

MINUTES
ULSTER COUNTY SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT
5 PARK LANE
HIGHLAND, NY 12528
April 24, 2024

1. **OPENING MEETING** - The **MEETING** was **CALLED TO ORDER** by Chairman L. Tantillo at 7:00 PM. Directors Present: H. Litts, S. VanNostrand, J. DeLaune, K. Nolan and F. Wilklow. SWCD Staff in attendance: J. Wedemeyer - Exec. Director, T. Ferry - District Technician, Christine DeGroot - Program Assistant and A. Doan - A.W.S.M.P. Stream Project Manager.

2. **WORK REPORTS**

Written staff reports were mailed and emailed to Board Members and B. Luskin prior to the meeting for review (attached to the filed minutes).

a) **SWCD**

J. Wedemeyer (see attached staff report)

AEM Round 18 – Wedemeyer and Ferry have been working on grazing plans, preliminary designs, subsurface and surface recommendations, etc.

AG NPS Round 27 – Wedemeyer has been working with JESS Engineering on two designs which he hopes to have completed soon. NRCS is assisting with a third design.

NYS DEP CAT-494 – Completed the FY 25 Annual Plan of Work.

CRF Round 6 – Ulster SWCD staff will be at the Soil Health Field Day next Tuesday at 5:30 PM at Walkkill View Farm in New Paltz to promote the use of the District's no-till seeder and to give a demonstration. Cornell Cooperative Extension, SWCD and John Ferrante of Walkkill View Farm will discuss practices to improve soil health and local resources available to help support farms. Wedemeyer invited the Board to attend.

District Updates/Other Projects

Annual Seedling Sale – Orders were low this year but overall the sale went well.

ARPA Funding – Wedemeyer is still working with Economic Development. He provided them information showing how other Districts utilized the ARPA funding. He also provided a list of equipment that would be beneficial to soil health that the local farmers could use such as a row mulcher, lime spreader and no-till drill. Wedemeyer asked Legislators Litts and Nolan to inform the ARPA committee of the importance of a lime spreader for soil health, based on the interest that was expressed at the March 24th agricultural producer meeting with Economic Development.

Wedemeyer is coordinating a 4-Hour Erosion & Sediment Control Course with Westchester County SWCD and the City of White Plains to be held on May 21st.

The District donated bird boxes to a Girl Scout group in Boiceville.

Wedemeyer mentioned that the District's insurance rates went up with the last renewal, but added that Ashokan pays for half.

There is an interview on May 6th for the Junior Tech position.

Ulster SWCD sponsored a Community Preservation and Farmland Protection in Ulster County: Seminar and Training being held on June 11, 2024 at 8:10 AM at SUNY New Paltz. The seminar and training will provide Ulster County's Town Supervisors and municipal leaders with information on how to plan and implement and Community Preservation Program and utilize funding through the NYS Dept. of Agriculture and Markets to protect working farmland in their communities. Wedemeyer thanked the Board for the \$500.00 donation towards refreshments.

Wedemeyer mentioned he's been working with the Lower Esopus Stream Management Plan Working Group and plan finalization.

Ulster SWCD has been working with the Department of the Environment on the Catskill Mountain Railroad Herbicide Application waiver. Their waiver was denied because they have been spraying beyond what they were allowed despite being issued multiple warnings. Discussion followed.

The District's new pickup truck was delivered. Nolan brought up the idea of adding an electric vehicle charging station at our location. Wedemeyer mentioned that the USDA rents this facility. Nolan suggested asking NRCS to ask the building owner about it. A brief discussion followed.

Litts commended Wedemeyer on a good job with the drainage mitigations that Wedemeyer pointed out to the Town of Shawangunk. They were installed and are working perfectly.

Salary structure to be discussed under **NEW BUSINESS**. After receiving the state report on 2023 salaries, Ulster SWCD salaries are on the low end.

C. DeGroodt – (see attached staff report)

CAT-494 Quarterly Reports – One report is complete and the other is in progress.

District's Annual Audit – The annual audit is scheduled for May 2-3, 2024.

County Quarterly Report - The 1st Quarter 2024 County Financial Report is almost ready to be submitted to the County. We just have to approve the March Abstract so it can be included.

T. Ferry – (see attached staff report)

AEM – Ferry is working the AEM Tier 4 paperwork that is due May 1st.

District's Cover Crop Program – The cover crop documents have been updated for 2024 and can be viewed on the District's website. Documents were passed around to the Board.

The District's new truck was delivered with a nice size crack in the windshield. The dealer is offering to pay for the repairs. The District already obtained a WEX gas card and an EZ-Pass toll tag for it.

b) **AWSMP**

A. Doan – Stream Project Manager – (see attached report)

Doan completed and submitted the two-year Action Plan in coordination with Cornell Cooperative Extension and SWCD staff.

A research assessment and monitoring strategy update was completed. This is a document used to solicit various researchers.

2024 field planning meeting with Lent and Tollefson. The focus is primarily on project monitoring which needs to be done in order to meet permitting requirements, but also the collaborative USGS/UCSWCD fisheries study. There are two new sites coming into this study.

The first formal use of the new drone is scheduled in two weeks. Tollefson has been working on a standard operating procedure and doing test flights. It's lidar capable and has an upgraded sensor. Discussion followed.

Ferry and Lent have been completing monthly stormwater inspections on the Elk Bushkill site.

There was a site visit with Taylor and Wedemeyer to review the Boiceville plan with the DEP.

Ashokan staff are working on getting their new computers hooked up.

SWCC Report - submitted by Ben Luskin – (see attached report)

AEM Leopold Conservation Award 2024 – This award recognizes 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 \$10,000.00. The deadline for applications is May 15, 2024. Ulster SWCD is re-submitting last year's farm. This farm has done a lot for soil health over the years.

Climate Resilient Farm (CRF) Round 8 – We are waiting for it to be released. We will be applying for a new 12' no-till drill and a row mulcher.

CORRESPONDENCE – The District received a letter of appreciation from the First Presbyterian Church in Highland for the donation SWCD made in honor of Bill Wilklow.

The District received a second letter of appreciation from the Ulster County SPCA in Kingston in for the donation SWCD made in honor of Eugene Emil Brackle.

3. NEW BUSINESS

- a) **AEM Round 18 Cost-Share Funding Resolution** – This is an updated resolution to one that was passed last fall. This one specifies eight farms that we have lined up for cost-share Tier 4 portion, which is close to \$200,000.00. Project range from Irrigation Interconnection to Rotational Grazing, some access road help, etc. **2024-4-1 Nolan made the Motion, seconded by Litts, to approve Resolution Number 2024-1 to authorize participation by the Ulster County Soil and Water Conservation District in the AEM Base Program, Option A, as presented. All in favor.**
- b) **Salary Structure** – Wedemeyer emailed the Board a salary structure update prior to the Board Meeting. Salaries remain non-competitive compared to our counterparts in the Hudson Valley

as per the 2023 data received from the NYS Soil and Water Conservation Committee. The District's Jr. Technician position is struggling to attract candidates due to the salary range being offered. Wedemeyer proposed salary adjustments for all employees in order to attract new employees and retain current ones. Discussion followed.

4. OLD BUSINESS

- a) **Junior Technician Applicants** – There was one interview scheduled, but the applicant called and cancelled the day of the interview. There is another interview scheduled for May 6th. Wedemeyer requested increasing the salary being offered as it was already in our budget. Discussion followed.

5. **MINUTES APPROVAL – 2024-4-2 Nolan made the Motion, Litts seconded, to approve the March 2024 Board Meeting Minutes. All in favor.**

6. **FINANCIAL REPORTS AND ABSTRACTS** – Nolan asked what the payment made to Skinner Photography was for. Wedemeyer said it's a short promotional video about the Ulster County Soil & Water, which explains to the public who we are and what we do. **2024-4-3 Nolan made the Motion, Delaune seconded, to approve the Financial Report and March 2024 Abstract. All in favor.**

7. **NEXT MEETING** - The next Board Meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, May 22, 2024 at 7 PM.

2024-4-4 Nolan made the Motion, seconded by Delaune, to go into Executive Session at 7:45 PM to discuss salaries for the three current employees and proposed Jr. Technician position. All in favor.

The Board came out of Executive Session at 8:25 PM.

No Motions were adopted, passed, or agreed to in Executive Session.

2024-4-5 Nolan made the Motion, Delaune seconded, to increase the Jr. Technician salary to a range of \$46,000.00 - \$49,000.00. All in favor.

Wedemeyer mentioned that the Jr. Technician position was posted to colleges, Indeed, our website and Facebook. Litts suggested sending it to BOCES.

Nolan requested the salaries of all employees from past years. SWCD will email the Board a spreadsheet of salaries.

8. ADJOURNMENT

2024-4-6 A Motion was made by Litts to Adjourn the meeting at 8:31 PM, seconded by Delaune. All in favor.

Respectfully Submitted,

Christine DeGroot
Program Assistant

JLW Activities March 21 thorough April 12, 2024

AEM: AEM Tier 5B – Soil and acreage mapping assistance, T/O Esopus. AEM Tier 4 – Barnyard preliminary design, T/O Gardiner. AEM Tier 4 – Irrigation system preliminary design and cost estimate, T/O Marbletown. AEM Tier 4 – Rotational grazing plan, discussed gates and linear footage, T/O Rochester. AEM Tier 4 – Barnyard preliminary design, T/O Olive. AEM Partnership – Surface and subsurface drainage recommendations on farmland on the County Line, T/O Saugerties. AEM Program Evaluation – tallied practices and costs for AEM Option A, updated contract submittal.

Inventory and Evaluations: Peter Scatturo, T/O Esopus – Assistance with farm rental per acre price range. Town of Shawangunk – Critical area seeding and rock lined outlet recommendations. John Sczerba, T/O Lloyd – follow up with backyard and wellhead flooding issues. David Weiss, T/O Esopus – Agricultural Feasibility site visit. Ann Kurth, T/O Shawangunk – pond site enhancement. Elizabeth Ryan, T/O Marbletown – soil group worksheet assistance. Do Coptic Orthodox Monastery, T/O Esopus – agricultural feasibility.

NYC DEP CAT 494: Assistance with computer monitor orders and delivered to Shokan office. Reviewed and approved SLR invoices and payment tracking. Working with Adam and Bobby advancing the Boiceville Flood Buyout CSBI contract. Assistance with the FY24 Q3 reconciliations. Completed FY25 annual plan of work and budget. Double checked successor contract budget. Assistance with culvert sizing and erosion based on prior site visits. Passport enrollment. Weekly staff meetings with A. Doan. Reviewed and approved Kiosk materials for Emerson informational panels.

Round 27: Working with JESS engineering to have designs done by mid-April to review with farmers. Completed On-Farm Secondary Containment Design.

CRF Round 6: Coordination and promotion of no-till and cover crop twilight field day at Wallkill View Farm. Working with CCE of Ulster County.

District Updates/Other Projects:

- Working with Chris and Travis on the annual tree and shrub sale.
- Working with Economic Development with ARPA funding. Provided info with how other Districts are handling the funding. Not sure when funding will be released. Coordinated farmer/ARPA meeting on 3/24/24.
- Coordinating 4 Hour Erosion and Sediment Control Course with Westchester Co. SWCD and the City of White Plains.
- Working with Girl Scouts, District donated wildlife boxes, doing a nature walk on April 21st.
- District insurance renewal and completing renewal documents.
- Junior Technician telephone interviews.
- Coordination of conference space and food for Farmland Protection workshop.
- Participation with Lower Esopus Stream Management Plan working group and plan finalization.
- Participation with updating Ulster County Farmland Protection Plan.
- Ulster County herbicide application waiver review.
- Assistance with new truck registration.
- Salary study for District employees.

TRF Activities – March 21, 2024 – April 12, 2024

AEM: Tier 3A – T/O Marlboro – met with producer to work on grazing plan for Tier 4 implementation. Tier 2 – T/O Rochester – finish Tier 2 and send to producer. AEM Tier 1 – T/O Shawangunk – look at barnyard issues for beef producer. Tier 2 – T/O Saugerties – tier 2 site visit for horse operation and undersized bridge. Tier 5A – T/O Ulster – look up old conservation plan to send to producer, start conversation on updating plan. Work on Tier 4 implementation projects SW sheets and resolution.

Part C Cover Crop Program: Updated our cover crop documents for 2024 after last board meeting.

Inventory and Evaluations: Jonah Fuechsel – T/O Saugerties – site visit to look at farm operation and streambank erosion on Kaaterskill Creek. Attend ARPA funding meeting. T/O Shawangunk – site visit to Stein Rd w/ Jake for road and bank stabilization. Jeannie Franck – T/O Olive – phone discussion about ditch management, loop in Bobby for Stream Program inclusion. Mike Freeman – T/O Shawangunk – emails about cover crops. Jocelyn Ffriend – T/O Marlboro – setup site visit for cover crop and erosion issues on farm. Bill Willis – drinking water lab testing questions/options. John K – ag assessment questions. Kelly C – office visit, discuss ag exemption, stream/pond erosion issues and tree and shrub sale.

CRF Round 6: No activity.

CRF Round 7: Talk with landowner about irrigation project, give them contract to sign.

NYC DEP CAT 494: Listened to a Streambank Soil Bioengineering Webinar. Meet Bobby in Shokan, site visit to Franck site for potential CSBI project. Gathered quarterly hours, truck mileage/tolls.

Round 27: No activity.

No-Till Program: No activity.

Misc: Ag assessments, still have a few coming in, 4 completed.

Received our new truck. Registered truck at the county, should receive our plates. Chris got insurance, Wex card and EZpass taken care of quickly. Unfortunately, the windshield must have taken a rock on the way down to the office. Joe Basil is offering to pay for the repair, working on quotes to send to them. Safelite was \$770, working on a quote from Affordable Auto Glass in Highland.

Helped prepare for tree and shrub sale, unloading bird boxes, moving trees to Wilklow's for cold storage. Packed trees and helped with distribution.

Christine DeGroot

Activities March 21, 2024 – April 12, 2024

District's 2024 Tree & Shrub Program: A total of 77 orders were received.

NYS Retirement – Monthly reporting.

CAT-494 Contracts – I am working on the quarterly reports for Capital and Expense.

County Quarterly Report – Almost finished. Once I get the March Abstract approved at the Board Meeting, it can be submitted to the County.

ARPA Funding – Helped with and attended the ARPA meeting on Sunday, March 24th and a follow-up meeting on April 4th.

Quarterly Tax Reports – The first quarter FIT and NYS Income Tax reports were submitted. A copy of the NYS-45 report was submitted to County of Ulster per their request.

District's Annual Audit – I've been in contact with the auditor and have been preparing documents he requested. The audit will be May 2 – 3rd for the District and the 22nd and 23rd for the DEP contract.

Ongoing- mail, bank deposits, bill payments/receipts, abstracts, Board Minutes, tree & shrub assistance, bank transfers, bank account reconciliations, supply orders, etc.

New York State Soil & Water Conservation Committee
Region 5 Report – April 2024
Submitted by: Ben Luskin – Region 5 Associate Environmental Analyst

NYS SWCC News

New Water Quality Programs Manager: We are pleased to announce that Jason Kokkinos will serve as our new Associate Environmental Analyst (AEA) for SWCC Water Quality Programs (AgNPS/CAFO/SWBP)! Many of you remember Jason as our Division's Program Analyst, where he assisted in the administration of the AgNPS, AEM and other programs. Since leaving the Department in 2022, Jason has been serving as an Environmental Analyst for the Lake George Park Commission. We are super excited to have Jason back on our team! Jason can be reached at (518) 457-7374, jason.kokkinos@agriculture.ny.gov

April SWCC Meeting: The next meeting of the NYS Soil and Water Conservation Committee will be on **Tuesday, April 16th starting at 10:30 AM**. This meeting will be held in person at the State Office Building in Utica, NY; lunch will be provided. Unfortunately, due to limited capacity, we are unable to offer a virtual call-in/teleconference option. The meeting agenda, DRAFT March meeting minutes, and DRAFT NYS SWCC Strategic Plan are available on the Department's website: <https://agriculture.ny.gov/soil-and-water/about-soil-water-conservation-committee> To ensure we have an accurate count of attendees, please respond to (Bethany.bzduch@agriculture.ny.gov) no later than **April 8th, 2024**.

AEM18 Tier 4 Cost-Share (CS) Track Project Packages are due May 1st: Please upload your Tier 4 CS Track Project packages to your AEM18 SharePoint folder and email you Regional Coordinator and Greg Albrecht (greg.albrecht@agriculture.ny.gov) to let us know they're complete and ready for our review. Forms, including Tier 4 project related ones, have been updated for AEM18, so please use those posted to the [AEM R18 Management and Close Out Materials](#) folder within the AEM18 folder on SharePoint. The instructions (checklist) for putting together AEM18 Tier 4 project packages based on your AEM Tier 3 plans (or equivalent from other programs or regulations) are found in Section IV of the AEM18 Program and Contract Policy on pages 8 and 9. Contact your Regional Coordinator or Greg Albrecht if you have any questions along the way.

NYS SWCC On-Demand Conservation Approval Authority: Several training videos are available for District Technicians looking to learn new skills or take a refresher course. Some of these videos lead to a Conservation Approval Authority Certificate and some are background/prerequisite material. These videos are currently housed on Youtube and Udemy. We are actively working to transition all videos to the Youtube platform. The following courses are available on Youtube ([Soil and Water Conservation Committee Training - YouTube](#)): Basic Hydrology (ArcMap & QGIS editions), Culverts in HY8, Fence Design, Spreadsheet Stream Hydraulics, Conservation Tools and References Wiki (Short). The following courses are available on Udemy ([Tim Clark | Conservation Planning, Design & Implementation across NY! | Udemy](#)): Stream Crossing Design and Roof Runoff Structure Design. If you have any questions, please reach out to Tim Clark, tim.clark@agriculture.ny.gov.

Interim Reporting: Interim reports for AGNPS Contracts (Round 21-Round 23), CAFO WSTSP (Round 1 and Round 2), CRF (Round 1 – Round 4) **MUST** be submitted by **May 1st**. Please submit these reports to the appropriate Program Manager and cc your AEA and Maureen Irish (Maureen.Irish@agriculture.ny.gov).

New NYS Grants Management System: As a reminder, on January 16, New York State transitioned grants management activities from the Grants Gateway to SFS. SFS is New York State (NYS) government's accounting and financial management system used to manage contracts and payments. SWCD roles established in the Grants Gateway have transferred to SFS with varying success. Districts are encouraged to check out the SFS Vendor Portal to be sure that access is available. If it is not, there are a variety of ways you can obtain SFS support, including virtual support calls, on-demand training materials, and the SFS Help Desk. Links to the SFS Vendor Portal and training material can be accessed through the Grants Management website <https://grantsmanagement.ny.gov/>

AEM Leopold Conservation Award 2024: 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. The application can be found at, <https://www.sandcountyfoundation.org/our-work/leopold-conservation-award/application-info>. The deadline for applications is **May 15th, 2024**.

2024 NYS Envirothon Call for Volunteers: The NYS Envirothon Committee is pleased to host the 2024 NYS Envirothon at State University of New York in Cortland, NY, on May 22nd and 23rd and is putting out a call for all volunteers. Please let the Committee know if you are willing to volunteer by completing the online volunteer registration at, <https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLScMFLrYPXZkYXm7qMQABYrUCCb7jYjR5nzi7Mx9Mu-6MKSzqg/viewform?vc=0&c=0&w=1&flr=0>

Other Events

2024 NYS Wetlands Forum Annual Conference: The New York State Wetlands Forum 2024 Annual Conference and Business Meeting will take place on **April 16th and 17th, in Saratoga Springs, NY**. To register, please visit: <http://www.wetlandsforum.org/registration.html>

CREP In-Field Eligibility Training: Meet up with USDA and local partners on the ground to determine site eligibility for Riparian Forest Buffers. Trainings will be held in Otsego County on **May 2nd**, Tioga County on **May 9th & 20th**, Jefferson County on **May 29th**, and Monroe County on **May 30th**. Check out the google form link for more information, and please fill out the form by **April 22nd**. Here is the google form to sign up: <https://forms.gle/7k5xcgTCedQncA849>

Silvopasture Field Course: Essex County SWCD is hosting a Silvopasture Field Day on **May 4th**, from **8:30 AM to 3PM**. Subject experts will walk through the principles of site selection and planning before heading into the field where participants will meet with local farmers and foresters implementing silvopasture practices. Limited space – advanced registration required. To register, please contact Renee Clark at the Essex SWCD (518) 962-8225 or rclark@essexcountyswcd.org. Cost is \$20/person (lunch and refreshments provided).

GLAA Sub-Basin Work Group Spring Meetings: Meetings will be held throughout the basin this spring as follows. To request more information, or to request to be added to a regional sub basin work group, please email greatlakes@dec.ny.gov

- ***Southeast (SE) Lake Ontario: 4/23, 1-4PM*** at the Cayuga County SWCD, Office, 7413 County House Road Auburn, NY
- ***Northeast Lake Ontario-St. Lawrence River: 4/24, 1-4PM*** at the Gouverneur Community Center, 4673 NY-58, Gouverneur, NY 13642
- ***Southwest (SW) Lake Ontario: 5/8, 1-4PM*** Room 213 in the Chili Community Center, 3237 Chili Avenue, Rochester, NY 14624
- ***Lake Erie: 5/9, 9AM – 12PM*** in Room 108, Appletree Business Park, 2875 Union Rd, Cheektowaga, NY 14227

Other 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 streambanks. The due date for applications is **April 29th, 2024, at 5:00 p.m. EST**. <https://www.glc.org/work/sediment/apply-2024>

NYSP2I 2024 - 2025 Community Grants Program: The New York State Pollution Prevention Institute (NYSP2I) is accepting applications for the 2024 - 2025 cycle of the Community Grants Program. This program seeks projects that raise awareness and understanding of pollution prevention, and that lead to implementation of best practices at the local level. Eligible applicants are able to receive up to \$20,000 to support their project. Applications are due **May 3rd, 2024 by 5:00PM**. https://www.rit.edu/affiliate/nysp2i/community-outreach?mc_cid=b0b20eba3c&mc_eid=3c766b5276#community-grants