

# 2015

## Annual Report

Watershed Agricultural Council  
[nycwatershed.org](http://nycwatershed.org)



## 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.

This 2015 Annual Report is a publication of the Watershed Agricultural Council, a nonprofit 501(c)3 organization whose mission is to promote the economic viability of agriculture and forestry, the protection of water quality, and conservation of working landscapes through strong local leadership and sustainable public-private partnerships. The Council is funded by 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 paper.

## Building towards the Future

Each of the Watershed Agricultural Council's (WAC's) service areas, Agriculture, Forestry, Conservation Easements and Economic Viability, are a blend of our mission with the intent to strike a balance between water quality and economic viability.

Last year in our annual report we were proud to demonstrate a visual expression of our *Conservation Footprint*, our conservation ethic, and our environmental and economic impact throughout the 2000 square mile NYC Watershed.

As an organization, it is important to us to consistently plan, evaluate our effectiveness, and incorporate new initiatives into our strategic direction. Through progressive planning in March of 2015 the leadership of the Watershed Agricultural Council began exploring options to improve efficiencies for our organization.

After 22 years of operation, we determined that the condition and separation of WAC's West-of-Hudson offices were beginning to limit the pursuit of our mission. Our obligations to perpetually steward conservation easements and support NYC's goal of sustaining source water protection were limited by housing West-of-Hudson staff in separate locations. In order to meet these obligations it was determined that WAC needed to secure appropriate office space to house its West-of-Hudson operations.

As we close 2015 we are excited to announce that with the support of the New York City Department of Environmental Protection (NYC DEP), over the coming months and years WAC and NYC DEP will work together to site and build a new facility in the Watershed for WAC's West-of-Hudson staff. Building a new office will allow WAC to meet the challenges of protecting water quality over the next 20 years and beyond.

We also are excited to roll out in 2016 a resource development plan that will further assist us to protect the environment and inspire economic growth.

Much has been written about the great balancing act and the clash between protecting the environment and at the same time promoting economic growth. We need water, food and ideas to support sustainable development.

Independently, each of our service areas could be considered a separate not-for-profit organization focused on a singular mission. The skillset that we have developed with an emphasis on protecting water with our science based programs, or conserving landscapes as a land trust, or promoting economic growth with farm and forest owners, is unmatched under one non-profit organization.

As a diverse organization we are positioned in the NYC watershed to safeguard the ecological island which is the Catskills. The region's farms, forests and water resources define a local economy and are the lifeblood of our nation's greatest city.

Our ability to ensure success and continue to advance the conservation of critical working lands is incumbent upon on the support of many. Your commitment to WAC goes beyond a well-established public-private partnership and marks a commitment to your land, your water and our people.

You can donate easily online at [nycwatershed.org/donate](http://nycwatershed.org/donate).



Thank you for protecting our *Conservation Footprint*.

*Sincerely,*  
*Craig J. Cashman*  
*Executive Director*

# Agriculture

The Watershed Agricultural Program (WAP) has developed 320 total Whole Farm Plans (WFP)

on farms in the Catskill and Delaware Watersheds. Of those farms there are currently 289 active large and small farms in production. The impact these WFPs have on conservation is evidenced by the 159,230 acres West of Hudson that NYC Watershed participants manage for water quality and economic viability.

In 2015 the WAP conservation planners focused their attention on using the conservation footprint maps to fine tune the amount of acreage each participant farm needed for their production of agricultural crops. A majority of farmers do not own all of the land that is needed for their production needs, so it is critical that planners can identify the land either leased or loaned to the farmers that are managed under their WFP. The WAP and Easement Program staff have been making joint visits for their annual reporting, which has increased the participants understanding of both programs.

A major effort for all of our staff this year was coordinating the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP). There were 19 CREP re-enrollments and 7 New CREP contracts signed to

help buffer the streams, which are a very high priority for water quality.

A noteworthy project being completed in the West of Hudson watershed includes a covered feeding area and waste storage facility at the Mark MacGibbon farm in Walton, NY. The farm raises over 100 Hereford beef and sells them for wholesale at markets. They manage their beef operation as an outside year round feeding lot. Prior to these projects the herd had unlimited access to several watercourses. Fencing and a livestock water system were installed in 2014 to exclude all of the animals from the watercourses. The covered feeding area will allow the herd to concentrate their manure in the waste storage facility to be spread on crop land in the spring when the nutrients will be used efficiently by the forage crops.

A priority to the WAP is the repair and replacements of Best Management Practices (BMPs). Funds are reinvested into existing BMPs to continue the water quality benefits that were gained years ago. This year the West of Hudson program will have completed over \$810,000 of repairs. All of these efforts combine to achieve a large farm participation rate of 92% in the West of Hudson watersheds.



# Accomplishments

- 92% Large Farm Participation (West-of-Hudson)
- 289 Active Farms with Whole Farm Plans in the Catskill/Delaware Watersheds
  - 159,230 total acres
  - 248 Active Nutrient Management Plans
- Precision Feed Management Program launched



## Accomplishments

- Developed 104 Forest Management Plans covering over 14,000 acres
  - Stabilized over 83 miles of logging roads this year
- Completed 82 forest stewardship projects, effecting 590+ acres of Watershed forests
- Launched My Woodlot, an interactive website for forest landowners



# Forestry

In 2015 the Forestry Program explored ways to make current programming even better while continuing to build on the resounding successes of previous years. As in past years, it would not be possible for us to confront the demands of the landscape level stewardship of regional forests without the support of numerous partners and organizations. Columbia/Greene County Cornell Cooperative Extension and the SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry have proven to be a vital component in the Forestry Programs efforts, without whose help we would be unable to achieve what we have done. We are deeply grateful for their insight and assistance as we work with family forest owners, loggers and foresters in the NYC Watershed.

In 2015 the Watershed Forest Management Planning (WFMP) Program provided much needed funding to help family forest owners create forest management plans for their watershed properties. These landowners worked with Watershed Qualified Consulting foresters to create plans that address water quality, wildlife, timber and more. In 2015 the WFMP Program developed 104 forest management plans encompassing more than 14,000 acres. Since 1996 Forestry Program staff worked with regional consulting foresters to create more than 1,300 watershed forest management plans covering more than 194,000 acres!

But efforts to provide forest landowners with forest manage-

ment plans represents a small portion of the total work undertaken by Forestry Program staff in 2015. The Forestry Best Management Practice Program continued to provide technical support and financial incentives to allow loggers to protect water quality during active timber harvesting by stabilizing more than 83 miles of logging roads. Since the establishment of the Forestry Program, we have worked with loggers to stabilize an astounding 570 miles of logging roads through the BMP Program.

The Management Assistance Program also armed family forest owners with the knowledge and resources necessary to actively steward their woodlots. In 2015, MAP supporting forest landowners in their efforts to complete 82 forest stewardship projects, effecting more than 590 acres of watershed forest. Since its inception in 2005 MAP has funded over 440 forest stewardship projects, impacting more than 4,400 acres of watershed forest.

With the support of the New York City Department of Environmental Protection (NYC DEP) and the US Forest Service the Forestry Program is poised to protect water quality, promote the regional economic viability of forests, and conserve working landscapes well into the future.

Conserve farm and forest land for future generations



# Economic Viability

to showcase the high-quality products coming from the NYC Watershed region.

Pure Catskills is a regional, buy local campaign developed by the Watershed Agricultural Council (WAC) to improve the economic viability of the local community, sustain working landscapes and preserve water quality in the NYC watershed region. Currently, Pure Catskills represents nearly 300 farm and forest-based businesses, restaurants, local artisans, accommodations and other non-profit organizations throughout Delaware, Greene, Otsego, Schoharie, Sullivan and Ulster Counties.

An achievement we are proud to report is the launch of the Pure Catskills Marketplace. The Marketplace ([purecatskillsmarketplace.com](http://purecatskillsmarketplace.com)) is an online collection of high-quality and authentic farm, food and forest products grown, raised and made

In 2015, one of the main focuses of the Economic Viability Program was to build off of the success of last year's Pure Catskills rebranding, and continue

throughout the region. This is another way WAC is achieving its mission to improve the economic viability of our region by providing Pure Catskills members an online avenue to sell products and reach a larger customer base. Purchasing a product on the Marketplace invests in healthy forests, farmland protection, working landscapes and clean drinking water.

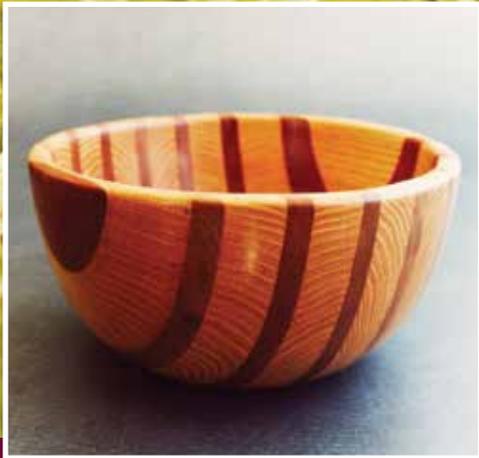
Contributing to the success of the Economic Viability Program is our partnerships with other organizations. We all strive for one common goal- to help farmers sustain their land and become economically viable. From the New York City Department of Environmental Protection, to the Lucky Dog Local Food Hub, to the Center for Agricultural Development and Entrepreneurship, and many of the Cornell Cooperative Extensions- we are stronger working together, than we are working apart.

The multitude of collaboration efforts is a testament to our dedication of preserving farm and forest entities, and the strength of this region. We are proud to support these connections, and are thrilled to be working together in a joint effort to sustaining farms and forests in the Catskills.

Support working landscapes and economic viability

## Accomplishments

- Pure Catskills in 11th year
- 280 Pure Catskills members
  - 10 Events attended
- Pure Catskills Marketplace website launched, [purecatskillsmarketplace.com](http://purecatskillsmarketplace.com)



## Accomplishments

- 793 acres closed on in 2015, 1,129 acres in contract as of 1/1/16
  - 2,309 acres currently in offer
- 160 landowners with an anticipated total portfolio of 25,738 acres of farmland
  - 15 approved Reserved Rights
- Pilot Forest Conservation Easement Program launched



2015 marked a banner year for the WAC Easement Program. Having closed on nearly 800 acres of agricultural land and executing contracts on an additional 1,100+ acres, the program has expanded to include more than 25,000 acres now committed to conservation.

Through the support of the New York City Department of Environmental Protection (NYC DEP), with funds totaling \$52,000,000 to date, the program is well positioned to advance the economic viability of local agriculture and forestry, the protection of water quality and the conservation of working landscapes.

While agriculture remains a top priority, in 2015 WAC launched the pilot Forest Conservation Easement Program. Forestland is of particular interest in the Catskills as it is the predominant land use (70%) and represents the smallest percentage (10%) of landowners participating in conservation programs. As such, this also signifies the greatest opportunity for WAC to further its mission and promote our region's unique working lands heritage. Since July, WAC has engaged several key landowners (totaling 1,350+ acres) to pilot the program and help ensure the region's future land protection efforts are met.

With the addition of recent acquisitions and with anticipation of things to come, WAC's Stewardship Staff is charged with the most important and an ever-increasing responsibility—maintaining relationships. Currently managing a portfolio of 160 farm easement properties, it's been the longstanding, trusted interactions between staff and participants that have afforded such great success.

WAC's Stewardship Staff works directly with landowners to ensure the terms and conditions of the Deed of Conservation Easement are upheld; with strong consideration to ecological integrity and economic viability. In 2015, Stewardship Staff assisted numerous landowners through the Reserved Right request process, helping to ensure that all projects requested were reviewed and addressed efficiently and consistent with requirements of the Conservation Easement deed and WAC policies.

# Conservation Easements

# East of Hudson

The East of Hudson staff had a busy year marking the addition of the 77th participant into the Program. To date, Whole Farm Plans encompass 10,900 acres of Watershed land with over 470 Best Management Practices (BMPs) implemented. A noteworthy project completed this year includes a pasture renovation at Green Chimneys, which has helped redirect runoff that was flowing through a compacted and overgrazed paddock. Additional fencing was installed and the watering system was expanded, making it easier for the farm staff to rest and rotate the two primary pastures on this educational farm in the East Branch Reservoir basin.

Outreach efforts in 2015 included an EOH farm tour for staff, board and committee members and farm tours at Hilltop Hanover Farm for several groups including DEP staff members and the Yale School of Forestry who came to learn about WAC's programs and water quality BMPs. WAC also participated in the annual tours at Snow Hill Farm by New York City school children where first and third graders come to learn about farming and the New York City water supply.

## Accomplishments

- 66 Active Whole Farm Plans in the Croton Watershed
- 10,900 total acres



## REVENUES JULY 1, 2014 – JUNE 30, 2015

Federal	\$510,449	(3.69%)
Donated Services	\$192,262	(1.39%)
Foundations & Other Grants	\$0	(0.0%)
Interest and Gain/loss of Asset Sale	\$285	(0.00%)
NYC DEP	\$13,112,080	(94.91%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$13,815,076</b>	<b>(100.0%)</b>

## EXPENDITURES JULY 1, 2014 – JUNE 30, 2015

Forestry Program	\$1,455,358	(10.51%)
Easement Program	\$1,774,073	(12.81%)
East of Hudson Program (Croton Watershed)	\$423,557	(3.06%)
Agricultural Program		
BMP Implementation & Construction	\$988,568	(7.14%)
Nutrient Management Planning	-	(0.00%)
Watershed Agricultural Program	\$6,928,396	(50.05%)
Outreach Communications & Economic Viability	\$415,927	(3.00%)
Program Administration & Depreciation	\$1,665,718	(12.03%)
Donated Services	\$192,262	(1.39%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$13,843,859</b>	<b>(100.0%)</b>

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## Continuing Our Mission

Here I am new Chair of the Watershed Agricultural Council (WAC), writing my first piece for the Annual Report. First, a hats-off and round of applause to Fred Huneke for his many years of helping to steer WAC to where it is today. Fred is not leaving, but he will be freed of some of the responsibility that goes with guiding such a large and dynamic organization. His leadership has overseen the proud numbers of Whole Farm Plans, acres under Easement, Forestry education, and the evolution of our Economic Viability Program as well as the respect WAC has earned throughout the state, nation and even internationally.

Those are big shoes and I'm eager to fill them. Fred and I have worked together for several years, making sure that as he gradually retires I will have strong footholds to continue what he has helped develop before me. Like Fred, I'm an old dairy farmer. My father had a registered Ayrshire herd on the outskirts of Margaretville, NY where I tell people that I never learned what girls couldn't do. I married a veterinarian/ Holstein breeder who was often absent from the farm. My belief that "I can do this" helped me get through the day's chores.

We have three adult children and nine grandkids, all living within the Watershed. I will do all that I can to ensure that this area will be a place where they can be economically successful while protecting NYC's water and our own environment. While I recognize the importance of all businesses, it is farms that are closest to my heart.

I hope you feel the way I do- that keeping farms here and keeping them active is one of the best things that we can do for our region. Please show your regard and enthusiasm by donating to our Stewardship Fund and/or our general fund which will be utilized by our Economic Viability Program to expand marketing opportunities for farmers and forest producers.

I'm looking forward to working with all of our participants, partners and stakeholders to continue to promote the economic viability of agriculture and forestry, the protection of water quality, and the conservation of working landscapes.



*Sally Fairbairn*  
*Council Chair*



# Donate Today

Help us protect the environment and ensure economic growth, we are the model for both!

- Advocate: \$35
- Supporter: \$50
- Protector: \$100
- Friend of the Watershed: \$250
- Sponsor: \$500
- Benefactor: \$1,000
- Steward: \$2,500
- Conserver: \$5,000
- Guardian: \$10,000

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