participate after an adviser was suggested. Long Lake Central School will attend with 1 high school team and 2 or 3 middle school teams. Indian Lake Central School was unresponsive.

i. Caring Through Conservation Mini Grant approval – WhitKovits updated the application and emailed it county wide. She also sent a press release to the *Hamilton County Express* advertising the program. We have received one application already.

j. Septic System Replacement Fund – Stewart reported that the team continues to answer landowner inquiries. The state has not yet released information regarding Round 5.

k. Hazard Mitigation – At the request of the Department of Homeland Security and Emergency Services, Stewart arranged a meeting with Croote and Hamilton County Emergency Services Manager Timothy O’Neill to schedule a Hazard Mitigation Plan update kick-off meeting. Putnam County will also attend. The purpose of the meeting is to provide the County and its planning leadership information on the various phases and tasks of the HMP update process. The meeting will be held March 5.

l. Watershed partnership update

- FLOWPA – Stewart and WhitKovits attended FLOWPA Legislative Day on February 4 and spoke with 7 legislators.
- Upper Hudson River Watershed Coalition – Stewart reported that she prepared the 2025 annual report, and disseminated copies to the Directors.

- St. Lawrence River Watershed Project – Nothing new to report.
- Mohawk River Watershed Coalition – Nothing new to report.
- Black River Watershed – Nothing new to report.

VII. Other -Director Bain reported that the company that has been doing testing of wells at the Town of Lake Pleasant landfill will no longer be doing business. She asked if the District might be able to do this testing for the Town. The District will research testing parameters, cost and other logistics and get back to her.

VIII. Directors' comments - None

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

X. 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.

XI. Correspondence –

- a. Thank you from APIPP
- b. FLOWPA Fundamentals newsletter
- c. WhitKovits received a thank you note from the Adirondack Museum for presenting at Homeschool Day.
- d. Stewart received thank you notes for her service to the New York State Conservation District Employees' Association and Invasive Species Advisory Committee
- e. 2026 NYACD Legislative Day Booklet "Boots on the Ground"

XII. Next meeting – April 7, 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.

XIII. Adjournment

- **A motion was made by Buyce, seconded by Bain to adjourn the meeting at 9:59 a.m. All in favor, motion carried.**

Respectfully Submitted



Marjorie Remias
Secretary to the Board/Treasurer

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

- **Administration**
 - Finalized and submitted the 2025 Annual Reports to the SWCC and OSC. All team members assisted with completing the reports.
 - Attended NYACD and FLOWPA Legislative Day
 - At the request of NYACD, completed the Ohio State University Workforce Development Survey
 - Submitted AEM 5 Year Strategic Plan board approval documentation to the SWCC
 - Staff appraisals
 - 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

- **Adirondack Tree and Shrub Sale**
 - Wrote and submitted the press release, updated the website including photos, worked with Go Daddy and PayPal to link the website to online payments

- **Invasive Species**
 - Invasive Species Advisory Committee – completed January draft minutes and reviewed the recommendation for Part 575 before Chairman Williams emailed it to the Invasive Species Council

- **Grants**
 - Hamilton County Roadside Stabilization and Erosion Prevention Program grant – tracked time
 - Hamilton County Road Salt Reduction Program – tracked time, reviewed Water Quality Improvement Project grant materials

- **Hazard Mitigation**
 - Emailed a reminder for Board of Supervisors Chairperson Clay Arsenault to sign the contract

- Assisted DHSSES with coordinating the Hazard Mitigation Plan update kick-off meeting on March 5
- **Septic System Replacement Fund**
 - Replied to inquiries
- **Watershed Coalitions**
 - FLOWPA – Attended Legislative Day with Katie, offered to assist with the 30th anniversary celebration
 - Upper Hudson River Watershed Coalition – Completed 2025 annual report
- **Education**
 - Presented H2Olympics to 9 seventh graders at Lake Pleasant Central School with Katie
 - Provided Hamilton County Envirothon guidance to Katie
- **New York State Conservation District Employees Association**
 - After 15 years, prepared my last CDEA News
 - Finalized Bylaws updates and emailed them statewide for review and comment
 - Hosted a Managers' Meeting in Ballston Spa
 - Preparations for the Water Quality Symposium include my final Managers' Meeting, New Employee Orientation, and Annual Meeting
 - Met with SWCC members, CDEA Vice President Jess Armstrong, and Zero Footprint to discuss private sector funding opportunities for Districts
 - Attended the following meetings and provided updates to ensure CDEA's support of and contribution to the 4-Way Partnership and beyond:
 - February Soil and Water Conservation Committee meeting
 - February New York Association of Conservation Districts meeting

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

2026 Tree Program
2026 Construction Permit
Review Hamilton County Courthouse Green Infrastructure Feasibility Study
SSRF Review
Uncas Road Culvert Replacement Wetland Permits
Forked Lake Culvert Replacement TRP
Zacher Drainage Wetland permits
Attended Mohawk River Coalition Meeting
Meetings with Town of Lake Pleasant and Village of Speculator
Pesticide Credits Webinar

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

- AEM
 - Submitted the AEM Round 18 close out, including \$5,661.00 for the technical assistance track

- Black River Watershed Coalition
 - No meeting or update

- Caring Through Conservation Mini Grant
 - Updated the application and emailed it county wide
 - Sent a press release to the Hamilton County Express

- Envirothon
 - The event will be held Thursday May 7, 2026
 - I met with Beth & Mark Hodgkins to discuss potential team advisers for the Wells Central School team as the science teacher is unable to participate
 - Unfortunately, the school decided not to participate after an adviser was suggested
 - Long Lake will attend with 1 fully high school team and 2 or 3 middle school teams
 - Indian Lake Central School was unresponsive
 - I've sent out presenter invitations and will be placing a shirt order this week

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

- Other
 - Attended FLOWPA Legislative day with Caitlin – We met with 14 legislators
 - Attended NYACD Legislative day with Caitlin – We met with 7 legislators
 - Updated the Tree & Shrub ad, and sent it to 2 local newspapers
 - Presented H2Olympics to 9 Lake Pleasant CSD seventh graders with Caitlin
 - I attended an ArcPro training in Warren County
 - Attended an Environmental Education Fund meeting
 - Picked up straw with Lenny
 - Attended the Adirondack Applied Water Quality Conference at Paul Smiths
 - Gained a lot of useful information about running our Septic System Replacement Fund program
 - Finalized details of the Farmers' Market Resource Fair for Water Quality Symposium
 - 26 Vendors attending this year – the tabling fees go to CDEA

- Prepared the annual sign-up form and presentation for the CDEA Fish ON! Challenge for Water Quality Symposium

**New York State Soil & Water Conservation Committee
Region 4 Report – March 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. Questions on the RFP are due in writing to Jason Kokkinos (Jason.kokkinos@agriculture.ny.gov) by March 2nd, 2026, and proposal submission to SharePoint is due **Monday, April 20, 2026 by 4:30 PM.**

AEM Round 19 - Round 19 has kicked off! If you have not sent your 25% Technical Assistance CFP request, please do so before the blackout period! Tier 4 projects are due by **May 1st, 2026**, so please begin thinking about those projects!

AEM Leopold Conservation Award 2026: 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. A Formal announcement, and application materials were emailed to Districts in the first week of February 2026. The deadline for applications is **May 15th, 2026.**

SWCC Meeting: The next meeting of the NYS Soil and Water Conservation Committee will be held **March 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 in 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.**

2026 NYS Envirothon - Volunteers Needed: The New York State Envirothon Committee is pleased to announce that we will host the 2025 New York State Envirothon at SUNY Cortland, on **May 27th-28th, 2026.** Volunteers are the heart of this event, and it doesn't happen without assistance from SWCD Directors and staff. Please consider Volunteering! A description of the volunteer positions available as well as an online registration link are available here on the NYS Envirothon website, <https://nysenvirothon.org/contact>. Any questions can be directed to nysenvirothon@gmail.com.

Soil Science Watch Party Continues: A group of SWCC Staff, district staff, and partners are working their way through 39 hours of Soil Science lectures from Cornell University's Jonathan

Russell-Anelli. The group meets virtually Monday mornings at 9:00 am to watch prerecorded lectures and answer discussion questions. They are only 5 hours in so plenty of opportunity to catch up if you join now. CCA credits are available for each session. The group uses Webex to coordinate and the recurring meeting link is: <https://meetny-gov.webex.com/meetny-gov/j.php?MTID=m872f0a411cf3434a744799dc62f873fd> . Contact Tim Clark for more information.

Other Events

Winter Webinar Series - Water Conservation for Small Farms: This series will examine how climate trends are impacting New York Farms, highlight agriculture's role in water quality and share practical strategies that farmers can implement to conserve water, increase resilience to extreme weather, and support improved water quality statewide.

- **March 19th, 12:00 PM – 1:00 PM: Beyond Soil Health: Integrating Water Conservation Strategies,**
<https://us06web.zoom.us/meeting/register/MzqiiR0PSUSFS5pAa9huVg#/registration>

2026 NYS Wetlands Forum Annual Conference: Save the Date. The New York State Wetlands Forum 2026 Annual Conference and Business Meeting will take place on **April 14th and 15th, in Oswego, NY.** To register, please visit:
<http://www.wetlandsforum.org/2026Conference.html>

Other Grant Opportunities

NY Great Lakes Basin Small Grants Program: The New York Great Lakes Basin Small Grants Program supports stakeholder-driven efforts to restore and revitalize the Great Lakes region using ecosystem-based management and is funded through the EPF and administer by NY Sea Grant. NYSG is soliciting proposals for up to \$40,000 in total costs for projects that advance the goals of the GLAA and implement actions identified in locally supported community plans. Applications are due by **March 27th, 2026, at 4:30 p.m.** <https://small-grants-program-ccegeomaps.hub.arcgis.com/pages/apply-for-funding>

Great Lakes Sediment and Nutrient Reduction Program: The Great Lakes Sediment and Nutrient Reduction Program (GLSNRP) Request for Proposals was recently announced, for projects that reduce nutrients and sediments entering the Great Lakes. This year's program will focus on helping nonfederal units of government, tribes, or incorporated nonprofit organizations reduce phosphorus contributions to waters within the Great Lakes basin. Applicants are invited to submit proposals for sediment and nutrient reduction activities associated with one of two project types: 1) agricultural non-point; and 2) shoreline or stream. The due date for applications is **April 27th, 2026, at 5:00 p.m. EST.** <https://www.glc.org/work/sediment/apply-now>



**New York Association of Conservation Districts
c/o Steuben County SWCD
24 North Street
Edmeston, NY 13335
www.nyacd.org**

February 27, 2026

Dear Directors,

Legislative Days were successful once again with over fifty (50) Legislative meetings and fourteen (14) districts participating in the meetings. It was great meeting new Legislators and educating them on what districts are doing and gathering their support as well as meeting with those that know and support SWCD's. Folks provided feedback and this information was shared during our monthly NYACD meeting. I have additional Zoom meeting appointments scheduled to meet with additional Legislators that could not meet with folks during Legislative days. I would like to take this time to THANK all the districts that participated in this year's Legislative Days. We appreciate your help in educating our Legislators, sharing your story, and gathering support for SWCD's at the state level.

The Great Lakes Commission Committee survey was sent out to district directors and staff for your completion of the survey. This study identifies the obstacles and opportunities impacting the effectiveness of Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCDs) in the Great Lakes states, focusing on recruitment, training, retention, and collaboration among conservation professionals. Participation is voluntary and response is confidential. To protect anonymity, your responses will not be associated with a specific district name. It is my hope you will complete the survey so that we can determine the next step in the process to help and support districts in moving forward.

The NYACD Annual meeting will be held Monday, October 26th and Tuesday, October 27th, 2026, at The Hampton Inn, Penn Yan. I am presently working on potential training sessions, so if you have any ideas or something you think we should consider, PLEASE let me know. Information will be provided soon for registration.

I have been working on making appointments for Sam Casella, NYACD President for the annual Fly-In in Washington, DC on March 25, 2026. Sam will be providing the US Legislators with what SWCD's are doing to protect NY's soil and water.

I provided districts with the "Water Data Bill" A10199 and S9280 that passed in both houses on February 24, 2026, regarding the goal is to improve transparency and decision making by ensuring that key water data sets are identified, integrated, and made available in a unified format. These bills will move forward in the bill making process to find their way onto the Governor's desk.

The Delaware Association of Conservation Districts is excited to host the 2026 NACD Northeast Region Meeting on August 24-27 in Wilmington. I wanted to share our [meeting website](#) and ask for your help in spreading the word about our open Call for Presentations among your state associations, state conservation agencies, district employees, etc. A tremendous amount of great work is being done throughout the region, and this is an opportunity to share that work and support the success of districts and partners. Please share this information in an upcoming monthly report, newsletter, or email out to your members.

The Delaware Association of Conservation Districts invites conservation district leaders, partners, and technical experts to submit presentation proposals for our 2026 National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD) Northeast Region Meeting.

As environmental, economic, and land-use pressures rapidly evolve, conservation districts must be adaptive, innovative, and resilient. This conference will focus on sharing practical, real-life success stories and tangible, local solutions that empower districts to effectively serve their communities. We seek proposals that detail implementation, measurable results, and actionable strategies that can be immediately applied by peers across the region. We are looking for presentations in the following topic areas:

- *Funding the Mission: Expanding Revenue and Capacity*
- *Adapting to New Land Use: Emerging Conservation Issues in Developed Land Uses*
- *Smart Conservation: Innovative Tools & Technologies for Implementation*
- *Engaging the Community: Outreach, Education & Urban Growth*
- *Policy in Action: The District's Role in Legislative Change*

Hopefully, many people from New York will attend this event.

Sincerely,

Blanche

Blanche L. Hurlbutt
NYACD Executive Director