



WATERSHED AGRICULTURAL COUNCIL

# 2025 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, 2024 – JUNE 30, 2025

#### REVENUES

NYC DEP Contracts	\$ 17,050,731	98%
In-Kind Services	283,416	2%
Federal Grants	38,343	-
Non-Federal Grants & Contributions	8,722	-
Program Service Revenues	56,301	-
Other	14,037	-
Net Investment Activity	14,908	-
<b>Total Revenues</b>	<b>\$ 17,466,458</b>	<b>100%</b>

#### EXPENSES

Agricultural Program	\$ 10,688,292	62%
Forestry Program	1,778,817	10%
Conservation Easement Program	1,161,231	7%
Economic Viability & Outreach	628,370	4%
Administrative Support	2,518,482	14%
Contributions to Endowment	607,897	3%
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$ 17,383,089</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 2025 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.

# NAVIGATING CHANGES OF WORKING LANDS

Throughout 2025, the Watershed Agricultural Council (WAC) continued to deliver meaningful results across the Watershed by supporting regional agriculture and forestry, as well as protecting water quality. Renewed investments are helping participants navigate change while keeping working lands productive and resilient. While traditional dairy farming remains a cornerstone of the region, noteworthy shifts in land-ownership and farm operations are underway, including transitions from dairy to beef and growing interest from next-generation farmers. These changes reflect evolving economic conditions and exciting opportunities for innovation across the region.

To help farms adapt to the growing impacts of climate change, WAC has formed new partnerships focused on research, technical assistance, and practical, on-farm solutions tailored to local needs. These efforts aim to help producers respond to changing weather patterns, protect natural resources, and strengthen their operations. WAC is also pursuing new technologies and grant opportunities to improve farm efficiency, resilience, and productivity.

Internally, WAC is taking a fresh look at how we operate. Through strategic planning and collaboration, we are ensuring our programs remain responsive to the needs of the Watershed community. By staying adaptive and forward-looking, WAC is well positioned to continue protecting water quality, supporting agriculture and forestry, and conserving working landscapes for years to come.

— Ryan Naatz, Executive Director

#### Credits:

Art Director/Editor: Heather Magnan  
Assistant Editors: Kristan Morley, Morgan Hughes  
Graphic Design: Cynthia Dunne  
Printing: Catamount Color  
Cover Photo: Joe Damone  
Photos: WAC Staff





# ECONOMIC VIABILITY

**324**

Pure Catskills  
Members

**18**

Events Attended and/or  
Sponsored

**\$37,316**

Approved  
Grant Funding

The Watershed Agricultural Council's (WAC) Economic Viability Program had a successful year in 2025. We are proud to report the completion of all program contract deliverables, including our commitment to directly support at least five watershed events annually related to the economic viability and marketing needs of farm and forestry businesses. In 2025, program sponsorship and attendance totaled 18 events, far exceeding this goal.

Our participation underscores the power of collaboration and community engagement in advancing the economic viability of the region's farm and forestry landscape. Through targeted sponsorships, on-site participation, and partnerships including close coordination with the WAC Communications and MyWoodlot teams, the EV Program continues to generate measurable

## GENERATING MEASURABLE BENEFITS IN THE COMMUNITY

benefits for producers, small businesses, and the broader community.

We were fortunate to experience beautiful weather and strong community turnout throughout the summer season. These events provided valuable opportunities to connect with local producers, promote regional products, and share the mission of Pure Catskills and WAC programs. Some of the highest attended events included Bovina Farm Day, the Cauliflower Festival, and the Maple Shade Hootenanny.

Collectively, these efforts support the broader WAC Communications Plan and reinforce our commitment to strengthening local economies, celebrating the Catskills' agricultural heritage, and supporting the long-term sustainability of farm and forest businesses.





# FORESTRY

**2,754**  
Acres Enrolled  
in 480a

BMPs on  
**47**  
Timber Harvests

**106**  
Stewardship Projects on  
**335**  
Acres

**40**  
Field Trips for  
**2,491**  
Students/Teachers

Using Best Management Practices (BMPs) to protect water quality at stream crossings during logging is essential for maintaining healthy waterways and supporting sustainable timber operations. One of the primary benefits of BMPs is the prevention of sedimentation, which is the leading cause of water quality degradation in forested watersheds. Using temporary bridges minimizes direct contact with the stream bed, reducing the amount of disturbed soil that could wash into the water during rainfall events. Stream crossings including temporary bridges, culverts, or fords, are natural pinch points where soil disturbance, equipment activity, and runoff can most easily introduce sediment into waterways. Stabilizing approaches with gravel further reduces erosion by creating a firm, low-impact travel surface for equipment. By implementing these BMPs,

## ENSURING SUSTAINABLE TIMBER HARVESTS

loggers can significantly reduce these impacts while still meeting operational needs.

The Watershed Agricultural Council's (WAC) Forestry Program provides financial incentives and technical assistance to loggers and foresters to aid in the implementation of BMPs on active logging jobs in the watershed. WAC has a fleet of portable skidder bridges ranging from 20 feet to 40 feet that loggers and foresters can borrow free of charge. In addition, WAC will compensate loggers for the transportation of these bridges to and from the job site. During 2025, the WAC Forestry Program worked with 23 loggers to implement BMPs on 47 logging jobs in the Watershed. This includes stabilizing 37 stream crossings and their approaches as well as enabling the use of 15 portable bridges.





# CONSERVATION EASEMENTS

**33,051**

Acres  
Conserved

**223**

Properties  
Conserved

**37**

Reserved Right  
Requests/  
Notifications

**2**025 upheld as another busy year for the Watershed Agricultural Council's Conservation Easement Program. Two closings occurred, adding 318 acres of protected forest land to our conservation portfolio. In addition, three contracts were facilitated, with approximately 960 acres of farm and forest land to be conserved next year. While acquisition levels differ from earlier years, we are proud to consistently welcome several new easement properties each year.

This strategic shift has allowed staff resources to focus on increased collaboration. The simple act of encouraging applications, while monitoring eased properties, proved complementary to the Economic Viability Program's efforts and supported the success of WAC's Farms and Forests in Transition (FFIT) grants this year. Of the four completed projects to date, two were landowners with conservation easements. There are



**WORKING  
TOGETHER TO  
SUPPORT  
LAND  
TRANSITIONS**

currently five additional FFIT grants in progress, all associated with eased properties.

Our team looks forward to working with our WAC colleagues, and the community, to continue to explore innovative opportunities for our participants, especially hoping to continue to expand transition support. We've also emphasized increased engagement amongst participants and staff this year. Second and third generation easement landowners are especially encouraged to contact program staff as much as necessary. We see ourselves as partners on the land, working together to uphold the Deed of Conservation Easement terms, ensuring development occurs responsibly while supporting the notion that working lands stay worked. In closing, whether your land is protected by an easement or not, our dedicated staff would welcome the opportunity to talk with you.





# AGRICULTURE

**8,069**

Best Management Practices,

**232**

in 2025

**213**

Active Farms

**30**

Farmer  
Education Events

**128,596**

Acres Farmed

In 2025, the Watershed Agricultural Council's Agricultural Program maintained a high level of implementation activity while advancing several strategic initiatives intended to strengthen long-term program delivery. In coordination with partners including Delaware County Soil & Water Conservation District, Cornell Cooperative Extension of Delaware County, USDA agencies, and others, we continued to support water quality protection across a diverse and evolving farm landscape in the NYC Watershed.

Staff remained engaged with more than 213 voluntary farm participants and conservation partners. While dairy operations continue to represent a significant portion of activity, ongoing transitions to beef and diversified livestock systems were reflected in planning, design, and implementation workloads.

Throughout the year, program staff supported the planning, design, and implementation of over 232 Best Management Practices (BMPs) totaling over \$6.2 million. Projects included barnyard improvements, manure storages, access roads, stream crossings and water systems. Despite variable weather conditions, projects advanced through coordinated efforts among farmers, staff, and contractors, contributing to continued progress on implementation targets.

Our Nutrient Management Credit Program supported more than 125 farms in 2025, with nearly 200 active Nutrient Management Plans maintained under our updated program structure.

## INCREASING IMPLEMENTATION WHILE PURSUING INNOVATION



These plans remain a core component of manure management and water quality protection efforts across the Watershed.

The Watershed Investigation and Repair Crew completed dozens of investigations and emergency repairs, providing targeted technical assistance and timely responses to infrastructure and water quality issues identified through Annual Status Reviews and farmer engagement. This work helped farmers maintain the function of existing BMPs and protect prior investments.

In parallel with implementation efforts, WAC advanced several strategic projects in 2025. Development of the Long-Term Management Plan continued, focusing on whole farm planning structure, BMP prioritization, and workload planning. Staff are working on the long-term impact of agronomic BMPs and soil health. The Office of the New York State Attorney General is funding a project supporting demonstration and evaluation of innovative agricultural equipment and technologies, while the partner-driven Conservation Innovation Grant projects contributed to enhanced nutrient management and applied research relevant to Watershed farms.

Together, these efforts reflect our program operating at scale while actively planning for future delivery needs, ensuring continued support for the economic viability of the farming community while protecting water quality across the NYC Watershed.





# EAST OF HUDSON

**6,514**  
Acres

**837**  
Best Management  
Practices Completed

**84**  
Whole Farm Plans

Demonstrating our ongoing commitment to water quality protection in the Croton Watershed, the East of Hudson (EOH) Program implemented numerous Best Management Practices (BMPs) this year, including two major projects at Echo Hill Farm in Lewisboro, NY, and Salinger's Farm and Orchard in Brewster, NY.

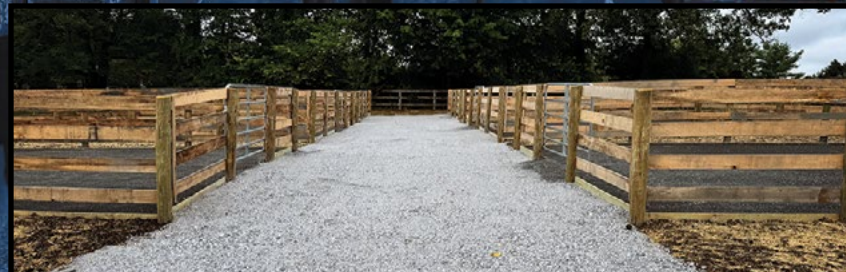
Located in the Cross River Basin, Echo Hill Farm spans 28 acres and is home to approximately 38 horses. The farm offers a diverse lesson program for all levels of riders, hosts three horse shows annually, and runs four weeks of summer riding camps. To address water quality concerns, a Heavy Use Area Protection (dumpster pad) was installed to house a 30 cubic yard dumpster for manure and bedding from the existing barn stalls. The pad was constructed with a concrete catch basin to capture wastewater from the dumpster, which is routed to a concrete septic tank installed as part of the wash water infiltration system in front of the barn. Runoff from the wash stall in the barn ties into the system also. The system was completed by the installation of medical paddocks to allow for easier cleaning of the horse manure.

Salinger's Orchard, a fourth-generation farm dating back to 1901, is located in the Muscote River Basin. It spans 78 acres and

## COMMITTING TO THE FUTURE OF AGRICULTURE

offers pick-your-own apples and seasonal fruits in the fall. In addition to the orchard, farm market, year-round cider production and in-store bakery, the farm has a composting operation run by an outside company. To address water quality concerns, an agrichemical handling facility was installed, featuring a covered building and an impervious concrete slab to allow the safe mixing of pesticides and herbicides while preventing soil contamination. Runoff generated inside the building is routed and stored via a system of trench drains, catch basin and polyethylene tanks to allow for rinsate storage and re-use. The building was also equipped with a filling system to allow efficient filling of the sprayer tank during the mixing process. Polyethylene storage tanks, sinks and pumps were also installed inside the building for filling the sprayer tank and for handling any spillage that may occur during the mixing process.

As we look forward to 2026, we are excited to continue to support practices that enhance water quality and the economic viability of our participants. We are also encouraged by the success of our increased outreach to potential future participants we made in 2025 and hope to increase our participation by welcoming new farms into our program.



Over the last few years, the Watershed Agricultural Council (WAC) has focused on increasing our outreach and education in the region. We have steadily and strategically increased our community event attendance as well as our reach in area schools, colleges and BOCES programs. In 2025, WAC participated in or sponsored over 155 outreach and education events across the NYC Watershed region as well New York City. These events ranged from the Catskill Regional Agriculture

## INCREASING COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Conference and high school and college career days to logger and farmer education offerings, to farm tours and school field trips, to large local events like the Delaware County Fair, Delaware County Clean Sweep and Maple Shade Hootenanny. It was a busy year, and we are proud to report that over 60% of staff participated in these public outreach efforts for WAC, and our Pure Catskills and MyWoodlot initiatives!



# TOURS & EVENTS

59

Outreach Events

96

Education Events

60%

Staff Attendance

# 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)



# WAC

[nycwatershed.org](http://nycwatershed.org)

33195 State Highway 10

Walton, NY 13856

NONPROFIT  
US POSTAGE PAID  
WALTON NY  
PERMIT NO. 250



FOLLOW US ON FACEBOOK



@WATERFARFOREST