

Watershed Agricultural Council

Agriculture ♦ Forestry ♦ Conservation Easements ♦ Economic Viability

33195 State Highway 10, Walton, New York 13856

phone: 607-865-7790

fax: 607-865-4932

nycwatershed.org



MINUTES OF THE WATERSHED AGRICULTURAL COUNCIL MEETING

November 25, 2025

I. Meeting called to order at 10:04 a.m.

Directors Present:

Wayland 'Bud' Gladstone, *Chair*
Jennifer Grossman, *Secretary, via Teams*
Karl Gockel, *Treasurer*
Fred Huneke
Steve Reed
Marilyn Wyman
Michael Vander Werff, *NYC DEP*
Jason Helmbold
Dwight Bruno
Tom Hutson, *Vice Chair*
Paul Gallay
John Verhoeven
James Darling

Director's Absent:

Barbara Hanselman
Kyle Clark

Others Present:

Ryan Naatz, *Executive Director*
Amy Faulkner, *Director of Operations*
Carol Bishop, *Director of Finance*
Connor Young, *WOH Agricultural Program Manager, via Teams*
Serena Orleski, *Easement Program Manager*
Heather Magnan, *Communications Manager*
Kristan Morley, *Economic Viability Program Manager*
Patrick Palmer, *NYS DOH*
Morgan Zyzik-Tarbell, *NYC DOH*
Sara Storrer, *NYC DEP, via Teams*
Bruce Dolph, *DC SWCD Board, via Teams*
Rebecca Reynolds, *RBT CPAs, LLP, via Teams*
Vincent Buono, *RBT CPAs, LLP, via Teams*
Katelyn Tymczyszyn, *RBT CPAs, LLP, via Teams*
Lillian Browne, *The Reporter, via Teams*

II. Approval of Minutes

Motion to approve the minutes of the October 28, 2025, meeting as presented.

Motion: Tom Hutson

Second: Steve Reed

Approved

III. FY25 Audit – RBT CPAs, LLP

Carol Bishop, WAC Finance Director, introduced Rebecca Reynolds of RBT CPAs, LLP, to present WAC's FY25 Audit. A clean opinion was issued. Rebecca Reynolds, Vincent Buono and Katelyn Tymczyszyn presented the FY25 audit and 990 in detail to the Board. The audit reflects changes in program expenses from the previous year; Paul Gallay requested further information from program managers. Ryan responded for all, providing broad explanations on the increases and decreases respectfully. The 990 was provided to Carol this morning and will be provided to the Board later today. The Board will be provided with time to review the 990 and motion will be presented at the December meeting for consideration.

Motion to approve the FY25 Audit as presented.

Motion: Paul Gallay

Second: James Darling

Approved

IV. Executive Director's Report – Ryan Naatz

A. Operational & Programmatic Updates

Ryan Naatz explained that he has met one-on-one with each Board Member over the past few months focusing on strategic topics and direction, one common theme was that everyone wants to be accountable and engaged with their peers, but there is some reluctance to do so in the meeting unless really encouraged in a formal manner. To address that, Ryan presented an outline to the Board to support this type of generative discussion, W.A.C. – Want to learn more about...Advocate for...Concerned with...and all members were asked to share on one of these areas.

Marilyn stated that she needs to learn more about other program areas, easements and economic viability as it is difficult to help move information forward without being as knowledgeable as possible. She is very interested in advocating by fostering opportunities to facilitate connections that may provide additional resources to WAC. She is on the board of SUNY Cobleskill and she is excited to share the opportunities and resources that can come to fruition with a collaboration between WAC and SUNY Cobleskill.

Dwight reported that WAC needs to better understand any changes in agriculture that are constant and, at times, drastic. He would also like to ensure he is promoting and bringing issues to the table that need to be discussed that maybe were not as important as in the past. Otherwise, it will be difficult for WAC to evolve as the experts for the people that we serve.

Steve Reed stated that he is concerned with the timeline for planning and implementation in the Agricultural Program; things are planned and sometimes not implemented for 3-5 years. He feels that when things are planned, implementation should be happening faster. He also expressed concerns with the streamside acquisition program that is being discussed between DEP and the stakeholders.

Jim Darling shared that he often contemplates the direction for WAC for the future. He feels WAC has 'the water quality issues under control', but economic viability is a priority. We need to save current agriculture in the watershed and protect the City's investment. The scale of agriculture in the watershed cannot compete with the rest of the country without economic support. Watershed farms cannot thrive on the commercial marketplace. He does not want to see the watershed simply become a tourist attraction. He also added that he agrees that the Agricultural Program is planning too far ahead and cautions against developing another 'backlog situation'.

John Verhoeven shared that as a beef farmer, beef prices are skyrocketing locally because of the droughts out west. New York State has perfect grazing land, and fallow land around the watershed needs to be grazed. He wonders if DEP is committed to doing something with the land that they have acquired to help bring beef farming back to the area.

Karl Gockel would like to learn more about the forestry and economic viability programs. Forestry is becoming a much more important and sizeable component, and he wants to ensure WAC is an advocate for proper practices. He recently returned from an education conference and, as a result, would like to see more pathways for high school and college aged children to get into the environmental and conservation career streams. Perhaps a dual enrollment with Cobleskill or another state university to get college kids involved.

Jason Helmbold wants to learn more about forestry products and agricultural business development opportunities that would be regionally viable. Utilizing the resources that we have, are there any ideas we can incubate to support and advocate using WAC's platform. The viability of small farms is not ideal; how can WAC assist in that.

Paul Gallay expressed that he would advocate for the incoming NYC administration to get on board with the initiatives to get food to the people who need it in the city, to be realistic about the opportunities, and to give that program as much of a forward push as possible. Also, to understand the value of the work on BMPS and forestry and easement to the value of water quality of the city's most valuable asset, the clean water supply. Also, the continued growth and renewal of the easement program and understanding folks that are coming into the program or have the opportunity arise now.

Fred Huneke stated that the program will continue long after this board of directors is gone, and he wonders about the conversation's DEP has amongst themselves concerning the future of this program. He is also curious about where the regulators are with the FAD and how long it will be in place. What happens to the program if a filtration facility is built, the future, and what DEP and the regulators are saying.

Tom Hutson shared that he wants to protect the farmland and that the area needs a meat packing plant and wonders how can WAC support that. He would also like to expand outreach and communications to share what we are doing more.

Michael Vander Werff shared that working with WAC is the highlight of his career. He has seen first-hand the quality of the staff leadership and technical expertise of the staff throughout the entire program. He wonders now if there is an opportunity for the Board of Directors to reassess its goals and objectives. Can the Board take a step back from day-to-day tasks knowing things are in good hands and focus on opportunities and advocacy topics that have been shared today.

Jennifer Grossman expressed that she would like to hear more from staff about their challenges and successful tools. She recently joined the easement committee and has learned what the staff are dealing with day-to-day. She wants to keep learning from staff as to what the board can do more to support them. As it relates to advocacy – affordability, food costs, and the real issue of food affordability. Restoring food banks is a real focus right now; how can WAC participate in creative ways to make food more affordable? How do we make our farmland more affordable? She added the issue of climate change, that it is not going away, and feels we need to do everything possible to keep our grass growing and our farms in active use. How can we fortify the WAC community to remain viable and be a leader in the future for farmland protection and food production.

Bud Gladstone asked how can WAC adjust to changing national agricultural trends and government regulations? He also shared concerns with the Streamside Acquisition Program; Bud is opposed because he doesn't feel the city needs to own the streams. He supports a CREP type program with the same effect and product. He would like to focus on farm transition, how we can support farms that are transitioning to new, younger farmers. We need to keep our farms ready to hand over to the next generation; the farm needs to be successful and in a good financial position. Currently, the board is very diversified, and we need to ensure that we keep the board diversified. Community partnerships are key, highlighting how well WAC is working with the County now, which is a drastic difference to where the relationship was ten years ago.

In summary, Ryan highlighted some common themes – evident people are interested in food and market connectivity, being purposeful in that regard, parallels with education and outreach, ensuring that WAC stays nimble, that there is program adaptation potential and have the ability to adapt to the current ag and forestry trends but not to compromise water quality. More to come.

B. Quarterly Program Reports – July - September 2025

Program managers were present to share reports on the quarter of program activities for July through September.

- **Easement Program** – Serena reported that the program closed on a Forest Conservation Easement in the quarter; the portfolio is now 32,875 acres. Rebecca Morgan is diligently working on outreach for acquisitions. Serena and Rebecca are planning to rethink solicitation for new applicants. Hoping to focus on 'kitchen table' meetings. The easement committee has been tasked with coming to the next meeting with potential farmers that Rebecca can approach regarding the option of conservation easement.

- Communications Program – Heather Magnan reported that a lot of events occurred in the quarter being reported, as outlined in the dashboard. A few board members attended events which were great. She would love to see increased numbers for event attendance by Board members in the next season. Heather is currently working with the new web team developing a revamped WAC website which should be available to the public in the upcoming quarter.
- Agricultural Program – Connor Young shared that per the dashboard provided in the packets, there were a high number of WFP revisions. This was due to clean-up efforts by the staff this last quarter to validate BMP's; many of the revisions were administrative in nature. There was a series of new cover crop rounds; nutrient management had a very productive year soil sampling. Interns were able to accomplish the goals and get prepared for next year. Annual Status Reviews are on track for the 90% for this year.
- Forestry Program – Marilyn Wyman provided reporting details on behalf of Tom Pavelisch. Karl VonBerg retired and will be missed. Heather Hilson started handling logger training administration in house. Tyler and Jessica are focusing on the 'Women Owning Woods' which received a grant for expansion, and they are taking advantage of that.

C. Spotlight Presentation: WAC Events Update – Kristan Morley, Economic Viability Program Manager

Kristan presented Economic Viability Events for the 2025 season.

V. Chair's Report – Wayland "Bud" Gladstone

Bud mentioned 'Giving Tuesday', next Tuesday, December 2, and encouraged all members to consider giving.

VI. Building Committee – Karl Gockel

Karl reported that the Committee continues to meet to review site and floor plan specifications. The committee is pleased with the site design and proposed building layout. WAC is required to conform with NYC Local Law 51, so staff are working with Keystone Associates to address that. The committee will meet again in January. The current contract with Keystone will be extended through February of 2026.

VII. Governance Committee – Jason Helmbold

Governance recently met to consider a potential board candidate, the committee conducted an interview with the potential candidate that will be nominated in December. The self-assessment reviews have been completed for all directors with terms expiring at the end of 2025.

VIII. Nutrient Management Sub-Committee – Jim Darling

Nutrient Management Peer review committee met in October.

Motion to approve the 2024/2025 NM Credit award for Darview Farm (DEP-005) as reviewed and recommended by the NM Peer Review Committee on October 24, 2025, and as further informed by November 25, 2025, review of the proposed award summary.

James Darling recused himself

Motion: Steve Reed

Second: Fred Huneke

Approved

Motion to approve the 2024/2025 NM Credit award for the River Haven Farm Legacy LLC (Thomas Hutson, DEC-121) as reviewed and recommended by the NM Peer Review Committee on October 24, 2025, and as further informed by the November 25, 2025, review of the proposed award summary.

Tom Hutson recused himself

Motion: Dwight Bruno

Second: Marilyn Wyman

Approved

Motion to approve the 2024/2025 NM Credit award for the Karl Gockel farm (DES-011) as reviewed and recommended by the NM Peer Review Committee on October 24, 2025, and as further informed by the November 25, 2025, review of the proposed award summary.

Karl Gockel recused himself

Motion: Fred Huneke

Second: Tom Hutson

Approved

Motion to approve the 2024/2025 NM Credit award for the Gladstone, Wayland farm (DEP-120) as reviewed and recommended by the NM Peer Review Committee on October 24, 2025, and as further informed by the November 25, 2025, review of the proposed award summary.

Bud Gladstone recused himself

Motion: Steve Reed

Second: Fred Huneke

Approved

Motion to approve the 2024/2025 NM Credit award for the Steven and Sylvia Reed Trust farm (Steve Reed, DEC-006) as reviewed and recommended by the NM Peer Review Committee on October 24, 2025, and as further informed by the November 25, 2025, review of the proposed award summary.

Steve Reed recused himself

Motion: Paul Gallay

Second: John Verhoeven

Approved

Motion to approve the 2024/2025 NM Credit award for the JJF Farm LLC (John Verhoeven, GRS-001) as reviewed and recommended by the NM Peer Review Committee on October 24, 2025, and as further informed by the November 25, 2025, review of the proposed award summary.

John Verhoeven recused himself

Motion: Dwight Bruno

Second: Steve Reed

Approved

Motion to approve the 2024/2025 NM Credit award for the Del-Rose Farm, (E & B Hanselman, DEC-048), as reviewed and recommended by the NM Peer Review Committee on October 24, 2025, and as further informed by the November 25, 2025, review of the proposed award summary.

Motion: Fred Huneke

Second: Dwight Bruno

Approved

Motion to approve the 2024/2025 NM Credit award for Clark Dairy Farms, LLC (Kyle Clark, DEC-139) as reviewed and recommended by the NM Peer Review Committee on October 24, 2025, and as further informed by November 25, 2025, review of the proposed award summary.

Fred Huneke recused himself

Motion: Steve Reed

Second: Dwight Bruno

Approved

Motion to approve the 2024/2025 NM Credit award for Scott Tuttle Farm (GRS-006) as reviewed and recommended by the NM Peer Review Committee on October 24, 2025, and as further informed by the November 25, 2025, review of the proposed award summary.

John Verhoeven recused himself

Motion: Karl Gockel

Second: Fred Huneke

Approved

Motion to approve conditionally the 2024/2025 NM Credit awards for DEC-SF133.1, DEP-SF216, DEC-SF204, DEC-257, and DEC-181 as reviewed and recommended by the NM Peer Review Committee on October 24, 2025, and as further informed by November 25, 2025, review of the proposed award summary. This farm will have access to their award once an existing manure pile is spread. The deadline for completing this is July 1, 2026. If the pile is not spread by this date, the credit award for this year will not be available.

Motion: Karl Gockel

Second: Paul Gallay

Approved

Motion to approve conditionally the 2024/2025 NM Credit award for DEC-336 as reviewed and recommended by the NM Peer Review Committee on October 24, 2025, and as further informed by November 25, 2025, review of the proposed award summary. The conditions for this farm are as follows: 1. A quarterly meeting with the farm to review manure records. 2. Limit credit availability until June 1st stating that it can only be used for custom manure services unless emergency expenses for manure management are needed, then the request would go to Ag. Committee for their approval. After June 1, 2026, if everything is going smoothly and NMP and O&Ms are being followed, the remaining credit award would have no restrictions.

Motion: Paul Gallay

Second: John Verhoeven

Approved

Motion to approve the 2024/2025 NM Credit award for the remaining 106 NM Credit participants as reviewed and recommended by the NM Peer Review Committee on October 24, 2025, and as further informed by November 25, 2025, review of the proposed award summary

Motion: Karl Gockel

Second: Dwight Bruno

Approved

IX. NYC DEP Report – Michael Vander Werff

Michael reported that the WWP permit expires at the end of December, DEC has issued a 4-year renewal; no gap is expected. DEP is working with stakeholders on the 4th side agreement; proposed language has been provided, and it is hopeful that the side agreement will be signed later today.

X. NYS DOH, US EPA Reports – Patrick Palmer

Patrick didn't have any additional DOH news to share currently.

XI. Executive Session

Motion to enter Executive Session at 11:58 a.m.

Motion: John Verhoeven

Second: Jim Darling

Approved

Motion to come out of Executive Session at 12:22 p.m.

Motion: Dwight Bruno

Second: Karl Gockel

Approved

XII. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 12:22 p.m. by common consent.

Our next meeting of the Council is scheduled for **December 16, 2025**, at 10:00 a.m.

Jennifer Grossman

12 / 16 / 2025

Jennifer Grossman

WAC Board Secretary

Date