

Watershed Agricultural Council  
nycwatershed.org



# 2019

## 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.

Thank you to our collaborative partners: 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.

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# Defining a Path to Success



*In October staff attended a team building day at Teatown Lake Reservation in Ossining, NY.*

Vision, mission and strategic direction has been, and remains, critical to the core of the Watershed Agricultural Council (WAC). These values have paved our way to become an internationally recognized leader in the field of environmental conservation and watershed management.

Having a well thought out strategic plan, goals and objectives doesn't necessarily take into consideration how that direction will be accomplished, and/or the organization's capacity to carry out that path to success. Often times the focus is on the finish line and not on how an organization got there. Earlier this year, while attending a National Academy of Sciences discussion, I was asked the question, "What has been the key to success for the Watershed Agricultural Council?" My answer was simple, "Excellent staff and key partnerships."

Central to the success of the WAC has been the quality staff and organizational partnerships that provide unparalleled expertise. We employ 60 staff and contract out an additional 20 through funding with the New York City Department of Environmental Protection (NYC DEP), and the United States Forest Service. These staff include: engineers, technicians, planners, foresters, real estate and land conservation specialists, finance, human resources, educators, economic development, communications and I.T. professionals.

**"What has been the key to success for the Watershed Agricultural Council?"**  
**My answer was simple, "Excellent staff and key partnerships."**

We have partnerships, sub-contracts and work side-by-side with the NYS College of Environmental Science and Forestry, Cornell Cooperative Extension of Delaware and Greene Counties, Delaware County Soil and Water Conservation District, Natural Resource Conservation Services and the United States Department of Agriculture Farm Service Agency.

That collective mix of expertise has been developed for the better part of two decades and has accomplished more milestones and innovative practices than what could have been imagined by those creating our first mission statement. To that end, two significant milestones were achieved in 2019 when an agricultural conservation easement was purchased bringing 30,000 acres to the program since inception, and the largest contract in the organization's history with the NYC DEP totaling \$92 million dollars commenced.

It is important to recognize and give credit to truly the most important resource an organization can have, staff. I want to thank all the WAC staff and partnership staff for their expertise, innovation and dedication to our collective missions.

—Craig Cashman, Executive Director



# Agriculture

A photograph of a herd of cows in a lush green field. The cows are of various breeds, including brown, black, and white. Some have yellow ear tags with numbers like 1251, 162, and 1162. The background shows rolling green hills under a clear blue sky with a few wispy clouds.

**262** Active Farms

**148,500** Acres

**19** Educational Events

**1,700** Acres of Cover Crops



# Expanding Implementation Through Collaboration

This year on April 1st, the West of Hudson Watershed Agricultural Program (WAP) entered into a new six year contract with the New York City Department of Environmental Protection (NYC DEP) totaling over \$4 million in annual funding, a significant increase from previous contracts. The new contract funding will help to accelerate the implementation of the WAP Best Management Practices (BMP) backlog list, and continue the new Watershed Investigation and Repair Crew (WIRC.)

Due to the increased funding for implementation Gladstone Farms and Holley-Hill Farm both had covered feeding areas constructed this year. Gladstone Farms in Andes, NY had two areas built for various animal ages/sizes of their Belted

Galway Beef herd. Holley-Hill Farm had a facility built for young livestock/heifers replacing a failing feeding area next to Kerrs Creek in Walton, NY. Both projects will have a positive impact on water quality by reducing animal run-off in sensitive areas.

Along with the NYC DEP funding, the WAP secured a grant of \$1.2 million through the USDA Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) for implementation of three manure management conservation practices. A recipient of this grant was Posthaven Farm in South Kortright, NY. The Posts have been active participants in our programs since 1997. The farm has a dairy herd with award winning stock and a small beef herd. Thanks to the RCPP

funding, this farm was able to benefit from implementation of a covered barnyard and a manure storage this year. These projects were completed simultaneously with a cost-share from NRCS.

Also in 2019, the WAP expanded the aerial cover crops initiative that seeded into 713 acres of standing corn last year and seeded over 1,200 acres this year. The pilot liming project which targets farms in the Precision Feed Management Program (PFM) is working with a second set of 15 farms. The lime that is spread on these farm fields will enable producers to increase the amount of home grown forages and decrease phosphorus coming onto these farms by decreasing the amount of purchased feeds.

Finally as we close out the year, both the

Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) and the Catskill Streams Buffer Initiative (CSBI) Pilot Program implemented riparian buffers on four properties for a total of 20 acres. We are proud to report that in 2019 the WAP has completed 199 BMPs on participant farms.

The partnership between the WAP, Delaware County Soil and Water Conservation District, Natural Resource Conservation Service, Farm Service Agency and NYC DEP is unique because it combines the resources of multiple partners to both defray the costs over several agencies and to expand our ability to provide benefits that none of the partner agencies would have been able to provide individually.





# Forestry

A vibrant, high-resolution photograph of a forest interior. In the foreground, a small waterfall cascades over large, flat rocks completely covered in thick, bright green moss. The water is clear, and the surrounding vegetation is dense with various shades of green, including ferns and broad-leafed plants. In the background, tall, slender tree trunks rise vertically, their leaves forming a canopy that filters the light. The overall atmosphere is one of a healthy, thriving ecosystem.

**8,990** Acres Enrolled in 480a Tax Law

**190** Miles of Logging Roads Stabilized

**250** Acres of Forest Stewardship Projects

**136** Loggers Trained



# Protecting Water Quality with Forestry Best Management Practices

The Watershed Agricultural Council (WAC) Forestry Program uses technical assistance and cost-sharing to help Watershed loggers install water quality protection measures called Best Management Practices (BMPs) on timber harvests in the NYC Watershed. There's plentiful research documenting the effectiveness of forestry BMPs in protecting water quality across the eastern US. But how effective are the WAC's efforts to help loggers use BMPs? In 2019, researchers from the SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry

(ESF) took up the challenge of evaluating the effectiveness of the WAC's Forestry BMP Program.

This research by SUNY ESF sought to evaluate the WAC's Forestry BMP Program by comparing harvests that did participate (WAC) with harvests that did not (NonWAC). The WAC and NonWAC harvests were compared by assessing the implementation rates of different BMPs. Comparing the WAC to NonWAC groups gives us a direct look at how involvement with WAC impacts the rate of forestry BMP implementation. A total of 45 Watershed

harvests were visited as part of the study, 23 WAC and 22 NonWAC.

The researchers found significantly better BMP implementation on the WAC versus NonWAC harvests when it came to protecting water quality on skid trails and stream crossings. In fact, the scoring of water diversion devices on the WAC harvests doubled that of the NonWAC harvests. This means loggers working with the WAC used forestry BMPs more frequently to protect water quality than loggers who don't participate.

The good news doesn't stop with harvests evaluated for this 2019 study. The researchers were able to compare their 2019 data with the results of similar research conducted in 2002 and 2011 that evaluated the WAC's Forestry BMP Program. They also found that all categories of BMP implementation demonstrated increasing scores over the past 18 years. These means that not only is the WAC's Forestry BMP Program key in protecting water quality on harvests now. It's getting better at protecting water quality over time!





# Conservation Easements



**30,963** Acres Closed

**40** Activity Requests

**1,150** Acres in Contract



# Preserving a Legacy While Adapting to Change

The Watershed Agricultural Council's (WAC) Conservation Easement Program has much to celebrate and reflect as this decade ends and the year 2020 is near. Most noteworthy is this year's achievement of 30,000 acres conserved "to protect the water quality of the New York City Watersheds, and to protect agricultural and forestry lands by limiting the form, location and density of development." And while the quoted conservation purpose is certainly the main objective of all easement projects, the end goal is often times not the only outcome worthy of praise. The WAC staff fosters a relationship with landowners and through the conservation easement creates a legacy, respecting that property's past while partnering as future stewards of the land.

On either side of Streeter Hill in Fleischmanns, NY, on the dead-end Moseman Road, are the fields of

Three Oaks Farm. It is easy to appreciate the land's history, utility and potential considering the property's quintessential stone walls, historic farmhouse, and breath-taking panorama. One can envision the past (Jersey herds and milk cans loaded onto old pickups in the morning light) and ponder the farm's resurgence (fields freshly cut, young-stock grazing, and a fresh blueberry patch) all within the same moment. On July 10, 2019, the WAC and the DiBenedetto family closed the conservation easement and forever secured those 161 acres for responsible agriculture.

Jim Moseman, whose parents purchased the

farm in 1923 from the Streeter family, originally began the process. Unfortunately, he passed before seeing the project to fruition. To quote Jim's niece, "Jim was truly a steward of his farm. He knew better than most the joys and vicissitudes of life on a small farm. His most ardent wish concerning his estate was that the land remain intact and undeveloped, preferably under agriculture. His family is happy to see Jim's desire being fulfilled under the stewardship of their local friends and neighbors, the DiBenedettos."

Program staff look forward to all future monitoring visits and the ability to watch this farm

flourish. The WAC's Deed of Conservation Easement is truly a "working lands" easement; not only intended to conserve but also to encourage and support farm operations. Additionally, the WAC's ability to purchase development rights, allows for and in this case facilitated, the transition of farm from one family to the next. With the dairy industry in decline, it is humbling for the Easement Program to be a part of this particular success story.

Perhaps that is the often downplayed outcome of the WAC's easement projects—the connection between people, healthy lands and waters, and the local economy. The project at Moseman Road hit all the marks: water quality protection, limitation of development, the preservation of a family farm; an all-around positive experience. A win for our community and those downstream.

**"Jim was truly a steward of his farm. He knew better than most the joys and vicissitudes of life on a small farm. His most ardent wish concerning his estate was that the land remain intact and undeveloped, preferably under agriculture. His family is happy to see Jim's desire being fulfilled under the stewardship of their local friends and neighbors, the DiBenedettos."**





# We Are Water



"The covered barnyard is a great addition to our farm! The contractors and WAC staff have been great. Challenging weather last year put them behind, but everyone worked hard to finish construction. The animals are happier and healthier. We are very happy!"

—Andy Post, Posthaven Farm



"I started with the program when the Watershed Ag Council first started, I was on the council for eight years. We have participated in a lot of programs over the years. Overall we are very happy with the new covered feeding area. It's raining and I see very little water running, the contractors did a great job sloping the concrete. The health of the animals is going to be 100% better. This will improve the overall udder health of our animals. This is a big improvement for us. The animals are so much cleaner, so far we are very happy!"

—Dave Holley, Holley-Hill Farm



"Thanks to WAC's Economic Viability Program grant, we were able to redesign our website, stimulating the growth of our farm business. Since the new website went live, we have been busy scheduling educational farm tourism and have seen increased sales in the farm store where we sell our homegrown yarn and handmade alpaca garments."

—Leda Blumberg,  
Faraway Farms Alpaca Farms



"The Nutrient Management Program is wonderful. It's a great program, I have no complaints! You can use the credits to buy manure management tools, it's a huge help for farmers. WAC has great programs you want to be a part of."

—Joe Eisele, Andes Mountain Farm



# Watershed Proud



“We are grateful that our family has been entrusted to carry on the stewardship of this amazing property in a way that honors Jim’s wishes. The WAC Easement will help ensure that this will be fulfilled in keeping the land open and available for agriculture for generations to come.”

—Chris DiBenedetto,  
Crystal Valley Farm/Three Oaks Farm



“I couldn’t be happier, this building works great. I can’t say enough for the Watershed Ag Council. Being one of the original 10 pilot farms and the first farm plan to be put together when there wasn’t a diagram to work off of, we had a lot of kitchen table meetings. The program is second to none, I wouldn’t want to farm outside of the Watershed. I’m speaking for my family as well, we can’t say enough for what WAC has done and continues to do for our farm and our family.”

—Bud Gladstone, Gladstone Farms



“The [Micro Grant for our] new website and marketing materials will help to increase sales of our steaks, roasts and ground beef and simplify the ordering process for both us and our customers.”

—Meghan Moody Potter, Potter Family Ranch

**#watershedproud**



# Economic Viability



**316** Pure Catskills Members

**22** Micro Grants Approved, Totaling \$81,917

**15+** Events Sponsored/Attended

Business Planning Program Launched



# Enhancing the Profitability and Sustainability of Working Landscapes

At the core of the Watershed Agricultural Council's (WAC) mission is the balance of water quality with economic viability. True to this, the WAC's Economic Viability (EV) Program works to enhance the profitability and sustainability of all agricultural and forestry enterprises in the NYC Watershed and Greater Catskill Region through initiatives including our Pure Catskills buy local campaign, our Micro Grants Reimbursement Program, and the newly launched in 2019 Business Planning Reimbursement Program.

This year, we want to take the opportunity to highlight the success of the first year of offering our Micro Grants Reimbursement Program. The purpose of these grants are simple: to encourage the implementation of activities that can

enhance the economic viability of farm and forest businesses. Any farmer, logger, forester, forest landowner or Pure Catskills member with business property inside the West of Hudson NYC Watershed are eligible. We had four grant rounds in January, April, July and October. Over 25 applications were submitted, 22 were approved, and the total funds awarded were \$81,917 (as of September 30, 2019), to date \$41,357 has been reimbursed. 2019 Grant categories include:

**Training:** to encourage continuing education intended to enhance the economic viability profitability and sustainability of eligible applicant's businesses by providing grant funding to help applicants offset the cost of online courses, workshops, seminars, conferences and college courses.

**Marketing:** to encourage branding, advertising and communications related to the marketing of products and services provided by eligible applicants.

**Event/Mileage:** to enhance the economic viability of farm and forest businesses by off-setting the cost of attending new events, fairs, farmers' markets and/or transporting products to new markets or venues through mileage reimbursement and/or vendor fees reimbursement.

**Staffing:** to enhance profitability, productivity and/or assist with business expansion.

**Loggers Workers Compensation:** to enhance the economic viability of New York City Watershed Logging businesses by off-setting the cost of Workers Compensation Insurance by encouraging

the use of the Planning Analysis in Timber Harvesting (PATH) software to assess logging costs and revenue.

The EV Program continues to play a unique role not only within the WAC organization, but the region. We have the ability to adapt with changing farm and forest trends and needs. The WAC is not only a resource for water quality protection, but we are now a resource for increased education, marketing, new markets, business expansion and more. These efforts will remain the focus of the EV Program as we look to evolve with future needs, and work to strengthen and foster economic growth for years to come!





# East of Hudson



**69** Active Farms

**7,305** Acres

**\$365,835** in BMPs

**26** BMPs on **14** Farms



# Fostering a Strong Stewardship Ethic in the Croton Watershed

The East of Hudson (EOH) Watershed spans Dutchess, Putnam, Westchester and Fairfield Counties, the most densely populated areas of the New York City Watershed. Agriculture in these counties are under pressure from changes in land uses, development, urban expansion, rising land values and loss of agricultural infrastructure. In this challenging environment, the Watershed Agricultural Council (WAC) plays a critical role in providing technical assistance, implementing Best Management Practices (BMPs) and creating a support network for farms.

Haviland Hollow Farm is located on 225 acres in Patterson, NY in the heart of the Great Swamp. This historic Putnam County farm has indoor and outdoor riding arenas, stables, boarding facilities, two polo fields, riding trails and is home to 120 horses.

Haviland Hollow became a member of the EOH Agricultural Program in 2010 and has implemented 13 BMPs to protect the East Branch Croton River and the important wetlands surrounding the farm. The EOH Program has implemented two manure pads and heavy use areas to protect local waterways and allow for animal waste to be exported from the

farm. The WAC has also created additional paddocks to improve grazing practices, a solar watering facility, a stream crossing, riparian herbaceous cover, as well as a nutrient management plan and a grazing plan to improve pasture rotation. This year EOH implemented an access road and additional structures for water control to ensure the farm has year-round access to all their pastures.

In addition to the farm's environmental conservation stewardship and their role as a leader in the EOH in equestrian community, Haviland Hollow hosts philanthropic events in support of

other NYC Watershed farms. This year marks the 10th Annual Haviland Hollow Charity Cup benefitting Pegasus Therapeutic Riding, an EOH Agricultural Program participant which provides equine-assisted activities and therapies to people with special needs, veterans and at-risk individuals.

The East of Hudson Agricultural Program continues to evolve to provide crucial support for our farm partners protect drinking water quality, preserve working farms in the Watershed and foster a strong stewardship ethic.





**REVENUE** JULY 1, 2018 - JUNE 30, 2019

Federal	\$309,654.00	1.64%
Donated Services	\$333,027.00	1.76%
Program Service Revenue	\$23,561.00	0.12%
*Interest and Gains/Loss of Asset Sale	\$760,568.00	4.02%
NYC DEP	\$17,503,330.00	92.46%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$ 18,930,140.00</b>	<b>100.00%</b>

**EXPENDITURES** JULY 1, 2018 - JUNE 30, 2019

Forestry Program	\$1,424,988.00	7.86%
Easement Program	\$4,262,011.00	23.51%
Agricultural Program	\$9,186,829.00	50.68%
Economic Viability and Outreach	\$608,574.00	3.36%
Administration & DEP	\$2,310,241.00	12.75%
Donated Services	\$333,027.00	1.84%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$ 18,125,670.00</b>	<b>100.00%</b>







## Credits

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# The Transition of Farming in the NYC Watershed

We understand that farming is dynamic and sometimes what worked in the past isn't always what will work in the future for agricultural businesses. As some farms begin to transition into different operations, the WAC is here as a resource to help with that transition.

Many farms in the area are transitioning to the next generation: the Moodys, DiBenedettos, Hillreigels, Deysenroths, Hanselmans and Holdridges to name a few. Each of these farms are remaining in dairy production, but adding their own twist of diversification. They have all researched expanding their markets and have come up with solutions that will best fit their operation and capacity. Take a look at the Hanselman family, Barb has a thriving pie and catering business known as 'The Farmers' Wife,' while Seth grows some of the best sweet corn and tomatoes around which can be found in stands all over the county. The Deysenroth family has expanded their Gouda cheese operation over the years and are now processing cheese in their new on-site facility. The Holdridge family has added a new farmstand featuring local products, Meghan Moody Potter and her husband Joe have added a beef herd, Donn Hillreigel has converted to organic, and the DiBenedetto's have expanded their retail milk markets. All of these farms are working with the next generation to continue doing what they love.

Other farms in the region are experimenting with various forms of agritourism – farm tours, glamping and farm stays. There is an increased interest in the story of where consumers get their food, and the Schmid and Marsiglio families are tapping into that interest by offering interactive farm stays. Other farms have decided to try raising beef cows, and Delaware County is now boasts the second largest number of beef animals in the state!

**“Many farms in the Watershed have new projects that will keep the farm in the family, and keep it in farming. Consider this a ‘Taste of Transitioning Agriculture in the Catskills’.”**

As some traditional dairies transition to the next generation, others retire and a new form of farming emerges on the land. An increase of high-quality vegetable operations have emerged. Tianna Kennedy, Eleanor Blakseele and Richard Giles are all working in the region offering a mix of CSA's, retail, restaurant and regional hub production. Eleanor and her husband Patrick recently purchased a retired dairy farm that has a WAC Conservation Easement on it. They are working hard to till the fields and transition them from crop production to organic vegetables.

The WAC is not only supporting farm transition, but forest ownership land transition as well. Transitioning the land to the next generation of dedicated forest owners is just as important to maintain a stable Catskill forest. Avoiding parcelization while responsibly utilizing a woodlot's resources has been a goal of WAC's Forestry Program since inception.

Transition is often looked at as something that is hard to do. There is change and uncertainty as we try something new or different than what we are accustomed to. While change can be risky, it is inevitable, and it can also be the way to save the farm and continue a way of life. Whatever kind of transition you might be considering, the WAC may be able to help. For watershed farms and forest lands our Easement Program staff can help you consider whether a WAC Easement would be an aid in a farm or forest land transition. Our Economic Viability Program has a micro-grant program that can help fund transition fundamentals from business plans, training, website development and other marketing tools. Contact us to find out how we can assist in your transition plans. We want to see this land and its people continue to prosper for many years to come!

—Sally Fairbairn, Council Chair





# 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. Safeguard these irreplaceable resources—our rural landscape and its family farms—by protecting regional farmlands and working landscapes through this fund.



[nycwatershed.org/donate](https://nycwatershed.org/donate)



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