

**MINUTES**  
**ULSTER COUNTY SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT**  
**5 PARK LANE**  
**HIGHLAND, NY 12528**  
**September 27, 2023**

The **MEETING** was **CALLED TO ORDER** by Chairman L. Tantillo at 7:06 PM. Directors Present: S. Van Nostrand, F. Wilklow and Legislator H. Litts. Staff in attendance: J. Wedemeyer - Exec. Director, T. Ferry - District Technician, C. DeGroot - Program Assistant, A. Doan - A.W.S.M.P. Project Manager and B. Taylor – CSBI Program Coordinator. Absent: K. Nolan, R. Davenport and J. Delaune.

**1. STAFF 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) Work Reports**

**SWCD - J. Wedemeyer** (see attached staff report)

- **AEM updates:** AEM Tier 4: A covered barnyard project is underway.

Completed a site showing last week for a rotational grazing system. The bid opening for the grazing system is this Friday at 2:00 PM at the District office.

Director Litts asked how many cover crop applications were received by the District. Ferry responded that approximately 5-10 farms sent in applications and ~66 acres were planted using the District's drill.

- **Inventory and Evaluations:** Assisting with the Lower Esopus Stream Management Plan. Since a consulting firm was hired, District staff have been attending the meetings and providing them with contacts for stream access for their stream inventory survey.
- **Public Assistance:** Assisted a homeowner in Saugerties with a foundation drainage issue.
- **Purchase of Development Rights (PDR):** Wedemeyer is assisting a local farmer with the PDR program.
- **No-Till Program Update:** After several farms rented the drill it was returned with some minor damage to it, which has since been repaired. Wedemeyer mentioned the possibility of purchasing a 12-foot drill next year.
- **Part B Arbor Day Initiative:** Reviewed the Town of Ulster planting proposal and conducted a site visit. Wedemeyer is working on fall plantings with the Ulster County Department of the Environment, Towns of Ulster and Olive, and mentioned that this is funded using the District's Performance Measures Part B \$6,000.00. There was a brief discussion on shifting the Part B funds to a different project next year, possibly a riparian project. To be discussed at the next board meeting.
- **NYC DEP CAT 494:** Although it took longer than expected, the audit has been wrapped up and every penny was accounted for. All information was provided to the auditor and bank statements were reconciled. The same company will also be completing the District's annual audit, which is scheduled for next week.

Wedemeyer mentioned that the Elk Bush Kill Construction Stream Restoration Project has been one of the most difficult stream restoration jobs that he has been involved with due to the high water table, a lot of rain and dealing with difficult landowners. Some days it's been almost impossible to control the stream turbidity. Wedemeyer has been training Lent and Ferry in construction inspection on this site, collecting documentation, etc. He's hoping to have both of them receive their NYS Erosion & Sediment Control certification. Currently, Wedemeyer is the only one certified to complete the weekly Stormwater Inspection Reports. Wedemeyer is offering a NYS E&SC review course on November 15-16<sup>th</sup> in Syracuse. Lent, Ferry (and Doan if he chooses) can take the course and the exam at the end.

The District is looking into purchasing a drone. We already received a few quotes and are waiting for the approval from the NYC DEP's legal department.

Lent, Taylor and Doan (Wedemeyer attended) presented at the Ashokan Watershed Stream Management Program (AWSMP) conference at Bearsville Theater back in July. Wedemeyer added that it was well attended.

Doan and Wedemeyer completed the budget for the CAT-494 successor contract. The draft budget for the 2025-2030 successor contract is approx. \$16 million and was submitted to the NYC DEP. A brief discussion followed.

Taylor mentioned that a gas powered post pounder with an angle iron adaptor was recently purchased for the stream program. It allows them to install approx. 60 posts an hour. A brief discussion followed.

Wedemeyer mentioned that staff are dealing with invasive species and deer browse on a site. A company called Taconic Invasives has been hired to spray an area to control Mugwort.

- **District Updates/Other Projects:** Staff are working with CCE of Ulster County on their "Meat the Farmer" event in October 2023. Wedemeyer mentioned it's been hard getting vegetable and fruit farmers involved in this event due to their harvest schedule.

Wedemeyer has been spending time working with DeGroot. Errors made by the former assistant are still being corrected.

The NYS State Soil & Water Conservation Committee wants to host a state committee meeting in Ulster County on October 12<sup>th</sup>. There will be a tour of some of the local farm and stream restoration projects that the District has completed. A pamphlet was passed out to Directors showing which farm projects will be visited. Wedemeyer said he will send out the Agenda to all who are interested in attending. There was discussion on renting a bus for the tour. Wedemeyer will look into it. Discussion followed.

Wedemeyer is working with the Ulster County Planning Board on updating the Farmland Protection Plan. The Planning Board meeting is next month.

**b) SWCD – T.Ferry (see attached staff report)**

- **AEM:** Ferry has spent a fair amount of time the past few months working on the AEM program. There have been several producers interested in the Grown and Certified Program, Ferry has completed site visits on three farms and has more visits to schedule.

Ferry is working on the next AEM Annual Action Plan and the final report.

- **Inventory and Evaluations:** Site visits are on-going.
- **NYC DEP CAT 494:** Elk Bushkill site showing and construction inspection training.
- **Round 27:** No activity.
- **No-Till Program:** The no-till drill was delivered to several farms (more still scheduled) and Ferry is seeing an increase in interest for fall cover cropping and pasture/hay seedings.
- **Misc:** The Conservation District Employees Association is having their bi-monthly meeting in Division VII (our division) on 27-28 of November.

There are no updates on the District's new truck purchase.

**c) AWSMP – A. Doan: - Stream Project Manager (see attached staff report)**

- The watershed conference, that was mentioned by Wedemeyer earlier, held a Landowner Day on Saturday, July 29<sup>th</sup>. The Municipal Officials Day was held the Friday before. Floodplain Management credits were offered.

- The CAT-494 contract will be having a name change for the successor contract.
- Working with CCE staff on coordinating a fall stream walk. No date has been set yet.
- Doan mentioned that M.Tollefson is at a Rosgen training in Montana.
- Stream Management Implementation Program support – SMIP Update.
- Assessment & Monitoring Update
- CSBI Update.
- Meetings/Site Visits.

**d) Bobby Taylor – Catskill Streams Buffer Initiative (CSBI) Coordinator** (see attached staff report)

- Wedemeyer read aloud an email received by a landowner that was pleased with work Bobby Taylor recently completed out at his property in West Shokan. He said that Taylor was professional and responsible, and the work was done with great care. He stated that Taylor is an excellent representative of the Ulster County SWCD.
- Taylor gave an update on his activities to the Board.
- The “Connecting Landowners and Native Riparian Buffers CSBI program in Ashokan Watershed” slide presentation that Taylor held at the AWSMP Conference was handed out to the Board and discussed (see attachment to Minutes). CSBI Project Potential - 75 projects have been installed, over 4 miles of streambank have been restored to native vegetation of various widths, nearly 17 acres of mowed lawn is now riparian forest buffer, ~13,000 trees and shrubs planted and 17,000 live stakes were installed.

**e) USDA NRCS – O. Velez-Juarbe**

Velez-Juarbe did not attend the meeting. Wedemeyer read his work report to the Directors. Velez-Juarbe has been finalizing contract obligations. Ulster County has twelve new contracts (10 EQIP, 2 CSP) totaling over \$200,000.00.

There may be a new Soil Conservationist starting soon in the Ulster office.

**f) NYS SWCC**

**Region 5 Report** – Ben Luskin, Region 5 Associate Environmental Analyst, submitted the September 2023 Region 5 report. The report was included for review in the Directors package.

**2. NEW BUSINESS**

- a) Introductions were made to Chris DeGroot, the new Program Assistant.
- b) Margarete Wagner announced her retirement. Her official retirement date is November 1, 2023, but she will continue working for the District part time. Wedemeyer told the Board what a hard-working and dedicated employee Margarete is.
- c) Wedemeyer hopes that by this time next year, the District will have hired a second Field Technician.
- d) Harrington Barnyard Progress Update – Wedemeyer is working with Jess Engineering on this covered barnyard. Both Wedemeyer and Ferry surveyed at the barnyard today and Wedemeyer plans on being there when they pour the concrete. Once the engineer certifies it and since we have funds in the AEM account, we will submit a partial payment to the landowner for the concrete. **2023-9-1 Van Nostrand made the Motion, Wilklow seconded, to make a partial payment for the concrete to Garrett Harrington for his barnyard project in the amount of ~\$35,000.00 after the project is certified by the engineer. All in favor.**
- e) Manager and Program Assistant Training for Audits, Financial Management and Programs, Syracuse, NY – Wedemeyer and DeGroot requested to attend this training in Syracuse on November 6-7. The cost to attend is \$75 per person which includes the cost of meals and rooms. **2023-9-2 Litts made the Motion, Van Nostrand seconded, to pay \$150.00 for Wedemeyer and DeGroot to attend the Manager and Program Assistant Training for Audits, Financial Management and Programs in Syracuse on November 6-7, 2023. All in favor.**

**3. OLD BUSINESS**

- a) **External District Audit – CAT 494** – The CAT 494 audit has been completed. Wedemeyer presented the draft audit letter for Director review. One recommendation (which the District now does) is review District bank statements monthly and address any issues immediately. The auditor will be at the District office on October 5<sup>th</sup> to work on the District audit. The Board requested quarterly updates on the CAT 494 grant and monthly updates on the other District accounts so that they know the District is following the auditor's recommendation. A brief discussion followed. Litts said that the Legislature is very interested in the outcome of this audit and

will be looking at the recommendations and asking how the District is going to meet the recommendations in the future. The auditor is planning on attending the District's November Board Meeting to discuss his findings.

- b) **County Funding Status/Audit Conclusion** – Wedemeyer has not heard back from the County regarding his appropriation increase request of \$10,000.00. Litts mentioned that a lot of the covid money available the past few years that helped enhance budgets, will no longer be available by 2026.
- c) **District Shirts and Truck Signs** – Lent designed a logo for the trucks and shirts. Discussion followed.

**2023-9-3 Litts made the Motion, Wilkow seconded, to enter into Executive Session at 8:19 PM to discuss personnel matters. All in favor.**

**2023-9-4 Litts made the Motion, Wilkow seconded, to come out of Executive Session at 9:31 PM. All in favor.** No decisions or votes were made in Executive Session.

#### 4. Minutes Approval

**2023-09-5 A Motion was made by Litts to approve the July 2023 Minutes, seconded by Van Nostrand. All in favor.**

#### 5. Financial Reports and Abstracts – July and August

There was a question as to why the August payroll taxes were so high. DeGroodt will look into it and report back to the Board.

#### 6. Next Meeting

The next Board Meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, October 18, 2023 at 7 PM. The Directors requested a reminder email be sent out ahead of next month's meeting.

#### 7. Adjournment

**2023-09-6 A Motion was made by Litts to Adjourn the meeting at 9:40 PM, seconded by Van Nostrand. All in favor.**

Respectfully Submitted,

*Christine DeGroodt*

Christine DeGroodt  
Program Assistant

## JLW Activities July 20 through September 19, 2023

**AEM:** AEM Tier 4 – Covered barnyard project is underway. Site showing for rotational grazing/fence project on Sept 18<sup>th</sup>. CRF Round 7 grant application submitted. AEM Tier 5B, T/O Olive – Cropware report with nutrient management recommendations. AEM Tier 4, T/O Rochester – Assistance with cover crop applications for three farms. AEM Tier 5B, T/O Saugerties – Soil sampling and lime and nutrient management recommendations. AEM Program Evaluation – Working with T. Ferry with AEM Round 18 action plan.

**Inventory and Evaluations:** Assistance with Lower Esopus Stream Management Plan. Dom Sorbello, T/O Lloyd – assistance with field flooding and renting additional farm land. Walk in-assistance with water testing laboratories. Lenore Ostrawsky, T/O Shandaken, wetlands mapping. Joan Brenner, T/O Saugerties, site visit for foundation drainage and roof water management. Chris Davies, T/O Ulster – stream bank erosion and critical area seeding site visit. Brett Fox, T/O Olive – assistance with purchase of development rights programs. James Manessee, T/O Marlborough – agricultural feasibility. Jim Boice, T/O Ulster – Provided livestock fencing contractors. T/O New Paltz – Assisted CCE of Ulster County with riparian buffer assessment.

**Part B Arbor Day Initiative:** Reviewed Town of Ulster planting proposal and conducted site visit, working with UC DOE with 2023 budget and expenditures to date.

**NYC DEP CAT 494:** Contract administration and reviewed and approved timesheets, payroll delivery, Bi-Weekly meetings with AWSMP staff. Bank transfer reconciliations. Concluded CAT 494 audit. Panther Kill SRP deer browse control approval. Elk Bush Kill construction inspection and staff on site training, SWPPP revisions and approval, stream permit extension. Updated drone purchase memo for approval. Attended AWSMP watershed conference. Worked on budget for successor contract. Worked on forth quarter recon for capital and expense accounts and advance requests for funding. Assistance with CSBI equipment and supplies purchases.

**No Till Program** – Assistance with deliveries and pick up of drill for 3 farms.

### **District Updates/Other Projects:**

- Continue to work with CCE of Ulster County to do another “Meat the Farmer” event in October 2023.
- Working with Chris with Program Assistant training, we spent a lot of time correcting the mistakes made by the former Program Assistant.
- No till and cover crop programs are garnering more county-wide interest.
- Ulster County SWCD will be hosting the next State Committee meeting and project tour on October 12, 2023, Board members are encouraged to attend.
- Continue to work with UC Planning with updating the County Farmland Protection Plan.

### TRF Activities - July 19, 2023 to September 19, 2023

**AEM:** Tier 5B – T/O Marlborough – cost estimates for grant proposal. Tier 5B – T/O Marbletown – meet w/ farmer to discuss irrigation grant proposal. Tier 5B – T/O Gardiner – refine cost estimates for irrigation grant application. Tier 5A – T/O Saugerties – discuss Grown & Certified program, site visit to update Tier 2s. Tier 5B – T/O Wawarsing – input soil sampling into cropware for nutrient management. Tier 4 – T/O Lloyd – no-till delivery for buckwheat seeding. Tier 5B – T/O Gardiner/Plattekill – input soil sampling data into cropware for nutrient management. Tier 1 & 2 – T/O Gardiner – site visit to get flower farm into Grown & Certified program. Tier 2 – T/O Marlborough – respond to producer questions about funding, grown and certified program. Tier 4 – T/O Marbletown – barnyard implementation project construction inspection. Tier 4 – Various towns – Cover crop program applications. Program Evaluation – working on next AEM Round Annual Action Plan. Reporting – working on filling in final report to inform our Annual Action Plan for next round.

#### Inventory and Evaluations:

T/O Rosendale – Daniel Tamulonis – site visit for drainage issues. T/O Lloyd – Fjord Vineyards – make topo map and send no-till information. T/O Saugerties – Joan Brenner – site visit to look at drainage issues along foundation/into basement. T/O Marlborough – James Mannese – provide no-till info, hay seeding recommendations, site visit to look at hay planting ground/give more recommendations. T/O Ulster – Chris Davies – site visit w/ J. Wedemeyer to look at streambank vegetation/erosion. T/O Rochester – Sharyn Siegel/Hudson Valley Seed Company – soil questions about property that will be used to grow native lupine for seed, send soil map and soil survey info.

**CRF Round 6:** Delivered no-till drill to 1 cover crop participant, looked at fields to give recommendations on no-till cover crops.

**CRF Round 7:** Round 7 CRF proposals submitted.

**NYC DEP CAT 494:** Attended Elk Bushkill preconstruction meeting, surveyed in control points for our total station. I have been helping to cover Elk Bushkill construction inspection as needed.

**Round 27:** No activity.

**No-Till Program:** No-till drill is seeing increased interest with fall cover crops and pasture/hay seedings. Decals were installed on no-till drill.

**Misc:** NYS Conservation District Employee's Association Bi-Monthly meeting will be in our Division (VII) at the end of November.

Attended a Farm Hub ecology tour/information update on their research programs.

Continuing to work with Joe Basil Chevy on truck purchase, getting them paperwork as they need it.

New York State Soil & Water Conservation Committee  
Region 5 Report – September 2023  
Submitted by: Ben Luskin – Region 5 Associate Environmental Analyst

#### **NYS SWCC News**

**September SWCC Meeting:** The next meeting of the NYS Soil and Water Conservation Committee is scheduled for **10AM on Tuesday, September 19<sup>th</sup>**. The meeting will take place via video conference. There will also be multiple locations where in person attendance is an option. Further details can be found in the available meeting agenda.

**AEM Base Program Round 18 Announced:** AEM Base 18 offers non-competitive funding for technical assistance and cost-sharing BMP implementation projects based on the local AEM Strategy. The two-year AEM Action Plan is due **November 1, 2023, and the program runs from January 1, 2024, through December 31, 2025**. Visit the SWCC's SharePoint site for program details (<https://nysemail.sharepoint.com/sites/Agriculture/SWCC>): "Resources for Districts > Agricultural Environmental Management > AEM Base Program Materials > AEM Base Round 18 Materials". please feel free to contact me ([greg.albrecht@agriculture.ny.gov](mailto:greg.albrecht@agriculture.ny.gov) or 607.229.4654) or your Regional Coordinator with any questions.

Also, please join us for a webinar from **1 to 3 PM on Tuesday, September 12<sup>th</sup>**, where we'll tour through AEM18's upgrades and workings and field questions. Please use the following WebEx info to join:

<https://meetny.webex.com/meetny/j.php?MTID=m3902ea43e3bf78bde19939c820602972>

Webinar number (access code): 161 389 2738, Webinar password: r2iJKdMWj88

**2024 Annual Plan of Work (APOW):** It's time to start updating your APOW for 2024. The deadline for submittal to your AEA is November 1, 2023. This will allow time to review, provide feedback, and recommend to the SWCC for approval by the end of the calendar year. Please don't hesitate to discuss with your Regional AEA if there are any questions or concerns.

#### **State Aid to Districts:**

- **2024 Part B Conservation Project Financial Assistance** – Part B proposals are Due November 1, 2023. Projects are to be completed by December 31, 2023. Part B requests should be submitted via email to [ben.luskin@agriculture.ny.gov](mailto:ben.luskin@agriculture.ny.gov).
- **2023 Part C Performance Measures** - As for Performance Measures, the end of the year is rapidly approaching and SWCDs should be checking to make sure that your District is fulfilling their obligations for meetings, training, training plans, etc., to be able to earn all the funds that will be available. Please contact your Regional AEA with any specific questions that you may have.

**SWCC Operations Sub-Committee:** The SWCC is preparing to re-establish the Operations Sub-Committee SWCC is currently looking for interested SWCD staff to help serve. A major component of the sub-committee's focus is directed at the upkeep of the SWCD Office/Operations Manual. We anticipate the first meeting to occur in the Winter of 2023. If you are interested in serving on the sub-committee, please contact your Regional AEA.

**Applications for use of CDEA 4-HR Funds:** The NYS CDEA is pleased to announce the release of their application form for use of funds generated from the NYS DEC Endorsed 4-Hour Erosion and Sediment Control Online Training. Funds are available for SWCDs to host or attend a training that will benefit SWCDs state-wide. All information is available on SharePoint (CDEA Materials - Application for Use of 4 Hour Funds.) All questions and application submissions should be sent to Caitlin Stewart at Hamilton SWCD, [caitlin@hamcoswcd.org](mailto:caitlin@hamcoswcd.org).

#### **Other Events**

**Silvopasture Training for Professionals:** CCE and other partners will host a three-day training centered around Cornell's Arnot Teaching and Research Forest starting on **Monday, September 25<sup>th</sup> at 1:00 pm and concluding on Wednesday, September 27<sup>th</sup> at noon**. This inaugural field-based training (<http://cceschuyler.org/resources/silvopasture-agenda-2023>) is tailored to Technical Service Providers and resource management professionals who work with grazing operations that are already using or interested in developing silvopastures. Cost is \$60. The training is limited to 30 participants on a first-come, first-serve basis so register before September 21<sup>st</sup> at: [https://reg.cce.cornell.edu/2023\\_Silvopasture\\_Training-2\\_244](https://reg.cce.cornell.edu/2023_Silvopasture_Training-2_244)



**2023 CDEA Administrative Conference:** The New York State Conservation District Employee Association (NYSCDEA) is happy to announce the 2023 Administrative Conference! The conference will convene **November 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup>**, at the DoubleTree by Hilton Syracuse, 6301 State Route 298, East Syracuse, NY. Registration details will be available shortly. Please save the date.

#### **Other Funding**

**Restoring Fish Passage through Barrier Removal Grants:** Nearly \$175 million in funding is available for fish passage projects under the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law and Inflation Reduction Act. This funding will support projects that reopen migratory pathways and restore access to healthy habitat for fish around the country. Proposals must be received through [www.grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov) by **11:59 PM Eastern time on October 16, 2023**. <https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/grant/restoring-fish-passage-through-barrier-removal-grants>

**DEC Invasive Species Grant Program Funding Available:** DEC recently announced that \$3 million is available in the third round of the State's Invasive Species Grant Program (ISGP). This grant program is designed to advance projects that target both aquatic and terrestrial invasive species across the state, with six funding categories that address invasive species spread prevention; early detection and rapid response; research; management planning; and education and outreach. DEC is accepting applications for these grants through **Nov. 1st, 2023**. For more information and to apply, visit: <https://www.dec.ny.gov/animals/115742.html>

**NOAA Transformational Habitat Restoration and Coastal Resilience Grant:** NOAA recently announced that they will provide nearly \$240M to prioritized high-value, high-impact habitat restoration projects that advance resilience. The competition closes **November 17th**. Proposals can request between \$1M - \$25M. Eligible project types include planning and assessments; feasibility studies; engineering design and permitting; on-the-ground implementation; pre- and/or post-implementation monitoring; capacity building, stakeholder engagement or a combination of activities. For more information and to apply, visit, <https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/feature-story/240-million-available-transformational-habitat-restoration-and-coastal-resilience>