

Watershed Agricultural Council

Agriculture ♦ Forestry ♦ Conservation Easements ♦ Economic Viability

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MINUTES OF THE WATERSHED AGRICULTURAL COUNCIL MEETING

April 22, 2025

I. Meeting called to order at 10:13 a.m.

Directors Present:

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

Directors Absent:

None

Others Present:

Ryan Naatz, *Executive Director*
Amy Faulkner, *Director of Operations*
Carol Bishop, *Finance Director*
Connor Young, *WOH Agricultural Program Manager*
Elaine Poulin, *Program Procurement & Contract Coordinator*
Brian LaTourette, *Program Operations Coordinator*
Tom Pavlesich, *Forestry Program Manager*
Serena Orleski, *Easement Program Manager*
Mike Morales, *Easement Program Stewardship Coordinator*
Bill Martin, *Easement Program Acquisition Coordinator*, via Teams
Kayla Atanasoff, *Easement Program Executive Assistant*
Kristan Morley, *Economic Viability Program Manager*
Heather Magnan, *Communications Manager*
Shilo Williams, *NYC DEP*
Tom Ganz, *NYC DEP*, via Teams
Patrick Palmer, *NYS DOH*
Paul Kacmarczyk, *NYS DOH*
Morgan Tarbell, *NYS DOH*, via Teams
Pauline Wanjugi, *NYS DOH*, via Teams
Bruce Dolph, *DC SWCD Board*, via Teams
Jessica Batienon, *The Reporter*

II. Approval of Minutes

Motion to approve the March 25, 2025 minutes, as presented.

Motion: Barb Hanselman

Second: Tom Hutson

Approved

III. Additions/Deletions to Agenda

- A. Employee Recognition – *added to Other Items*
- B. Dispute Resolution Request – *added to Executive Session*
- C. Columbia University’s AgMIP Research Collaboration Update – *added to Executive Session*

IV. Executive Director’s Report – Ryan Naatz

- A. Operational and Programmatic Updates - Dashboards

Being a quarterly Council meeting, administrative and program dashboards were included in the packet materials. Ryan asked for any questions, feedback, etc. on the materials presented. Directors were in agreement that the formatting for quarterly reporting is helpful in capturing a lot of information, making it easier to absorb and keep up-to-date – especially for Committees that they do not serve on.

Senior Leadership reported some quick highlights from their respective operational/program areas:

- 1. Operations/Administration – Amy Faulkner

First, Amy reported that WAC Administration was able to negotiate a month-to-month lease with Delaware County Soil and Water Conservation District (DC SWCD) for the Walton office space through June 30, 2025 at the March lease rate. This will give SWCD time to work with the NYC Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) on a new lease rate. Second, a contract has been finalized with Keystone Associates. Staff have been in touch to begin scheduling site scoping work soon for the new West of Hudson office building. The Building Committee will provide more updates soon.

- 2. Economic Viability Program – Kristan Morley

Kristan reported that the Economic Viability Program Handbook was approved, which acts as the program’s scope of work. Additionally, she reported that staff are currently working on the 2025-2026 Pure Catskills product guide and announced that changes to the program dashboard reporting are upcoming.

- 3. Finance – Carol Bishop

Carol reported that the new contracts are now all registered and funded. An extension from DEP was granted to close out the former contract monies by June 30th. The next payment request cycle is coming up in May to receive monies for the July – September quarter. The FY26 Budget will be ready in June.

4. Easement Program – Serena Orleski

Serena reported that new program subcontracts are currently in development. These contracts need to be completed before the bulk of program work can resume (should be completed within the next 2-3 weeks).

5. Communications – Heather Magnan

Heather reported that Communications began working with a new web team (this vendor has worked on the MyWoodlot webpage for a few years) for updates to the WAC website that have been wanted for a while. She is currently working on new content to share.

6. Agricultural Program – Connor Young

Connor explained that the current program dashboard is somewhat antiquated, but an updated version is expected to replace it at the start of the next quarter. He reported that BMP implementation/construction season is officially underway after a long winter. For staffing updates, he reported that Elaine's position as *Program Procurement and Contract Coordinator* has been advertised, with interviews currently underway, in preparation for her upcoming retirement. Additionally, the program will be looking to fill the vacant *Conservation Planner* and *Executive Assistant* positions.

7. Forestry Program – Tom Pavlesich

To start, Tom reported that the program has subcontracted CCE Columbia Greene in the past to provide Trained Logger Certification. That programming has been brought back in-house within the last two months. The hope is that this change will better serve the interests and needs of participants, creating a direct line of communication between loggers and program staff. Next, he reported that the Forest Service Grant is being processed but the funding is currently tied up at the federal level. Despite the delay, he anticipates that the funding will be secured sometime next year. Finally, he reported that Brittany Schenck, *Forestry Program Executive Assistant and WOH Educator*, is currently away on maternity leave so he is taking on her administrative duties until her return.

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

A. DEP Representative Change

Bud turned the floor over to Shilo to present this agenda item. Shilo explained that she was hired to replace Dave Worn, who had taken on another position within the DEP. She was asked to sit on the WAC Board as a way to listen and learn about the organization and the history of the NYC Watershed. She expressed the value of her experiences working with WAC and explained that she is now taking on more duties and responsibilities in her position. For this

reason, the DEP representation on the WAC Board will transition to Michael Vander Werff. She turned the floor over to Michael to formally introduce himself to fellow Board members and WAC staff.

B. Transparency Policy Appeal

Ryan explained that additional request and appeal letters dated March 11, 2025 and March 26, 2025 were received from Colm Ryan, requesting copies of operating and programmatic contracts with the NYC DEP since January 1, 2023. These documents were requested previously on February 5, 2025 and as part of an appeal letter dated February 25, 2025. Council members previously voted to affirm WAC's original response to produce the documents upon receipt of payment for compensation of staff time. Ryan explained how senior leadership calculated the cost to produce the documents requested, and asked for comments and deliberation for how to proceed. Discussions ensued.

Motion to affirm WAC's original offer to produce the documents requested by Colm Ryan on March 11, 2025, with redactions, within ten (10) days of receipt of payment of \$9.51.

Motion: Karl Gockel

Second: Tom Hutson

Approved

VI. Executive Committee – Wayland ‘Bud’ Gladstone

Bud reported that the Committee met last week to review and approve changes to the WAC Transparency Policy. The draft policy has been placed on the WAC website for public comment for 30 days, as required.

VII. Finance Committee – Karl Gockel & Carol Bishop

A. Financials

Karl reported that the Committee reviewed the Stewardship Endowment investment strategy, including minor changes recommended by NBT Bank. Additionally, members reviewed financials, the new contracts, and the process of transitioning between old and new contracts.

Motion to approve the February Financials as presented.

Motion: Fred Huneke

Second: Steve Reed

Approved

VIII. Forestry Committee – Marilyn Wyman & Tom Pavlesich

A. 2025 Forestry Handbook Modifications

Marilyn explained that modifications to the Forestry Handbook were presented and vetted by Committee members. The handbook guides staff on the administration of programming.

Motion to approve the 2025 Forestry Program Handbook modifications and direct staff to obtain DEP approval for these modifications in accordance with contracts prior to implementation.

Motion: James Darling

Second: Tom Hutson

Approved

IX. Building Committee – Karl Gockel

Karl reported that the only update on the new West-of-Hudson office building is that the selected subcontractor will begin site evaluations soon.

X. Governance Committee – Jason Helmbold

Jason reported that the Committee met on April 7th to discuss new candidates for the Council. He explained that members will be meeting this afternoon to interview Kyle Clark.

Additionally, members reviewed the organization's By-laws, topics from the Directors Only meeting, and attendance records.

XI. NYC DEP Report – Michael Vander Werff

Michael highlighted that every April, the contracts between the WAC and DEP require budgets and workplans. He reported that the DEP recently approved \$27.9 million in funding for the administration of WAC programming.

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

Pat explained that there was nothing to report at this time apart from announcing that Paul will be retiring in June, so this would be his last in-person Council meeting.

XIII. Other

A. Employee Recognition

Ryan and Connor took a moment to acknowledge Elaine Poulin, who will be retiring at the end of the month, for her years of contributions to the organization.

XIV. Executive Session

Motion to enter Executive Session at 11:26 a.m.

Motion: Fred Huneke

Second: Tom Hutson

Approved

Motion to come out of Executive Session at 12:10 p.m.

Motion: Fred Huneke

Second: Dwight Bruno

Approved

XV. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 12:10 p.m. by common consent.

The next meeting will be held on **Tuesday, May 27, 2025 at 10:00 a.m., via Teams.**