



HAMILTON COUNTY

Soil & Water Conservation District

103 County View Drive
PO Box 166
Lake Pleasant NY 12108

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t. 518-548-3991
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

June 2, 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
Beth Hunt, Town Supervisor – Zoom
Betsy Bain, Town Supervisor

District Staff

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

Absent

Shawn Hansen, Member-at-Large
Lenny Croote, Senior Technician
Shannon McPheeters, Seasonal Technician
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

Guests

Meg Parascandola, Deputy Supervisor,
Town of Lake Pleasant

1. Call to order and Pledge of Allegiance – Buyce called the meeting to order at 9:31 a.m.
Pledge of Allegiance conducted.

2. Roll call – Buyce conducted roll call.

3. Review and approval of the May 5, 2026, 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 May 5th, 2026, meeting minutes. All in favor, motion carried.**

4. Treasurer's Report – Remias provided the Treasurer's Report and May expenses for Board review and approval for payment. She also requested approval to move \$85,000 of recently received FLOWPA funds to the District's NYCLASS investment account.

Balance	4/30/26	\$424,901.99
Receipts		106,819.44
Disbursements		36,969.32
Balance	5/31/26	\$494,752.11

- A motion was made by Bain, seconded by J.M. Stortecky to accept the Treasurer's report, transfer \$85,000.00 from the NBT WRB Checking account to the NYCLASS WRB investment account, and approve the bills to be paid. All in favor, motion carried.

5. Request For Proposals for certified pesticide applicator – Stewart reported that upon Board approval at the May 2026 meeting, she ran a legal notice in the *Hamilton County Express* and sent the RFP to 4 certified pesticide applicators. She reviewed the proposals that were submitted by WhyKnot Services, LLC, and Burkum Plant Health and Tree Care. Discussion ensued.

- A motion was made by J.M. Stortecky, seconded by Hunt to accept WhyKnot Services, LLC's proposal of \$9,418.00 for 80 hours of Japanese knotweed, common reed grass, and purple loosestrife control in Hamilton County, and permit Manager Caitlin Stewart to proceed with acceptance and denial letters. All in favor, motion carried.

6. RESOLUTION #2-2026

HONORING BETSY A. BAIN FOR HER EXCEPTIONAL SERVICE AS HAMILTON COUNTY SUPERVISOR OF THE HAMILTON COUNTY SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT'S BOARD OF DIRECTORS

DATED: JUNE 2, 2026

BY: Ms. Buyce

WHEREAS, Betsy A. Bain served as a member of the Hamilton County Soil and Water Conservation District's Board of Directors since January 2022, and

WHEREAS, under her leadership, District staffing capacity expanded to include seasonal technicians, and

WHEREAS, she was responsible for overseeing the establishment and enhancement of District programs including the Hamilton County Trail Stewardship Program, Caring Through Conservation Mini Grant Program, Water Monitoring Program, Hydroseeding, Agricultural Environmental Management, Sediment and Erosion Control Program, Boat Storage Plastic Recycling, Invasive Species Program, Adirondack Tree and Shrub Sale, Water Testing Program,

Water Quality Coordinating Committee, GIS, Septic System Inspection Program, Perk Test Program, and the Fish Sale, and

WHEREAS, with her guidance, many special projects were implemented, including the snowmobile trail GIS mapping project for municipalities, streambank stabilization and restoration projects on Cold Stream, Warner Brook, East Stony Creek, and Shaw Brook, the Gilmantown Road bank stabilization project, the NY-LCB+ADK Aquatic Organism Passage initiative, the Wells Road runoff tributary diversion project, culvert replacement projects including Van Slyke Road, Parkhurst Road, Fawn Lake Road, Uncas Road, Sabattis Road and the Moose River Plains, and the Black River Adaptive Model, and

WHEREAS, she volunteered at longstanding outreach events including the Lynn Galusha Memorial Conservation Field Day, and the Hamilton County Envirothon that educated hundreds of students, and

WHEREAS, her directorship resulted in a strengthened partnership with the Hamilton County Board of Supervisors and departments, and the District is now overseeing county programs including the Septic System Replacement Fund and the Hazard Mitigation Plan Update grant, and

WHEREAS, she enhanced the District's ability of support landowners and municipalities with dry hydrant installations, climate resiliency projects, flood mitigation, tornado emergency response, and pit surveys, and

WHEREAS, numerous grants were awarded under her leadership, including the Upper Hudson River Roadside Erosion Remediation Program Phase II grant (\$58,200), the Elbow Creek Restoration Plan grant (\$75,000), the County Courthouse Green Infrastructure Feasibility Study (\$50,000), the Hamilton County Hazard Mitigation Plan Update grant (\$157,500), and the Forked Lake Road Culvert Replacement Project grant (\$100,000), and

WHEREAS, her strong knowledge of natural resources and municipal operations guided the staff to implement countless conservation practices to all corners of Hamilton County, and

WHEREAS, her service was performed with the highest standards of integrity, and the District and County have benefited greatly from her outstanding leadership and promotion of conservation, and

WHEREAS, the Hamilton County Soil and Water Conservation District Board of Directors and staff are proud to have worked with Betsy and express deep appreciation for her outstanding dedication and commitment, be it

RESOLVED, that this resolution be spread upon the minutes of the proceedings of the Hamilton County Soil and Water Conservation District as a permanent record to honor Betsy A. Bain for her service as Director.

SECONDED BY: Mr. J.M. Stortecky and adopted by the following vote:

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

NAYES: None

ABSTAIN: Ms. Bain

ABSENT: Mr. Hansen

7. RESOLUTION #3-2026

RESOLUTION RECOMMENDING THE APPOINTMENT OF MEG PARASCANDOLA TO THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE HAMILTON COUNTY SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

DATED: JUNE 2, 2026

BY: Ms. Bain

WHEREAS, Town of Lake Pleasant Supervisor Betsy A. Bain resigned from her office, therefore creating a vacancy on the Board of Directors of the Hamilton County Soil and Water Conservation District, and,

WHEREAS, Betsy A. Bain appointed Meg Parascandola to serve as Town of Lake Pleasant Supervisor, 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:

Town of Lake Pleasant Supervisor Meg Parascandola to serve as Supervisors' Representative for a term commencing July 3, 2026, and terminating December 31, 2026.

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

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

NAYES: None

ABSTAIN: None

ABSENT: Mr. Hansen

8. Approve Caring Through Conservation Mini Grant applications – WhitKovits reviewed the application she received from the Chamber of Commerce for our remaining funds of \$80. The board discussed and decided to increase the funding to \$200 because of its educational value for children.

- **A motion was made by Buyce seconded by J.M. Stortecky to approve the mini-grant request Speculator SPROUTS at the Speculator Farmers' Market in the amount of \$200.00. All in favor, motion carried.**

9. District Activities

a. Hamilton County Envirothon review and video – WhitKovits reported that the event was improved by including our middle school students. A big thank you to all of our volunteers and presenters. Long Lake Central School's team Daphne and the Bio Boys placed first and competed at the NYS Envirothon May 27 – 28. The team had a wonderful time at both the county and state competitions. Stewart reported that she wrote a press release that was published in the *Hamilton County Express* and *Adirondack Almanack*. She showed a video of the 31st annual event.

b. Sediment and Erosion Control Program – Croote reported that he and Seasonal Technician Shannon McPheeters planted willow stakes at Shaw Brook. He also performed a site visit and used the GNNS at the Stewart/Seifts property for sediment erosion control BMPs.

c. Fish Stocking Program – Croote reported that the District received 1 order totaling 100 fish that were distributed.

d. Agricultural Environmental Management – Nothing new to report.

e. Lake Monitoring Program – WhitKovits, Stewart, and Croote completed the May rotation, and collected samples from all 19 lakes. 4 dissolved organic carbon glass bottles froze and broke during transit. WhitKovits discussed solutions with our ALS Project Manager, who said it was a rare fluke. We will fill glass bottles to the shoulder instead of the top to allow more room for expansion.

f. Invasive Species Program – Stewart sent the legal notice to the *Hamilton County Express*, sent the RFP to 4 certified pesticide applicators, and developed a spread sheet to review proposals. Stewart attended the Adirondack Park Invasive Plant Program's spring partner meeting in Akwesasne, where she learned about the cultural significance of black ash to the Saint Regis Mohawk Tribe. The tribe's emerald ash borer mitigation tactics include a multifaceted approach of insecticide injections into ash trees, biocontrol (parasitoid wasps that hunt and kill EAB larvae and eggs), silviculture, and seed collection with the goal of protecting ash, prolonging time with natural resources,

and preserving cultural knowledge and teachings. Angello Johnson is passionate about preserving ash basket making, and provided a log pounding demonstration. Stewart along with other attendees toured a black ash management stand where parasitoids were released and silviculture was performed. Stewart and WhitKovits have been speaking with APIPP staff about an opportunity for the District team to treat invasive plants on DEC lands in Hamilton County listed in APIPP's work plan. WhitKovits and Seasonal Technician Shannon McPheeters deployed emerald ash borer and spotted lanternfly traps.

g. Conservation Education Program – Stewart and WhitKovits attended the New York State Envirothon on May 27 – 28, and commended the committee, volunteers, and sponsors for a successful, educational, fun, and positive event. Stewart served as an oral presentation day and evening judge, and took candid, team, and group photos. WhitKovits was an oral presentation day judge, and assisted the Wildlife presenter.

h. Arbor Day Poetry Contest review – 21 poets submitted Golden Shovel poems for the 18th annual Bob Tice Memorial Arbor Day Poetry Contest. Stewart's mom, Kathy, judged the entries. The gala took place on May 15, and Stewart thanked Long Lake Library Manager Kristel Guimara for coordinated refreshments and hosting. Stewart awarded certificates and seedling bundles to the poets, who read their entries. Sue Kunzmann of Long Lake received first place, Gregory Wait of Corinth received second place, Betsy Comeau of Long Lake received third place, and Robin Monthony of Lake Pleasant received the honorable mention. Stewart thanked Long Lake Library for coordinating refreshments for this event.

i. Septic System Replacement Fund – Stewart reported that the team continues to answer landowner inquiries, and grantees have not submitted any requests for disbursement this month. The state has not yet released information regarding Round 5.

j. Water Testing Program - Remias reported that we held our first well water testing for the year on May 22 and received 12 samples for testing.

k. Grants update –

- Hamilton County Hazard Mitigation Plan Update grant - Stewart updated the Scope of Work Tracker, emailed the Request for Proposals to consultants after Hamilton County Clerk of the Board Laura Abrams published the legal notice in the *Hamilton County Express*, and answered consultant inquiries pertaining to the RFP. She completed the Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act documents and emailed them to DHSES, and also attended an EM Grants System training. Hamilton County Emergency Services Manager Tomothy O'Neill attended the monthly outreach meeting with DHSES.
- Hamilton County Sediment and Erosion Prevention Program DEC WQIP (Water Quality Improvement Project) grant – Croote and McPheeters began

hydroseeding, and stabilized road banks on Old Piseco Road and East Shore Road in the Town of Arietta.

- Hamilton County Road Salt Reduction Program DEC WQIP grant – Stewart completed and submitted the Utilization Plan.
- Stream Corridor Management Pilot Program grant (Forked Lake Road Culvert Replacement Project) – Stewart disseminated an infographic detailing the project.
- Hamilton County Courthouse Complex Green Infrastructure Feasibility Study grant - The consultant is finalizing the report.

I. Watershed partnership update

- FLOWPA – Stewart is serving on the 30th anniversary planning committee, attended the kickoff meeting, and created a save the date postcard.
- Upper Hudson River Watershed Coalition – Nothing new to report.
- St. Lawrence River Watershed Project – Nothing new to report.
- Mohawk River Watershed Coalition – WhitKovits and Croote presented a Rural Roads Active Management Program training in Herkimer County on June 1 in conjunction with the Black River Watershed Coalition. Croote attended the May 29th meeting.
- Black River Watershed – The 16th annual Black River Watershed Conference will be held Wednesday June 3, and Stewart is preparing her MC speech and presentation. The Coalition has been awarded funds through the DEC EBM grant to pilot a new educational stream program in New York for contractors and municipalities. As Secretary, WhitKovits took minutes for the May 13 meeting.

10. Other

- **FY26-27 Enacted Environmental Protection Fund** – Stewart reported that the 2026-27 New York State budget was finally passed on May 28. The Environmental Protection Fund received flat funding at \$425 million. The FLOWPA appropriation is \$4 million, or \$157,200 to each member, a \$500,000 overall increase or \$20,000 increase per member. The SWCD appropriation is \$19 million, a \$1 million increase. Of note: Climate Resilient Farms, a competitive grant with funds applied for and awarded through SWCDs on behalf of farmers saw carveouts for Cornell University for their Soil Health Program, Agrivoltaics study, and satellite research farms and forests. The total CRF appropriation is \$20.5 million. Cornell carveouts total \$3.7 million, and another carve out for Forest Preservation totals \$500,000, cutting the budget to \$16.3 million for on-farm projects that result in adaptation and resiliency to heavy storm events, rainfall, and drought. In 2025, Cornell University's endowment totaled \$11.1 billion. In 2026, software billionaire David Duffield gifted Cornell \$371.5 M in addition to \$100 M in

2025. These carveouts that support Cornell are detrimental to producers and dilute the ability of SWCDs to get conservation on the ground at full capacity.

- **2025 Infographic** – Stewart reported that she completed the District’s 2026 infographic, and disseminated copies to the Directors.
- **Water Quality Coordinating Committee Meeting** – WhitKovits disseminated the flyer and invited Directors to attend the meeting on June 10, 9:30 a.m. at the Lake Pleasant Public Library.
- **Legislative Committee** – Stewart reported that she is interested in chairing the New York State Conservation District Employees’ Association Legislative Committee. The board approved and she will prepare for their first meeting.

11. Directors’ comments – J.M. Stortecky shared a video relating to the celebration of 250 years of our nation on the 4th of July.

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

13. 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.

14. Correspondence

- Thank you note for the Forked Lake Road Culvert Replacement Project grant – Hamilton County Department of Public Works Superintendent Tracy Eldridge
- Thank you note for the Arbor Day Poetry Contest – Tom Scahill

15. Next meeting – August 4, 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.

16. Adjournment

- A motion was made by Buyce, seconded by J.M. Stortecky that July's expenses will be emailed to the Board for approval for payment and to adjourn the meeting at 11:03a.m. All in favor, motion carried.

Respectfully Submitted



Marjorie Remias
Secretary to the Board/Treasurer

District Manager's report Submitted by Caitlin Stewart

- **Administration**
 - Hired the Seasonal Technician
 - Completed the Hamilton County SWCD 2025 Infographic
 - 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
- **Hamilton County Envirothon**
 - Wrote and proctored the Aquatics exam, wrote and submitted a press release to the *Hamilton County Express* and *Adirondack Almanack*, created a video
- **Arbor Day Poetry Contest**
 - Created certificates, oversaw the Gala that was attended by 8 poets, wrote and submitted a press release to the *Hamilton County Express* and *Adirondack Almanack*, created a video
- **Invasive Species**
 - Attended APIPP's spring partner meeting on May 6
 - Updated and sent the certified pesticide applicator RFP and submitted the legal notice

- **Grants**
 - Hamilton County Hazard Mitigation Plan Update grant - Updated the Scope of Work Tracker, emailed the Request for Proposals to consultants and answered consultant inquiries pertaining to the RFP, completed the Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act documents and emailed them to DHSES, and attended an EM Grants System training
 - Hamilton County Road Salt Reduction Program DEC WQIP grant – Completed and submitted the Utilization Plan
 - Stream Corridor Management Pilot Program grant (Forked Lake Road Culvert Replacement Project) – Created an infographic detailing the project
- **Septic System Replacement Fund**
 - Replied to inquiries
- **Water Testing Program**
 - Wrote and submitted an ad for the *Hamilton County Express*, replied to inquiries
- **Lake Monitoring Program**
 - Assisted Katie with field work for the May rotation
- **Watershed Coalitions**
 - FLOWPA – Serving on the 30th anniversary planning committee, attended the kickoff meeting, and created a save the date postcard
 - Black River Watershed –Preparing my MC speech and presentation for the Black River Watershed Conference
- **Education**
 - Took team and candid photos and served as a day and evening oral presentation judge at the New York State Envirothon
- **New York State Conservation District Employees' Association**
 - As Chair of the Legislative Committee, preparing for the first meeting
 - Computed Cornell carveouts in the EPF that adversely impact SWCDs and sent an email statewide

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

General

2026 Fish Program
2026 Construction Permit
Hamilton County Stormwater Bio-swale planting
Zacher Drainage Wetland permits
Peters 4th Lake Cottages Drainage
Attended Mohawk Coalition Meeting
Trout Unlimited meeting for Moose River Plains Projects
Compost Filter Soxxs
Hydroseeding
Straw
Vehicle maintenance
Equipment out of storage
Equipment maintenance

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

- Agricultural Environmental Management (AEM)
 - Nothing new to report
- Black River Watershed Coalition
 - The 16th Annual Black River Watershed Conference is scheduled Wednesday 6/3/26
 - I took minutes for a coalition meeting on 5/13 and serve as secretary
 - We were awarded funds through the EBM grant to develop a stream health educational program for contractors and municipalities
- Mohawk River Watershed Coalition
 - Led a Rural Roads Active Management Program training in Herkimer County with Lenny
- Caring Through Conservation Mini Grant

- We have received 1 additional application from the Speculator Chamber of Commerce
- Envirothon
 - We held the event on Thursday May 7, 2026
 - We had a beautiful day and sent Long Lake winners “Daphne and the Bio Boys” to the NYS event to represent Hamilton County
 - Thank you John for being our faithful timekeeper!
 - Caitlin & I also volunteered at the NYS Envirothon on 5/27 & 5/28
 - I was an oral presentation judge and Wildlife station proctor
- Lake Monitoring
 - We had a successful May monitoring rotation, and Shannon delivered the samples to the lab’s courier for us
 - There was a lot of coordination to be done with the lab prior to sampling and after the lab received the samples, but everything went as smoothly as can be expected

Other

- I assisted with the installation of additional streamco willow stakes at the newly created bioswale on the county property reducing erosion, sedimentation, and pollution from entering Lake Pleasant
- Scheduled and sent out the meeting invite for the annual Water Quality Coordinating Committee meeting for Wednesday, June 10 at 9:30am
- Delivered compost from the tree and shrub sale to the northern half of the county with Lenny
- I attended the annual workers compensation provider PERMA’s member conference to represent Hamilton SWCD as our Safety Coordinator
- I have been nominated to backfill the CDEA Division V seat

New York State Soil & Water Conservation Committee

Region 4 Report – June

Submitted by: Ryan Cunningham – Region 4 Associate Environmental Analyst

NYS SWCC News

New SWCC Staff: The SWCC is pleased to announce Maren Stoddard as the newest member of our team. Maren will be assuming the role of Program Analyst with the Division, specializing in data and environmental modeling work. Maren started her career in NYS conservation with the Warren County Soil and Water Conservation District, where she developed and grew programming for the District in the areas of Agricultural Environmental Management (AEM), stormwater, forestry management, conservation education and more. Please join me in

welcoming Maren to AGM and the SWCC! maren.stoddard@agriculture.ny.gov, (518) 925 – 5753.

SFY 2026-2027 Environmental Protection Fund: The Enacted SFY 2026-2027 Budget is now available at www.budget.ny.gov. This year, the overall EPF remained level at **\$425 million**. Line items of interest to SWCDs include:

- \$27 million for Farmland Protection, including up to \$175,000 for the Cornell Land Classification and Master List of Soils; \$1M for Capacity grants
- \$18.7 million for Agricultural Nonpoint Source Pollution Control Projects, including \$250,000 for Cornell PMEP;
- \$19 million for Soil and Water Conservation Districts; **This represents a \$1 Million increase.**
- \$26 million for the Oceans and Great Lakes Initiative;
- \$6.6 million for NYS Climate Adaptation, including \$20,000 for the Wood Products Development Council. WPDC remains at a reduced level due to a large amount of available reappropriations;
- \$20.5 million for the Climate Resilient Farms Program, including up to \$700,000 for the Cornell Soil Health program; up to \$1,000,000 for agrivoltaics; up to \$2,000,000 for Cornell University satellite farms

June SWCC Meeting: The next meeting of the NYS Soil and Water Conservation Committee will be on Tuesday, **June 16th** starting at **10:00 AM**. Further details and an agenda for this meeting will be sent out shortly. **Reminder – participation at a SWCC meeting is eligible toward PM1, Part C of State Aid to Districts.**

Conservation Approval Authority Update: The SWCC has approved changes to the Conservation Approval Authority (CAA) program, expanding its scope and available certification tracks. All conservation standards not requiring a PE license, CAA certificate, CNMP certificate or Professional Animal Scientist license are now included in the program. Participants can earn certification in 3 ways:

- Coursework to earn a Basic Certificate
- Mentored course follow-up projects to earn an Advanced Certificate
- Evaluation of Education and Experience to earn an Advanced Certificate

The CAA program is intended to help train district staff and help document their knowledge, skills and abilities to give district boards confidence in them. The CAA policy and accompanying Approval Authority Definitions for SWCC Programs spreadsheet are available on the SWCC SharePoint engineering page. Questions can be directed to Tim Clark, tim.clark@agriculture.ny.gov

Director Training: A reminder that your Regional AEA is available to present training modules to your Board of Directors. Most notably the District Law training module which is training required every 3 years under the Performance Measure 1. Please reach out to your Regional

AEA if you have any training needs. Additionally, the District Law training module is available to complete virtually via VIMEO: <https://vimeo.com/446525792>

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 on Monday mornings at 9:00 am** to watch prerecorded lectures and answer discussion questions. 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

From Planning To Action - Municipal Training Series: New York Sea Grant has announced educational opportunities for municipal leaders involved with land use management planning and implementation along New York's Great Lakes and connecting river channels. A two-part Coastal Community Development webinar series will feature information on coastal processes that impact the shorelines along Lake Erie, the Niagara River, Lake Ontario, and St. Lawrence River.

- **June 9, 2026, from 1:00 PM - 2:00 PM**, Keeping your Plan off the Shelf - a panel of local government representatives who have successfully developed and implemented land use planning goals will share tips for keeping an active process moving after completing a local plan to accomplish the desired objectives and benefits for the local community. https://cornell.zoom.us/meeting/register/-Ge8x470QFOtYB6ji_YvjA#/registration

2026 NY Soil Health and Climate Resiliency Field Days: The NY Soil Health Alliance Group will convene a series of Soil Health & Climate Resiliency Field Day's throughout the State during 2026. Registration is now live for the **June 25th event at Sheland Farm, located in Jefferson County** and the **June 30th event at the Nichols Farm in Cattaraugus County**. Visit, <https://www.newyorksoilhealth.org/fielddays/> for more information and to register.

NACD Northeast Regional Meeting – Save the Date: The 2026 Northeast Region Meeting, hosted by the Delaware Association of Conservation Districts, will be held on **August 24-27, 2026**, at the Chase Center on the Riverfront in Wilmington, DE. <https://dacdnet.org/2026NACDNE/>

Other Grant Opportunities

Resilient Watersheds Grant (RWG) Program Application Period is Now Open: At least \$60 million of Environmental Bond Act funding is available for implementation of flood mitigation projects across New York State. Minimum grant amount: \$150,000; maximum grant amount: \$10,000,000. **Applications are due Friday June 26th, 2026, at 4:00 PM.**

<https://dec.ny.gov/environmental-protection/water/water-quantity/resilient-ny>

The New York State Consolidated Funding Application window is now open, through July 31st. Funding is available for over 20 programs, including DEC's Water Quality Improvement Projects (WQIP) and Non-Ag Non-Point Source MS4 Planning Grants. [Governor Hochul Announces Launch of 2026 Regional Economic Development Council Initiative | Governor Kathy Hochul | New York State](#)

WQIP and NPG webinars will be held on June 8th from 1:00 - 3:00pm. Register here: [2026 Regional Workshops and Live Agency Webinars | Regional Economic Development Councils](#)



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

June 2026

Dear Directors,

A recap of what NYACD has been doing in the first half of 2026.

Blanche sent out a request to districts for emails, addresses, and phone numbers of their full SWCD Board members. We are trying to have better communication between the board members and feel that being able to reach out to each other is the best way to make this happen. Blanche has received information back from some but not all the districts at present.

Blanche participated in a 4-Way Partner meeting to discuss programs, projects, concerns, other pertinent matters related to SWCDs. Another session is scheduled for the coming months. These meetings provide valuable opportunities for partners to share information and collaborate effectively for the benefit of all involved parties.

Sam and Blanche attended the 2026 CDEA Annual business meeting on March 11, 2026. We welcome the new officers and will be happy to see them at our monthly NYACD meetings and collaborate with them as we move forward.

NYACD informed the Governor about SWCDs' use of EPF funds. Sam Casella also spoke to the

Governor's staff, who noted that while many groups contact the Governor about the EPF, the Governor strongly supports SWCDs.

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. Blanche had additional Zoom meeting appointments scheduled to meet with additional Legislators that could not meet with folks during Legislative days. We would like to take this time to THANK all the districts that participated in this year's Legislative Days. We appreciate your help and support in educating our Legislators, sharing your story, and gathering support for SWCD's at the state level.

Over the past month, Blanche contacted legislators about concerns regarding a possible \$7 million carve-out for Cornell from the EPF line-item Climate Resilient Farms Program. The Executive Budget also continued the longstanding \$500,000 allocation to the Cornell Soil Health Program that has been included for several years.

The NYS Assembly and Senate have different FY26-27 budget figures. The Assembly suggests keeping the CRF budget at \$19.1 million and adding three Cornell programs: Forest Preservation on Ag Land for Carbon Sequestration, Cornell Agrivoltaics Study, and Cornell Satellite Research Farms and Forest. This worksheet was sent in March.

The State is still negotiating the budget, aiming for final proposals in May. The Senate and Assembly are debating whether to increase total funding or remove the carve out from the \$19.1 million, which could reduce CRF program funds for Soil and Water Conservation Districts. The Senate would like to have the line item for CRF increased to provide the necessary funding for the three additional programs.

As you know the 2026-2027 budget passed with the following updates on EPF:

This year, the overall EPF remains at **\$425 million**.

Environmental Protection Fund

Overall appropriations for the FY 2027 EPF are approved to be \$425 million. Appropriations of interest to AGM/SWCC/SWCDs:

- \$500,000 for the Regenerate NY Program
- \$20.5 million for the Climate Resilient Farms Program, including \$700,000 for the Cornell Soil Health program, \$500,000 to maintain forests and woodlands located on agricultural land for the purpose of carbon sequestration, \$1 million for Cornell University CALS to study the ecological impacts of agrivoltaics, and \$2 million for Cornell University CALS for satellite research farms and forests
- \$18.7 million for Agricultural Nonpoint Source Pollution Control Projects, including \$250,000 for Cornell Pesticide Management Education Program (PMEP)

- \$27 million for Farmland Protection, including up to \$1,000,000 for capacity grants, \$150,000 for the Cornell Land Classification and Master List of Soils
- \$1.85 million for Biodiversity Stewardship, including \$500,000 for pollinator protection, \$200,000 for the Cary Institute, \$200,000 for Paul Smiths College for the Watershed Institute, and \$200,000 for UAlbany Atmospheric Sciences Research Center
- \$4 million for Finger Lakes Lake Ontario Watershed Protection Alliance
- \$250,000 for Lake Erie Watershed Protection
- \$28 million for the Water Quality Improvement Program (WQIP), including \$1.2 million for the Eastern Finger Lakes Watershed Coalition
- \$26 million for the Oceans and Great Lakes Program – the Ecosystem Based Management Program is supported by this funding.
- \$18.55 million for Invasive Species
- \$19 million for Soil and Water Conservation Districts – **this represents a \$1 million increase. With this increase to State Aid, Districts that receive full Part A reimbursement, Part B funding, and meet all performance measures could receive approximately \$323,000.00!**
- \$14.275 million for the Waterfront Revitalization Program

The Great Lakes Commission Committee survey was sent out to district directors and staff for their 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 was voluntary and response was confidential. To protect anonymity, your responses were not associated with a specific district name. The survey was completed and it has helped determine the next step in the process to help and support districts in moving forward. The final step has been completed and will be presented at the GL Commission Committee meeting in August.

The NYACD Annual meeting will be held Monday, October 26th and Tuesday, October 27th, 2026, at The Hampton Inn, Penn Yan. Blanche is 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.

Sam Casella, NYACD President attended the annual NACD Fly-In in Washington, DC on March 25, 2026, where he met with several federal Legislators. Sam provided the US Legislators with what SWCD's are doing to protect NY's soil and water. The feedback from the Legislators was very positive for Soil and Water Conservation Districts.

Sam attended the 2026 NACD Annual event in February in San Antonio, Texas. Sam shared with the NYACD Board at our February meeting that this was a major event, with great training sessions, evening discussions, and he shared with folks what NY has been doing.

Blanche provided districts with the “New York 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.

Blanche met with Jessica Armstrong, the new CDEA President in April. They discussed the importance of communication and working together moving forward.

The Delaware Association of Conservation Districts is excited to host the 2026 NACD Northeast Region Meeting on August 24-27 in Wilmington. We wanted to share the [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 magnificent 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.

Blanche has been reaching out to the different districts within Divisions III, V, VI, VII, and VIII Directors and Managers requesting their help in finding a division director representative on the NYACD board. She hopes to meet in person or by zoom with the above divisions to share what NYACD is doing on their behalf. She has created a director’s brochure that will be forward to potential Directors, that she has contact information for. This brochure provides information on what the director’s duties and responsibilities would be.

NYACD Board by-laws subcommittee met in April and May to review the by-laws. The committee began reviewing and making necessary changes, clarified statements, and will have them ready for review in advance of our annual meeting.

NYACD Board meets on the fourth Wednesday of the month, 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. FYI once NYACD board members approve the minutes they will be uploaded to our website www.nyacd.org.

Respectfully,

Blanche

Blanche L Hurlbutt,
NYACD Executive Director