

**BOARD MEETING MINUTES
ULSTER COUNTY SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT
5 PARK LANE
HIGHLAND, NY 12528
November 26, 2025**

- 1. OPENING MEETING** - The **MEETING** was **CALLED TO ORDER** by Chairman L. Tantillo at 9:03 AM. Directors Present: L. Tantillo, F. Wilklow, H. Litts and S. Van Nostrand. SWCD Staff in attendance: J. Wedemeyer - Executive Director, C. DeGroot - Program Assistant, C. Hernsdorf – District Technician and M. Garfinkle - Ashokan Stream Project Manager.

Three applicants were interviewed virtually for the vacant District Technician position.

(K. Nolan joined the Meeting at 9:04 AM)

In-person interviews for two of the applicants will be held next week on December 3, 2025 (8:30 AM and 9:15 AM) at the District office. Litts, Tantillo, Wilklow and Nolan will be attending as the hiring committee.

2. WORK REPORTS

a) SWCD

J. Wedemeyer – (see attached staff report)

Photos were passed out to the Board showing the installation of a perimeter fence for a rotational grazing system in the Town of Rochester, the installation of three on-farm secondary containment facilities (two in New Paltz and one in Wawarsing), the harvesting of willow stakes for a riparian buffer project, and cover crops that were certified.

The Ulster County Executive Jen Metzger is willing to give the District \$200,000.00 to support some farm projects (fuel storage, barnyard projects, etc.). Nolan mentioned that Wilklow and Davenport had inquired about financial assistance for the farmers from the County in the past.

Wedemeyer said the County asked him to create a “farmland protection program” to cover soft costs such as appraisals, title searches and surveying. Nolan said that Delaune and Mike Sweeton have provided a program to the County of Ulster for this already. Litts said that the farmers should do their homework because once you sell off your rights your borrowing power is basically diminished to nothing. Nolan said that a policy should be created.

Wedemeyer said that Hernsdorf completed the Climate Resilient Farming Round 9 Grant application and submitted it to the state.

C. Hernsdorf – (see attached staff report)

AEM - Hernsdorf and Wedemeyer have been busy completing construction inspections on various farms in the County.

MISC – The no-till rentals are wrapped up for another year and alot of soil group worksheets have been completed so far this year with additional requests coming in daily. Several towns are reviewing all ag exemptions.

Wilklow asked where does the money go that is taken in for equipment rentals. Wedemeyer responded that it goes into the District’s Part C account and is used for salary, equipment, computers, etc.

(C. Hernsdorf left the Meeting at 9:25 AM)

C. DeGroodt – (see attached staff report)

b) AWSMP

M. Garfinkle – Ashokan Stream Project Manager (see attached staff report)

Stream Restoration Projects

Broadstreet Hollow – Staff met with the design engineering firm regarding the Broadstreet Hollow project. Garfinkle has received the 30% design report and plans from the Stantec engineer, reviewed them internally and met with her yesterday to go over any outstanding comments so they can start re-engaging landowners on the project site. He is planning on solidifying landowner agreements now that there are more developed design plans in hand. Wedemeyer and Garfinkle spoke about setting meetings up with the landowners the third week in December to make sure they are aware of what the project scope will entail, to understand the construction sequence and what the intended timelines are. The 60% design is anticipated to be completed by mid-January, so at that point they will begin permitting and looking to set solid goals for the spring to begin planning construction steps.

Hollow Tree Brook (HTB) – Wedemeyer and Garfinkle were able to execute the contract with Stantec to retain them for the re-design. Garfinkle met with their engineer last week on-site and did the preliminary site walk. She can now put together a conceptual plan for the project which we should have in-hand by December 19th.

Last week was the annual stakeholder council meeting that was held by Cornell Cooperative Extension at the AWSMP office. They were able to present to all engaged partners where AWSMP stands with their restoration projects and where the program is headed for the next year.

Assessment and Monitoring – Over 50 applications were received for the vacant Stream Technical Specialist position at Ashokan. Garfinkle reviewed the applications and narrowed them down to the top 11 candidates. Virtual interviews will be conducted next week. The 2nd round of in-person interviews (top 3 candidates) will be held at the January District Board Meeting. The Board requested copies of the 11 resumes.

Garfinkle said they are continuing with the Birch Creek stream feature inventory.

Mark Tollefson attended a two-day Harkin Aerial LiDar training in Arkville, NY.

Garfinkle mentioned that one planting was completed by Taylor but another site lacked adequate deer protection so supplies were pulled from the site and the planting will be completed in the spring.

B. Taylor – (see staff report)

M. Tollefson – (see staff report)

G. Bonse – (see staff report)

Tantillo wanted to go on record to say that he is very pleased at how well both the Highland and Ashokan offices have been working together.

3. NEW BUSINESS

- a) **AEM Strategic Plan Approval** – Nolan asked if everything included in the plan is funded by normal means. Wedemeyer said it was and that a budget was already submitted to the board. Nolan requested it be distributed to the Board of Directors first since it's the Directors' duty to manage the finances. **2025-11-26-1 Nolan made the Motion, Litts seconded, to adopt the Ulster County Soil & Water Conservation District Agricultural Environmental Management Plan for 2026-2030. All in favor.** There was a brief discussion on agritourism in Ulster County. Nolan suggested the District send out a survey to farmers asking them if they would like the public to visit their farm.
- b) **Riparian Planting Video - \$250 for Skinner Photography** – The District partnered with the Orange County Land Trust and the Hudson River Estuary Trees for Tribes program to plant willow stakes at the Saunderkill Farm along the Rochester Creek in Accord, NY. **2025-11-26-2 Nolan made the Motion, Van Nostrand seconded, to pay \$250.00 to Skinner Photography for a video showing the planting. All in favor.**
- c) **Governor Hochul Letter to Support Environmental Protection Fund** – Wedemeyer presented a letter for the Chairman's signature addressed to Governor Hochul thanking her for her support of the Environmental Protection Fund (EPF), which is essential to our agency. **2025-11-26-3 Nolan made the Motion, Litts seconded, to approve of Chairman Tantillo signing the letter to Governor Hochul thanking her for her support of the Environmental Protection Fund. All in favor.**

4. OLD BUSINESS

- a) **District Technician Applicants** – discussed prior in the Meeting.

5. **Board Meeting Minutes Approval** – **2025-11-26-4 Nolan made the Motion, Litts seconded, to approve the October 22, 2025 and November 14, 2025 Special Meeting Minutes as presented. All in favor.**
6. **FINANCIAL REPORTS AND ABSTRACTS** – **2025-11-26-5 Nolan made the Motion, Wilklow seconded, to approve the October 2025 Financial Reports and Abstracts. All in favor.**
7. **NEXT MEETING** – The next Board Meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, January 29, 2026 at 9:00 AM.

The Board and SWCD staff thanked Legislator Litts for his years of service on the Soil & Water Board and presented him with a gift card.

8. ADJOURNMENT

2025-11-26-6 A Motion was made by Litts to Adjourn the Meeting at 10:00 AM, seconded by Nolan. All in favor.

Respectfully Submitted,

Christine DeGroot
Program Assistant