

Watershed Agricultural Council  
nycwatershed.org



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Annual  
Report



## Our Mission:

To promote the economic viability of agriculture and forestry, the protection of water quality, and the conservation of working landscapes through strong local leadership and sustainable public-private partnerships.

## WATERSHED AGRICULTURAL COUNCIL OF THE NYC WATERSHEDS, INC JULY 1, 2023 – JUNE 30, 2024

### REVENUES

NYC DEP Contracts	\$ 17,160,299	97%
In-Kind Services	362,559	2%
Federal Grants	25,683	-
Non-Federal Grants & Contributions	5,198	-
Program Service Revenues	40,333	-
Other	95,149	1%
Net Investment Activity	27,134	-
<b>Total Revenues</b>	<b>\$ 17,716,355</b>	<b>100%</b>

### EXPENSES

Agricultural Program	\$ 10,822,096	63%
Forestry Program	1,616,907	9%
Easement Program	1,416,832	8%
Economic Viability & Outreach	622,344	4%
Administrative Support	2,165,865	13%
Contributions to Endowment	607,897	3%
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$ 17,251,941</b>	<b>100%</b>

Thank you to our collaborative partners: New York City Department of Environmental Protection, Delaware County Soil and Water Conservation District, Cornell Cooperative Extension of Delaware County, Cornell Cooperative Extension of Greene County, United States Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service, and the United States Department of Agriculture Farm Service Agency.

The 2024 Annual Report is a publication of the Watershed Agricultural Council, a nonprofit 501(c)3 organization. The Council is funded by the New York City Department of Environmental Protection, U.S. Department of Agriculture, U.S. Forest Service and other sources. The Council is an Equal Opportunity Provider and Employer. This issue is printed on environmentally friendly recycled paper.







2024 proved another successful year of supporting the economic viability of agriculture and forestry, the protection of water quality, and the conservation of working landscapes in the NYC Watershed. Built on a foundation of local leadership and strong public-private partnerships, the Watershed Agricultural Council (WAC) now serves over 1,000 participants across the region. Thanks to the strategic guidance of the Board of Directors, and a renewed partnership with New York City, WAC has secured increased funding commitments to guarantee our impact for many years to come. Thank you to all who participate and support our efforts, here's to a great 2025!

—Ryan Naatz, Executive Director

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Pure Catskills  
in its  
**20th** Year

**335**  
Pure Catskills  
Members

**10+**  
Events Attended  
and/or  
Sponsored

**\$71,523**  
Total  
EV Grants  
Approved

# Economic Viability

**PURE CATSKILLS**

*Supporting Working Landscapes*

**BUY FRESH.  
BUY LOCAL.**

[purecatskills.com](http://purecatskills.com)





This year we are proud to be celebrating 20 years of Pure Catskills! Pure Catskills (PC) is a regional, buy local campaign developed by the Watershed Agricultural Council (WAC) to improve the economic viability of the local community, sustain the working landscapes of the Catskills and preserve water quality in the NYC Watershed region.

When WAC first began this initiative in 2004, it was grant funded and we started with a printed brochure of a small number of farms and businesses located in Delaware County. Now, we support over 330 farm and forest-based businesses, restaurants, local artisans, other non-profit organizations, activities and accommodations located throughout Delaware, Greene, Otsego, Schoharie, Sullivan and Ulster Counties in New York State.

Since 2004, PC has played a vital role in creating marketing opportunities for our members by showcasing local products being grown, raised and produced in the Catskills, and connecting consumers directly to the source. Our goal is the same today as it was when this initiative began, to support the economic viability of members, preserve our way of life, create and become a trusted and

necessary brand for all things local, and foster expansion of products coming from the Catskills region. Healthy businesses aid WAC's mission of ensuring the delivery of over one billion gallons a day of clean, fresh drinking water to nine million New York residents.

Pure Catskills basic \$45 membership includes a business listing in the *Guide to Pure Catskills Products* (an 88-page magazine), a detailed online listing on [purecatskills.com](http://purecatskills.com) searchable web directory, with a dedicated webpage, use of the PC logo and other marketing materials to enhance marketing efforts, promotional support through events, media mentions, advertising, social media, and other targeted campaigns including the *Holiday Gift Guide*, vending space under Pure Catskills sponsored tents at many local events and much, much more!

This milestone year wouldn't be possible without every Pure Catskills member (past and present), the continued support from NYC DEP, and our dedicated staff. Visit [purecatskills.com](http://purecatskills.com) to learn more about this initiative and to find a local farm near you. Here's to the next 20 years!



Celebrating  
20 Years  
of  
Pure Catskills



**2,500**

Acres Enrolled in  
480a Forest  
Tax Law

Water Quality  
BMPs on

**40**

Timber Harvests

**72** Forest  
Stewardship  
Projects on

**189** Acres

**29** Watershed  
Forestry Field  
Trips for

**2,900**

Students

A group of about ten people, including children and adults, are gathered on a sandy bank next to a small stream in a dense, green forest. The stream flows over rocks, and the surrounding trees are tall and leafy. The scene is bright and sunny, with sunlight filtering through the canopy.

**Forestry**



The Watershed Forestry Field Trip Program funds groups that want to experience their water supply system in-person. Any organization, community group, or 4–12th grade classroom in municipalities wholly or partially within the East and West of Hudson Watersheds or the five boroughs of NYC is eligible to apply for up to \$4,845 in funding to participate in one of four field trip options. Student groups younger than 4th grade may be considered for funding if specific watershed and forestry learning outcomes are part of the proposed tour. Partial grant funding is often awarded and is intended primarily to help pay for the transportation costs associated with a field trip. In 2020, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Watershed Agricultural Council (WAC) began hosting free virtual field trips, which we continue to offer. In 2023, with the support of the Watershed Forestry Education working group, the program’s name was changed from Bus Tours to Field Trips, which is a more familiar term for teachers and better conveys the experience we facilitate through this program.

There are five different ways WAC supports Watershed Forestry Field Trips: 1) WAC provides grant funds to NYC and Catskill schools. Teachers apply directly to WAC for grant funding. 2) WAC

and the Catskill Watershed Corporation (CWC) co-fund grants to Catskill schools: recipients of CWC Public Education Grant Funding for overnight trips to the Frost Valley YMCA Model Forest that include strong forestry themes in their applications automatically receive additional funding from WAC to assist with trip transportation costs. 3) WAC provides support for teachers and community groups that don’t need grant funds. These groups receive field trip planning, logistical and/or programming support from WAC but do not receive any funding. 4) WAC provides a field trip for non-formal educators, individuals engaged in educating people outside of a formal classroom setting. During this field trip, WAC teaches these educators about the connection between forests and water quality in the NYC Watershed. These teachers then pass along this information to their students. 5) Virtual Field Trips: free live programs hosted by WAC staff over Zoom that showcase the reservoirs, forests and/or streams of the NYC Watershed and may include hands-on science activities.

Visit [nycwatershed.org/fieldtrips](https://nycwatershed.org/fieldtrips) for more information and field trip opportunities.



Five Ways  
WAC Supports  
Watershed  
Forestry  
Field Trips



32,603

Acres  
Conserved

217

Properties

56

Reserved Right  
Requests/  
Notifications



# Conservation Easements



The Watershed Agricultural Council's (WAC) first conservation easement closing occurred in 2001. Fast forward 20+ years, and program staff together with our committed landowners, are as dedicated as ever to protecting the working farms and forests of the West of Hudson Watershed. Two new conservation easements, totaling nearly 200 acres of farmland, came to fruition this past year in Greene County. Both landowners are proud members of their respective communities, with a desire to see agriculture thrive. Each incorporates education into their operation, ensuring a future of awareness and growth. Additionally, WAC is expecting to close on a forest property by the end of the year.

With a growing portfolio and changing demographics, stewardship staff work collaboratively with landowners and participants to support economic endeavors through the facilitation of reserved rights, while completing annual monitoring visits to ensure the conservation purposes of easements are maintained.

As we move into a new era in land protection in the West of Hudson Watershed, WAC continues to actively solicit working lands for conservation, while brainstorming new ways to engage our current landowners, remaining ever mindful of opportunities and potential. How can we better support farm transition, for instance? How will the forest conservation easement program grow? The land is here, protected, ready for the next generation. What will the next 20+ years bring for this program? These are all questions staff strive to answer as we continue to safeguard the working landscape in the region.

To learn more about our Conservation Easement Program or to apply for a WAC Conservation Easement, visit: [nycwatershed.org/conservation-easements](https://nycwatershed.org/conservation-easements).



Expanding  
Conservation  
for the  
Next  
Generation



226  
Participating  
Farms

134,460  
Acres

2,615  
Acres of  
Cover Crops

34  
Educational  
Events  
Attended by  
68%  
of Watershed  
Farms

# Agriculture





The Agricultural Program made great progress this year in enhancing water quality and supporting farm sustainability within the NYC Watershed. Through strategic partnerships with Delaware County Soil & Water Conservation District, Cornell Cooperative Extension, USDA and others, the WAC has continued to foster its commitment to participating farms and the working landscape community.

The program's total engagement reached 226 participants, with 211 active farms and 15 conservation participants. This voluntary relationship reflects the strong dedication of the watershed's agricultural community to best management practices and stewardship that align both farm productivity and natural resource protection. The program implemented more than 220 Best Management Practices (BMPs) this year, which included upgrades to barnyards, waste storage, access roads, and water facilities. Thanks to collaborative efforts of Ag Program staff, the contractor community and farmers, these projects continued to move forward despite weather-related challenges, underscoring the program's adaptability and its commitment to bolstering both operational efficiency and water quality across watershed farms year-round.

The Nutrient Management Credit Program underwent a major assessment this year, leading to a more balanced approach that better reflects the costs of manure management for farms with

different operational intensities. This adjustment aims to foster both economic and management sustainability, aligning program incentives more closely with the actual costs incurred by farms. Currently, 127 farms participate under this updated system, with a total of 199 active Nutrient Management Plans.

The Watershed Investigation and Repair Crew has been crucial in promptly addressing issues that affect water quality and farm functionality. This year they completed 38 investigations, 17 priority repairs, and delivered technical support for 15 farms, helping to address urgent needs at no additional cost to participants. This remains an asset and has been essential in maintaining the effectiveness of implemented best management practices and supporting the timely needs of participating farms.

As the program moves into 2025, it remains committed to adapting to meet the evolving needs of agricultural stewardship. By refining its strategic approach, deepening partnerships, and supporting the adoption of BMPs, WAC is dedicated to enhancing program impacts and supporting the agricultural community within the NYC Watershed. This momentum reflects an unwavering commitment to advancing farm sustainability while safeguarding water quality for future generations. For more information visit: [nycwatershed.org/agriculture/planning](https://nycwatershed.org/agriculture/planning).



Enhancing  
Water Quality  
and  
Supporting  
Farm  
Sustainability





819  
BMPS  
Completed

84  
Whole  
Farm  
Plans

6,392  
Acres of  
Active  
Farms



# East of Hudson



**I**t was a year of transition in the East of Hudson Program as we moved our office to Patterson, NY after many years in Yorktown Heights. Despite the challenges of relocating our office and working with a limited staff, we were still able to implement 22 Best Management Practices (BMPs) on six participating farms this year. Notable projects included Stonewall Farm, Bluestone Stables and Coker Farm.

Stonewall Farm is a 741 acre horse farm specializing in breeding, raising and training thoroughbred race horses. There are currently 71 horses, 26 foals and 12 Belted Galloway cows on the property. The waste from the barn is transported to an existing compost facility via an access road which has eroded and deteriorated over time. An access road BMP was completed to allow for safe access from the barns to the compost facility. In addition to the access road, a washwater infiltration system BMP was installed to take effluent wastewater from an indoor wash stall and a structure for water control BMP installed to handle runoff flows into existing paddocks.

Bluestone Stables is a 20 acre horse boarding and training facility located in the high priority Cross River Basin. There are currently 23 horses on the property. A series of BMPs were installed to handle wastewater and roof runoff from entering the existing paddocks. These BMPs include fencing, roof runoff structures, washwater infiltration system, and a heavy use area protection.

Coker Farm is a 100 acre facility consisting of three horse boarding and training businesses. Many of these horses compete locally at horse shows throughout the region. There are 60 horses at any given time on this property. There was one fence BMP installed to assist with the subdivision of the existing paddock to allow for rotational grazing and to reduce soil compaction resulting in runoff into the nearby wetland.

Although 2024 provided challenges for the East of Hudson Program, we look forward to being fully staffed in 2025 and enjoying our new office location! Visit us at 2 Route 164, 1st Floor, Patterson, NY 12563.



**A Year  
of Transition  
Leads  
to Growth**





2024 was another busy year of tours and events in the NYC Watershed region. WAC staff participated in over 40 outreach events, and over 70 educational events throughout the region this year! In addition to the forestry field trip program (highlighted on page 7), and agricultural educational offerings from our subcontracted partners at Cornell Cooperative Extension of Delaware County (highlighted on page 10), WAC offered logger trainings. To raise awareness of the opportunities our organization provides and to enhance program education in schools within the NYC Watershed region, our staff participated in numerous local career and industry days at high schools, BOCES programs, and colleges.

From farmers' markets to fairs, staff attended events celebrating Pure Catskills 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary, showcasing WAC and our programs, and promoting our forestry initiative

MyWoodlot website. A few events to note were the Catskill Regional Ag Conference, Meredith Dairy Fest, Pink Street Festival, Delaware County Fair, Bovina Farm Day, NYS Woodsmen's Field Days, Cauliflower Festival, Delhi Harvest Festival, Belleayre Annual Fall Festival and the Maple Shade Farm Hootenanny.

WAC also hosted multiple farm tours including graduate students from Bard's Center for Environmental Policy, Columbia University Climate Research Center and SUNY ESF. We look forward to another year of showcasing our beautiful region, hardworking farms, and our programs in the NYC Watershed and beyond! For upcoming events and offerings visit: [nycwatershed.org/events](https://nycwatershed.org/events).





# Help Us Save Farms and Protect Water Quality

Farmland, clean water and a way of life. All three are dependent on a thriving agricultural community that is threatened by rising land prices and development.

Now, more than ever, we need your help. Help us safeguard these irreplaceable resources — our rural landscape and our family farms — by protecting regional farmlands and working landscapes.

Donate today to help our programs continue  
to support farm and forest landowners.

[nycwatershed.org/donate](https://nycwatershed.org/donate)



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