

# Watershed Agricultural Council

Agriculture ♦ Forestry ♦ Conservation Easements ♦ Economic Viability

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## MINUTES OF THE WATERSHED AGRICULTURAL COUNCIL MEETING

August 26, 2025

(\*Via 'MS Teams')

### I. Meeting called to order at 10:09 a.m.

#### Director's Present:

Wayland 'Bud' Gladstone, *Chair*  
Jennifer Grossman, *Secretary*  
Karl Gockel, *Treasurer*  
Fred Huneke  
Steve Reed  
Marilyn Wyman  
Michael Vander Werff, *NYC DEP*  
Jason Helmbold  
Dwight Bruno  
James Darling  
Paul Gallay  
Barbara Hanselman  
John Verhoeven  
Kyle Clark

#### Others Present:

Ryan Naatz, *Executive Director*  
Serena Orleski, *Easement Program Manager*  
Kristan Morley, *Economic Viability Program Manager*  
Heather Magnan, *Communications Manager*  
Kayla Henderson, *Head of Administration*  
Lee Harris, *NYC DOI*  
Patrick Palmer, *NYS DOH*  
Morgan Zyzik-Tarbell, *NYC DOH*  
Shilo Williams, *NYC DEP*  
Sara Storrer, *NYC DEP*  
Bruce Dolph, *DC SWCD Board*  
John Jackson, *Database Administrator*  
Jessica Batiemon, *The Reporter*  
Elizabeth DeFalco, *The Reporter*  
Mary Crisafulli, *The Mountain Eagle*

#### Director's Absent:

Tom Hutson, *Vice Chair*

#### Others Absent:

Amy Faulkner, *Director of Operations*  
Carol Bishop, *Director of Finance*  
Connor Young, *WOH Agricultural Program Manager*

## II. Approval of Minutes

### **Motion to approve the minutes of the July 22, 2025, meeting as presented.**

Motion: Jennifer Grossman

Second: Steve Reed

***Approved***

## III. Executive Director's Report – Ryan Naatz

### **A. Operational & Programmatic Updates**

To date, Ryan has met with most Council members for a SWOT analysis to have greater discussion geared around strategic steps for the future of WAC in a more in-depth manner. Ryan feels that the organization is incredibly well positioned to take on “next steps” for the first time in five years. It is important for Ryan to have a real-time perspective, understand concerns, and identify any gaps/opportunities which may exist. The goal is to complete these meetings by the end of October and then report back to the Board in a town hall type of discussion prior to the January/February annual retreat, to determine if the information collected could be utilized as a road map on the direction WAC will go within the next three to five years.

### **B. New Quarterly Reporting**

Efforts have been made by Amy Faulkner in collaboration with Management to better coalesce new reporting metrics that are included within the meeting packet. This reflects many months' works of finding congruency between individual program dashboards, reporting to respective committees, and aligning quarterly and annual reporting to DEP respectively. These efforts are meant to standardize formatting to ensure that critical metrics are program, financial, and contractual deliverables, all being met in unison. Data will now be reflected in real time and will be reported on a known period for what was accomplished, the quarterly reports will roll into the annual submittal, will be more informative for the Council and what is coordinated with DEP in respect to WAC's finances and reporting requirements, and to also inform on the year-end. There is also an obligation contractually to provide the summation of all quarters at year-end, which assists in informing DEP and their team for DOH reporting. This is a deliberate effort to make information more accessible and standardized. There is still opportunity for improvement; however, these dashboards represent the minimum necessary to keep all parties informed and achieve contractual deliverables. This is also an opportunity to highlight the good work that is being achieved that is not necessarily a numerical, contractual deliverable, to give a sense of what is actually occurring and how WAC is making an impact with our programs to the community we serve. Feedback or questions are welcome for consideration. Additionally, going forward, in-person quarterly meetings where staff members present updates on their programs, will be conducted during the months of May, August, November and February. Ryan would like to begin this new process by November, February 2026 at the latest.

#### **IV. Chair's Report – Wayland “Bud” Gladstone**

Due to technical difficulties experienced during the meeting, Bud was unable to provide a report at this time.

#### **V. Building Committee – Karl Gockel**

During the August 19 meeting, an update was provided on the status of the site surveys and review of draft floor plans for the building. A contract extension is being discussed between Keystone Associates. Next month's meeting should be more robust, with elevations included and feedback regarding comments made on the floor plans.

#### **VI. Finance – Karl Gockel**

##### **A. June Financial Reports**

During the August 12 finance meeting, the June financials were reviewed and discussion had regarding our employment reserve with consideration in possibly investing it for a better return; more to come on what options are available. Finance recently completed the closeout which was submitted to DEP. Michael Vander Werff confirmed that payment approval should be completed by week's end on the return of funds with the transfer process to follow before an official close out is made.

##### **Motion to approve the June financial reports as presented.**

Motion: Paul Gallay

Second: Michael Vander Werff

***Approved***

##### **B. Audit Committee – Paul Gallay**

Paul Gallay reported the Audit Committee was held on August 14 with business focused on the review of the new five-year contract between our RBT auditors. The annual audit and tax services timeline was reviewed; October 15 the federal forms from the previous year will be filed and will complete the retirement plan audit. In September, auditors will begin their field work on their audit for period ending June 30, 2025. Draft financial statements for October and November will be presented at the November meetings followed by a presentation to the Council in December for final approval and submittal to DEP by year-end. Federal and state charitable forms are due late this year; however, we are granted an extension until May 2026. Our annual 1099 filing must be filed by the 28th with the committee slated to meet again in November. Brief recommendations were made on our last audit regarding formal disaster recovery policies that are not being established.

#### **VII. Governance Committee – Jason Helmbold**

In relation to items discussed at the July meeting, by-law review is still being reviewed by our attorneys and will be addressed at the next meeting scheduled. During committee attendance review, a waiver was granted for one member based not only on their lack of attendance but also their merit as an individual contributor. The member was addressed, and engagement appears to be back in order. Discussion was had on engagement and effectiveness regarding virtual

attendance vs. in-person; more to come as discussion ensues. Jason reached out to several Board officers in relation to their job descriptions. Updates are being worked on and any feedback provided is appreciated. Consideration of onboarding a new potential Council member is in the works. Jason is working on follow-ups; details were discussed. Please bring any potential candidate recommendations that are felt to be strong contenders to Jason for consideration.

#### **VIII. Agricultural Committee – Steve Reed**

Highlights from the August 12 meeting included introduction to the new reporting format with a focus on review of the Whole Farm Planning (WFP) metrics, an update provided on the cover crop rate of \$130/acre for the year, and which acres were eligible, as well as updates on the Nutrient Management (NM) team having completed 170/202 plans out of the active farms needing one. An update on the long-term management plan was discussed at length.

#### **IX. Economic Viability Committee – Jennifer Grossman**

The committee met this morning and covered an RFP request for proposal that is being finalized for a capacity study. This is something that's been discussed for years, looking for data points to understand what our production capacity is, where our products are being grown and how much, as well as what the demand is for these products. This is an important analysis of capacity for what is being grown currently, how it aligns with demand, and what the potential for growth looks like (e.g. what is needed in terms of infrastructure, land, season extenders, and interested participants) in relation to what can be grown. Anyone who is interested in looking at the finalized RFP can reach out to Kristan Morley. Michael Vander Werff and DEP have been in great support in finalization process. It is expected that by October 31, collection of bids and proposals will be complete, and a decision will be made on when to launch the research that will begin in January 2026 and to extend for two years. Secondly, Kristan did a great job with the consolidation of the application for EV grants; details on the new formatting reviewed. Stats and metrics are available from Kristan on WAC events and 'Pure Catskills' membership, if interested. Upcoming events that WAC is participating in and need volunteers for include 'Bovina Farm Day August 31, the 'Cauliflower Festival' September 20, and 'Delhi Harvest Fest' September 27. Future events needing volunteers (Board members are encouraged to attend) include the 'Belleayre Fall Fest' and the 'Maple Shade Hootenanny', both on October 11-12, and 'Clean Sweep' which is the Delaware County public safety effort, October 10-11. Please see Kristan to participate.

#### **X. Easements Committee – Serena Orleski (\*on behalf of Tom Hutson)**

Summertime is always busy with lots of site monitoring visits for the stewardship team and addressing landowner requests (one closing is scheduled for Friday, August 29; a new forest conservation easement to be added). Interviews to be scheduled for the Land Production Coordinator position that is posted.

#### **XI. Forestry Committee – Marilyn Wyman**

The July 17 meeting was held at Dave Cammer's Farm, with a BBQ to follow, allowing committee members to come together in a more relaxed setting while reporting on various items. Highlights included an update on the BOCES logger training, and a summary from Anusha from her PhD thesis study on 'thriving, striving, or just surviving' regarding our NYC Watershed residents, and a presentation by Serena Orleski on the ways the easement and forestry programs integrate in

relation to the easement timber harvests that WAC conducts. Time was also dedicated to reviewing the annual forestry program performance evaluation, while committee members were encouraged to respond to various questions brought forth relating to prioritization of new initiatives or considerations on ideas relating to the work plan.

**IX. East of Hudson Committee – Fred Huneke**

No meeting was held this month. A program manager’s report is available detailing highlights on the EOH program and program matrix. The program manager’s position remains vacant and posted, with discussion had on how to further address this need.

**X. NYC DEP Report – Michael Vander Werff**

Michael wished to thank Ryan Naatz, Amy Faulkner, and the entire management team for leading efforts made over the past year in working with DEP on updating our quarterly data reporting. As part of Michael’s DEP division growth and reorganization to include the stream program, Sara Storrer has been promoted to the role of Section Chief for the Agricultural and Forestry Program division. As Michael advances to a more managerial role within the organization, Sara will be picking up more daily contract and program management tasks Michael’s been covering over the past few years. Michael will continue to remain as the Commissioner’s representative and remain involved with the program.

**XI. NYS DOH, US EPA Reports – Patrick Palmer**

Although there were no new items of discussion to review for the month, Ryan Naatz asked Pat to offer some insights on status or coordination efforts made with DEC’s regarding the water withdrawal permit, which may have implications to WAC and certain programs, such as Easement, who could be affected. Pat agreed to discuss this matter further in Executive session.

**XII. Executive Session**

***Motion to enter Executive Session at 10:50 a.m.***

Motion: Jennifer Grossman

Second: James Darling

***Approved***

***Motion to come out of Executive Session at 11:20 a.m.***

Motion: Marilyn Wyman

Second: John Verhoeven

***Approved***

**VIII. Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 12:38 p.m. by common consent.

The next meeting is scheduled for **September 23, 2025**, at 10:00 a.m.

*Jennifer Grossman*

Jennifer Grossman

WAC Board Secretary

10 / 30 / 2025

Date