



CHENANGO COUNTY SOIL AND WATER
CONSERVATION DISTRICT
BOARD OF DIRECTOR'S MEETING

1:00 PM THURSDAY, JANUARY 19th, 2023
USDA Conference Room, 99 North Broad St, Norwich NY

AGENDA

Call to Order.

Approval of Minutes.

Payment and Approval of Bills.

Report of Cooperating Agencies.

- | | |
|---|------------------------|
| ○ <i>Department of Environmental Conservation</i> | <i>Paul Romanenko</i> |
| ○ <i>Cornell Cooperative Extension</i> | <i>Ken Smith</i> |
| ○ <i>Natural Resources Conservation Service</i> | <i>Alana Covington</i> |
| ○ <i>Farm Service Agency</i> | <i>Brian Sheridan</i> |
| ○ <i>Soil and Water Conservation District</i> | <i>Jennifer Kelly</i> |
| ○ <i>Upper Susquehanna Coalition</i> | <i>Jennifer Kelly</i> |
| ○ <i>Fish & Wildlife Management Board</i> | <i>Jacob Welsh</i> |
| ○ <i>Water Quality Coordinating Committee</i> | |

Old Business.

- Health Insurance Discussion
- Sick Leave Discussion
- Proposed Changes to District Law/Update

New Business.

- 2023 Part C Funding
- Fish & Wildlife Management Board – Landowner Rep

Adjourn.



Chenango County Soil and Water Conservation District
Board of Director's Meeting
November 30th, 2022
1:00 PM

District Board Members Present:

John Lawrence	Chairman
Joe Henninge	Member
James Jenne	Member
Sue McIntyre (phone in)	Member

Agency Staff Present:

Katy Kemmeren	CCSWCD
Jennifer Kelly	CCSWCD
Riley Krupitza	CCSWCD
Jacob Welsh	CCSWCD

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES: October minutes were approved as presented.

PAYMENT OF THE BILLS: The October-November bills were approved as presented.

REPORTS:

NYS Department of Environmental Conservation

No one present, no report provided.

Cornell Cooperative Extension

Natural Resources Conservation Service

No one present, no report provided.

Farm Service Agency

No one present, no report provided.

Chenango County Soil and Water Conservation District

Jen read the SWCD report. Attachment A.

Upper Susquehanna Coalition

No report provided

Fish and Wildlife Management Board

Jacob read the FWMB report and provided pictures. Attachment B.

Water Quality Coordinating Committee

Nothing to report.

OLD BUSINESS:

Health Insurance- To be discussed at a different time.

NEW BUSINESS:

Watershed Health Coalition- Dustin Lewis, President of the New York State Employees Association wrote a letter to all district managers about the new draft amendments that the Watershed Health Coalition are proposing. There will be a statewide meeting December 13 and 14 and this topic is one of many that will be discussed. Jennifer is registered to attend and invited directors to attend if they wish. Letter attached as Attachment C.

2023 Performance Measures- Jennifer went over and passed out the revisions for this coming years performance measures that must be met to receive funding from the state. Since Covid-19, the performance measures have been changed as in-person meetings have been cancelled. Now, since the restrictions have been lessened, the requirements are back to they were pre-Covid-19.

Admin/Office Closure Policy- Jen brought up that, in the past, one person from each agency that is housed here would communicate about building closures prior to the work day starting. Since the Farm Service Agency and Natural Resources Conservation Service, both USDA agencies, have equipped their employees with the ability to work from home, they will now work from home on stormy days. However, the district does not have the luxury as most of our work is in office and in the field. John stated that he didn't see a problem with the District Manager making the call for the district employees if it was solely based on the weather in Chenango County and not neighboring counties. Sue was going to send Jen the policy that she has at her work place and will make edits from there.

Correspondence: None

Adjourn: 3:14pm

Respectfully Submitted

Katy Kemmeren

Recording Secretary/Treasurer

Chenango County Soil & Water Conservation District
Board of Director's Report
November 30, 2022



CURRENT PROJECT STATUS

- Riverside Dairy, Town of Pitcher, earthen manure storage pit is complete. The project turned out very well with a few contract modifications for an increased access road area and an upgrade to the fencing. The District will be issuing payment soon. *Project funding provided by the NYS CAFO Waste Storage and Transfer Program.*
- Harold Anderson, Town of Coventry – Shenandoah Habitats planted 1,875 tubeling tree and shrub seedlings as part of this stream restoration and CREP project. The total number of acres planted was 10.8 acres. The project went smoothly except the crew had a hard time digging holes for the larger planting stock we ordered. We will have to contract with the USC to auger holes into the gravel to get about 50 additional trees planted. USC will be onsite next week to plant the remainder of the willows. *Funded through NYS Climate Resilient Farming Program & the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation.*
- Davidson Forest Buffer Project, Town of Sherburne – Shenandoah Habitats planted 2,650 tubelings on 16.5 acres of which, about 3.2 acres of CREP. This planting project went well, and the only problem encountered is the Chenango River. The contractor was able to cross using his truck. District staff borrowed a kayak from CCE to ford across. Thank you to CCE Chenango for allowing us to utilize their equipment for that purpose. *Funded through AEM Round 17 Implementation and CREP.*
- Wolford Forest Buffer Project – The District contracted with Buckley Excavating to clear honeysuckle in the project area utilizing an open front brush clearing attachment on a skid steer. The attachment works well to clear brush; however, District staff and the landowner spend a day clearing additional woody and grass species. Shenandoah Habitats planted 1,575 tubelings, 6.4 acres. *Funded through AEM Round 17 Implementation CREP.*
- Chenango Greenway, 3 Amigos Wetland Restoration Project- Shenandoah Habitats planted 6 acres in the Town of Norwich. This is the first phase of a wetland restoration project on this site *funded by the Susquehanna River Basin Commission.* The District also participated in a volunteer planting portion with the Chenango Greenway of 75 tree seedlings. The second phase of construction, planned for summer of 2023, will include the installation of ditch plugs and a large bank stabilization using toe wood.
- Perrin CREP project – The well driller completed their portion of the project with the installation of the well, pressure tank and the water lines to the hydrant. The farmer is working toward hooking up the lines and backfilling the trenches. A water test and pump report are still needed for the engineer to sign off on the practice. *Funded by CREP and NYS AEM Round 17 Implementation.*
- Martin Road Wetlands Trust Planting – The Wetland Trust purchased a piece of property along the Unadilla River in the Town of New Berlin as part of their land holdings. This piece of property is within a mile of the wetland that the Wetlands Trust owns.

Previously a crop field, the trust paid for the fields to be reforested, a total of 22 acres. The District assisted with the planning and Shenandoah Habitats planted nearly 5,000 trees on this parcel. *Funding provided by the Wetlands Trust.*

- The District certified and had cost shared on 1340 acres of cover crops for the 2022 growing season. The District has utilized ARCGIS online and the Survey 123 application to make the certification process easier.

SWCD LANDOWNER & MUNICIPALITY TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM REPORT

- Norwich City Urban Tree Project- The District volunteered an afternoon to help plant 20 trees in the City of Norwich. Approximately 12 volunteers helped plant the trees on various city roads and parks. Trees were purchased by the District using *NYS Aid to Districts, Part B Funds*.
- The SWCD made the following fields visits for technical assistance:
 - Daniel Murphy – NYS stream/USACE wetland disturbance permit, Town of Pitcher.
 - Andrew Kross – crop field drainage issues/cleanout of open ditches, Town of ~~Pitcher~~ Sherburne.
 - Jim Rostberg- Pond site investigation, Town of Sherburne.
 - Savona- Trees for Tribs, Town of Greene

DISTRICT FUNDING & OPERATIONS

- District staff met with Karl Strauss and Mike Fournier to review the process and our job for potential job approval authority to sign off on several NRCS practices, including tree and shrub establishment, brush management, and herbaceous weed control. This would greatly improve the District's ability to implement CREP projects as we would be able to certify practices for both FSA payment and NYS payments with the appropriate level of JAA.
- The District has cleaned up, winterized, and have put the hydroseeder in for winter storage. The Round 13 WQIP contract ended in October, and we will be working on closeout of that contract.

DISTRICT SALES

- District is working on putting the sales form together. Will be sent out in January 2023.

AGRICULTURAL ASSESSMENTS

- Rick Wade- Town Of Bainbridge, Indian Camp Farm- Town of North Norwich and Sherburne, Ross Joscelyn- Town of Smithville Flats, Lynn Leonard, Town of New Berlin, Gregg Thornton- Town of Bainbridge, Pam Smith- Town of Bainbridge.

N.Y.S. Region 7 Fish and Wildlife Management Board

October 22, 2022

ATTACHMENT B

Fisheries:

- **STUDY: State-wide Catch and Release Trout Season**
 - 2nd year of examining the potential impacts of a state-wide c/r trout season
 - Potential harm on spawning process?
 - Increased angling pressure

Forestry:

- **Unit Management Plans – Chenango County State Forests**
 - *Chenango Trail UMP*: Public comment later this winter or early spring
 - o Coventry, Bobell Hill, Beaver Flow, Bumps Creek, Oak Ridge
 - *Five Streams UMP*: Awaiting Final Draft approval
 - o Five Streams, Balsam Swamp, Red Brook
 - *Pharsalia Woods UMP*: Initial Draft review
 - o Pharsalia Woods, Pitcher Springs, Perkins Pond, and Pigeon Hill

Natural Resources:

- **Open Space Plan:**
 - Members are assembled for the Regional Advisory Committee for Region 7
 - Will assist in updating the Open Space Plan – Last updated 2016

Wildlife:

- **Bluetongue:**
 - September: BT was detected in NY for the 1st time (3 deer in Suffolk Co.)
 - Very similar to EHD, though more prevalent in domestic livestock
- **2022 Pheasant Stocking:**
 - Tioughnioga WMA (Madison Co.) – 250 Pheasants stocked on 100+ acres
 - > 5,000 Pheasants will be released at 9 locations throughout Region 7
 - ~ 30,000 Pheasants will be released statewide on both state and private lands
 - o Where open to public hunting
- **Pharsalia WMA – Young Forest Initiative: (Photos on next page)**
 - Spring 2018: 25 acres of hardwoods were clearcut ; planted to >8,000 shrubs
 - 2 focal species: Ruffed Grouse and Wild Turkey
 - Post Treatment Survey: Extensively used by both species along with American Woodcock and many songbirds

N.Y.S. Region 7 Fish and Wildlife Management Board

October 22, 2022



ATTACHMENT C



New York State Conservation District Employees' Association, Inc.
151 Finney Blvd, Malone, NY 12953
www.nyscdea.com

*Soil and Water Conservation Districts provide
ongoing programs and services to conserve, enhance, and protect
soil and water resources in communities.*

November 17, 2022

Dear District Mangers,

I wanted to provide you an update on New York State Conservation District Employees' Association's efforts regarding the Watershed Health Coalition (WHC) that we informed you about several weeks ago. After our discussions at the annual New York Association of Conservation District's (NYACD) Annual Meeting, and following discussions with many Districts around the state, CDEA past President Chastity Miller, CDEA Vice President Caitlin Stewart, and I attended a listening session with the WHC on November 9 to make our intentions clear to them. We told them in no uncertain terms that we do not want, nor do we support, any attempt to amend District Law. We also informed them that we do not want them to represent that we have been involved with or support any future attempts to amend District Law.

It has also been brought to my attention that the WHC has been promoting their draft proposed amendments to District Law to watershed groups around the state. We were not aware of this, and they did not inform us of this during last week's listening session. I see this as a purposeful subterfuge to allow them to garner support while professing that we can work together as we go forward. As a result, CDEA is working to create a line-by-line review of the proposed changes and their effect on District operations. Look for this information to come out after Thanksgiving.

I have also gotten many inquiries from Districts asking what they can do to help with this issue. At this point in time, I ask that you inform your local watershed groups and lake associations of the WHC and their work to undermine Districts and insert themselves into our organizations. Let them know that we oppose any amendments to District Law, and that our commitment to conserving the natural resources of New York State is just as strong as when Soil and Water Conservation Districts were created 80 years ago.

Additionally, please let me know if you are contacted by the WHC, enabling CDEA to maintain a unified response in saying that we do not support amendments to District Law. Finally, continue to educate your Board of Directors on this challenge and ask them to stand ready to make their voices heard to our legislators. SWCDs rely on Directors for legislative lobbying.

I understand that many of you and your Boards are upset with what appears to be an attempt to alter the very fabric of who we are and what we do, as am I. At this moment, CDEA is attempting to persuade the WHC that many, if not all, of their stated goals are either already being met by Districts or can be achieved without legislative action. The apparent lack of knowledge of who we are and what we do by



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Soil and Water Conservation Districts provide ongoing programs and services to conserve, enhance, and protect soil and water resources in communities.

some members of this group is surprising and alarming. CDEA will continue to work on this issue as it develops, and we will keep you informed along the way. Rest assured that if the WHC introduces this legislation, CDEA, through our partners at NYACD, will be asking for the aid of every SWCD and Director in New York State.

Please see the below update from CDEA Vice President Caitlin Stewart that documents up to date actions and how to prepare for our future response.

One final reminder: if the WHC presents legislation to amend District Law to legislators, lobbying MUST come from our Directors and NYACD. Under District Law, District employees cannot lobby.

Sincerely,

Dustin Lewis, CDEA President

CDEA Action Items

- The Executive Committee is in a perpetual state of contact to discuss this challenge and keep abreast of new developments
- Attended a listening session with the WHC on November 9
- Addressed the Watershed Health Coalition via email and stated NYSCDEA does not support the WHC's opening and amendments to NYS Soil and Water Conservation District Law
- Consulting with past CDEA presidents
- Sought a due-paying NYACD member to submit the attached resolution from the floor during the October annual meeting that was passed < New York State Conservation District Employees' Association Inc. and New York Association of Conservation Districts representatives are to be notified when any proposed amendments to New York State Soil & Water Conservation District Law are to be brought to Legislation forums>
- Documenting and archiving all correspondence with WHC

WHC Statements during the November 10 Listening Session:

- Some people may feel they are not welcome in SWCD offices
- Education through legislation is their goal
- Legislators are unaware of SWCD accomplishments
- A mentorship program is needed for underserved farmers
- This bill will help to leverage funding for NYS SWCDs
- They desire a soil health champion program



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- SWCDs must look 30 to 50 years into the future to effectively plan for soil and watershed health programs
- Small farms are underserved and disadvantaged
- They believed that grants are ranked by SWCD and SWCC boards
- Diversity is an issue
- There are concerns for underserved and disadvantaged farmers
- They inquired how SWCDs track diversity, equity, and inclusion

Recent Developments

- NYACD posted draft District Law amendments and press on their website:
<https://nyacd.org/>
- CDEA past president Chastity Miller informed Farm Bureau of the challenge and asked for an update on their plan
- The Grange published a press release opposing the changes
- WHC listed SWCDs as a stakeholder in the attached PowerPoint PDF
 - Note: To our knowledge SWCDs were not included in any discussions prior to draft District Law amendments being released
- WHC is contacting lake associations and watershed coalitions for support

Next Steps

- CDEA will meet November 30, 11 a.m. – 5 p.m. at 305 Tom Miller Rd, Plattsburgh to discuss our course of action, and Districts, Directors, and partners are welcome to attend
- Please inform CDEA President Dustin Lewis immediately at dustinlewissaratogawcd@gmail.com if the WHC contacts your District or if you see WHC information on the internet or in newsletters
- If WHC contacts you please respond: "Thank you for your message. I am not ready for a productive conversation. For further questions, contact CDEA president Dustin Lewis: dustinlewissaratogawcd@gmail.com."
- Kindly do not participate in listening sessions. If you do, please debrief CDEA.
- Many Districts are informing their Directors, local legislators, and boards of supervisors. Let's keep our message unified. Share the first letter from NYS CDEA (attached), the draft proposed District Law amendments, press, and the SWCC's 2021 Annual Report to educate and spotlight how we conserve soil and watershed health:
<https://agriculture.ny.gov/system/files/documents/2022/10/2021_annual_report_0.pdf>



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- We will discuss this challenge at the Mangers' Meeting on December 13 – 14. Register here: <https://forms.gle/7NAVytBsvvvy9iAa8>

Resources

- Draft proposed changes to District Law and press are available on the NYACD website: <https://nyacd.org/>
- Draft legislative proposal in support of watershed health and farming justice in NYS (attached)
- Listening sessions advertisement: https://www.cayugalake.org/wp-content/uploads/clwn_nn_i2-3_2022.pdf
- Draft legislation changes threaten NY Conservation Districts press release: <https://countryfolks.com/draft-legislation-changes-threaten-ny-conservation-districts/>
- Proposed regulation changes threaten SWCD efforts, officials say press release (attached)