

Watershed Agricultural Council

Agriculture ♦ Forestry ♦ Conservation Easements ♦ Economic Viability

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MINUTES OF THE WATERSHED AGRICULTURAL COUNCIL MEETING

November 26, 2024

I. Meeting called to order at 10:03 a.m.

Directors Present:

Dwight Bruno
Paul Gallay
Wayland 'Bud' Gladstone, *Chair*
Karl Gockel, *Treasurer*
Jennifer Grossman, *Secretary*
Barb Hanselman
Jason Helmbold
Fred Huneke
Tom Hutson, *Vice Chair*
Steve Reed
John Verhoeven
Jeff Wilson
Marilyn Wyman
Shilo Williams, *NYC DEP*

Directors Absent:

James Darling

Others Present:

Ryan Naatz, *Executive Director*
Amy Faulkner, *Director of Operations*
Carol Bishop, *Finance Director*
Connor Young, *WOH Agricultural Program Manager*
Cindy McCarthy, *NM & PFM Coordinator*
Tom Pavlesich, *Forestry Program Manager*
Tyler Van Fleet, *EOH Forestry Program Coordinator*
Heather Hilson, *Forestry Program Outreach Specialist*
Serena Orleski, *Easement Program Manager*
Kayla Atanasoff, *Easement Program Executive Assistant*
Kristan Morley, *Economic Viability Program Manager*
Heather Magnan, *Communications Manager*
Michael Vander Werff, *NYC DEP*
Sara Storrer, *NYC DEP*
Tom Ganz, *NYC DEP*
Paul Kacmarczyk, *NYS DOH*
Bruce Dolph, *DC SWCD Board*
Mary Crisafulli, *The Mountain Eagle*
Rebecca Reynolds, *RBT CPAs, LLP*
Vincent Buono, *RBT CPAs, LLP*

II. Approval of Minutes

Motion to approve the October 22, 2024 minutes, as presented.

Motion: Fred Huneke

Second: Tom Hutson

Approved

III. **FY24 Audit – Rebecca Reynolds, CPA, RBT CPAs, LLP**

A. FY24 Audit and 990 – Motion

Rebecca presented highlights from the financial statements of the FY24 Audit, as well as a summary of findings and suggestions. The only finding was that Forms 5500 had not been filed since 2019. She noted that this was a result of miscommunications between WAC and the Third-Party Administrator, and that WAC leadership is currently taking measures to remedy this finding. Ryan noted that this subject matter could be discussed in greater detail with Council members during the Executive Session. Rebecca then reported that the only suggestion was for the creation and adoption of a formal Disaster Recovery Policy. She turned the floor over to Vincent to present the Form 990 Summary, and then closed by explaining the next steps to finalize the audit and tax forms for filing.

Motion to accept the FY24 Audit and Form 990s as presented.

Motion: Karl Gockel

Second: Steve Reed

Approved

IV. **Executive Director’s Report – Ryan Naatz**

A. Operational and Programmatic Updates

Ryan stated that the majority of the updates he would provide would take place during the Executive Session. He did, however, have an update regarding the new West-of-Hudson office building construction. He explained that November 12th was the due date for all proposals. Staff are currently in the process of reviewing those submissions. He will provide an update at the December Council meeting, with subsequent proposals to follow.

B. Spotlight: Communications – Introducing the WAC Outreach and Education Plan and Strategy presented by Heather Magnan, Heather Hilson and Tyler VanFleet

Heather M., Heather H. and Tyler presented the WAC Education & Outreach Plan – which was created in an attempt to improve the coordination of outreach and education across WAC programs. They outlined the steps that have already been taken, and the next steps to come, in implementing the plan as outlined.

V. **Chair’s Report – Wayland ‘Bud’ Gladstone**

A. Dispute Resolution Request

Bud reported that last month, the Executive Committee met with Colm Ryan, a Whole Farm Plan participant, to discuss a dispute resolution request regarding the removal of BMP implementation schedules from Whole Farm Plans.

The inclusion of BMP implementation schedules was discontinued in practice in 2012 because of difficulties in creating accurate projections due to project prioritization schedules and budget constraints. The change was intended to avoid participant dissatisfaction if BMPs could not be implemented as scheduled - and was noted in Agricultural Committee meeting minutes, but not formalized in programmatic guideline revisions. The Agricultural Committee has since formally amended program guidelines to reflect this change, and the Executive Committee has affirmed the decision to omit implementation schedules for the reasons outlined above.

Motion to affirm the Executive Committee's decision at the October 15, 2024 meeting regarding the Dispute Resolution Request.

Motion: Karl Gockel

Second: Fred Huneke

Approved

VI. Finance Committee – Karl Gockel & Carol Bishop

Karl explained that the Finance Committee meeting was a joint Audit Committee meeting. Aside from the audit, there was nothing else to report at this time.

VII. Agricultural Committee – Steve Reed & Connor Young

A. WAC Equipment Innovation Grant Proposal

Connor presented a proposal for a grant opportunity through the Office of the Attorney General for New York State (OAG). He explained that WAC was approached by the OAG for ideas regarding the application of funding from environmental settlement monies (\$1.44 million) to innovative agricultural projects in the region – particularly to address clean air and water quality concerns while promoting education and economic viability. It was determined that the most feasible investment would be in equipment and technology - which is a largely underfunded grant category and without funding, these types of resources can be risky undertakings (especially for small farm operations).

Under this proposal, farms within the Cannonsville, Pepacton, Neversink and Roundout water basins could be eligible to apply under three (3) categories:

- (1) Soil Health and Cover Crop Management;
- (2) Agricultural Drones; and
- (3) Precision Agriculture Technology.

Under the draft Scope of Work, WAC would act as the primary grant administrator, in collaboration with Cornell University to support education and monitoring.

Motion to approve the concept of the WAC Equipment Innovation Grant Proposal and support staff moving forward with formal application submission.

Motion: Paul Gallay

Second: Tom Hutson

Approved

VIII. Nutrient Management Sub-Committee – Steve Reed & Cindy McCarthy

A. 2023-2024 Nutrient Management Credit Awards – Motion

Motion to approve the 2023/2024 NM Credit award for Darview Farm as reviewed and recommended by the NM Peer Review Committee on October 24, 2024 and as further informed by the November 26, 2024 review of the proposed award summary.

Motion: Karl Gockel

Second: Tom Hutson

Note: James Darling was not in attendance

Approved

Motion to approve the 2023/2024 NM Credit award for the R. Thomas Hutson farm as reviewed and recommended by the NM Peer Review Committee on October 24, 2024 and as further informed by the November 26, 2024 review of the proposed award summary.

Motion: Bud Gladstone

Second: Fred Huneke

Abstained: Tom Hutson

Approved

Motion to approve the 2023/2024 NM Credit award for the Karl Gockel farm as reviewed and recommended by the NM Peer Review Committee on October 24, 2024 and as further informed by the November 26, 2024 review of the proposed award summary.

Motion: Fred Huneke

Second: Dwight Bruno

Abstained: Karl Gockel

Approved

Motion to approve the 2023/2024 NM Credit award for the Gladstone farm as reviewed and recommended by the NM Peer Review Committee on October 24, 2024 and as further informed by the November 26, 2024 review of the proposed award

summary.

Motion: Karl Gockel

Second: John Verhoeven

Abstained: Bud Gladstone

Approved

Motion to approve the 2023/2024 NM Credit award for the Steve Reed farm as reviewed and recommended by the NM Peer Review Committee on October 24, 2024 and as further informed by the November 26, 2024 review of the proposed award summary.

Motion: Bud Gladstone

Second: Paul Gallay

Abstained: Steve Reed

Approved

Motion to approve the 2023/2024 NM Credit award for the JIF Farm LLC as reviewed and recommended by the NM Peer Review Committee on October 24, 2024 and as further informed by the November 26, 2024 review of the proposed award summary.

Motion: Bud Gladstone

Second: Fred Huneke

Abstained: John Verhoeven

Approved

Motion to approve the 2023/2024 NM Credit award for the Del-Rose Farm, (E & B Hanselman), as reviewed and recommended by the NM Peer Review Committee on October 24, 2024 and as further informed by the November 26, 2024 review of the proposed award summary.

Motion: Tom Hutson

Second: John Verhoeven

Note: Barb Hanselman left the meeting ahead of the vote

Approved

Motion to approve the 2023/2024 NM Credit award for the Jeff Wilson Farm as reviewed and recommended by the NM Peer Review Committee on October 24, 2024 and as further informed by the November 26, 2024 review of the proposed award summary.

Motion: John Verhoeven

Second: Dwight Bruno

Abstained: Jeff Wilson

Approved

Motion to approve the 2023/2024 NM Credit award for the remaining 119 NM Credit participants as reviewed and recommended by the NM Peer Review Committee on October 24, 2024 and as further informed by the November 26, 2024 review of the proposed award summary – with the amendment to the award summary presented for DEC-SF118.

Motion: John Verhoeven

Second: Tom Hutson

Approved

IX. Economic Viability Committee – Jennifer Grossman & Kristan Morley

Jennifer was not able to attend the last Committee meeting, so she turned the floor to Kristan to present some highlights. Kristan reported that the second grant round cycle for the Fruit and Vegetable Expansion Grant will be closing soon for review, and that a draft program Handbook will be presented to the Committee soon.

X. Easement Committee – Tom Hutson & Serena Orleski

Tom reported that the Committee recently approved revisions to the Forest Conservation Easement Applicant Selections Guidelines (with more revisions to existing guidelines to come). The Committee will vote on new applicants at the December meeting. He reported several Stewardship and Acquisition updates.

XI. Forestry Committee – Marilyn Wyman & Tom Pavlesich

Marilyn explained that the Committee met the week prior so the minutes were not included as part of the packet materials. Some topics of discussion included an analysis of the program's Management Assistance Program (MAP) invasive species control rates in relation to Gordian RSMMeans (RSM) standards, the Logger Certification Program (as previously presented to Council), and the Master Logger Program (with a potential collaboration opportunity to come).

XII. East of Hudson Committee – Fred Huneke & Amy Faulkner

Fred reported that the Committee postponed its meeting until December. He turned the floor over to Amy to provide an update. She reported that staff are officially moved into the new, professional office space in Patterson, NY and getting settled. As for staffing updates, she reported that six (6) interviews are currently scheduled for the vacant Conservation Planner position. The advertisements for the Program Manager vacancies are ongoing and interviews are conducted periodically. She concluded that there will be missed deliverables for the 2024 calendar year due to the vacancies and she has had discussions with Tom Ganz regarding the 2025 implementation goals.

XIII. NYC DEP Report – Shilo Williams

Shilo had a couple items to report:

First, due to Mayor Adams issuance of a drought warning, DEP has paused all Delaware aqueduct repair projects for the time being and will move back to full service by mid-December. We continue to be in a precipitation deficit – despite the recent snowfall – as evidenced by the statewide burn ban and recent wildfires.

Second, Commissioner Aggarwala recently announced the DEP’s intention to expand broadband and wireless communications in the region.

XIV. NYS DOH, US EPA Reports – Patrick Palmer & Katie Lynch

Patrick was not in attendance. Paul reported that the DOH had nothing to report at this time.

XV. Other

Governance Update – John Verhoeven

John reported that the Governance Committee is currently reviewing Board Member Self-Assessments, and reaching out to Members with questions or comments as needed. In addition, the Committee will be reviewing terms that are expiring at the end of the calendar year and will provide any motions to approve new terms at the December Council meeting.

XVI. Executive Session

Motion to enter Executive Session at 12:08 p.m.

Motion: Fred Huneke

Second: Shilo Williams

Approved

Motion to come out of Executive Session at 12:21 p.m.

Motion: Steve Reed

Second: Dwight Bruno

Approved

XVII. Adjournment

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

The next meeting will be held on Tuesday, December 17, 2024 at 10:00 a.m.