

Watershed Agricultural Council

nycwatershed.org



2022 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.

WATERSHED AGRICULTURAL COUNCIL OF THE NYC WATERSHEDS, INC.

JULY 1, 2021 – JUNE 30, 2022 (UNAUDITED)

REVENUE	\$	%
NYC DEP Contracts	10,507,160	94
In-Kind Services	343,944	3
Program Service Revenues	245,601	2
Federal Grants	73,816	1
Non-Federal Grants & Contributions	21,036	-
Other	43,175	-
Total Revenues	\$ 11,234,732	100%

EXPENSES	\$	%
Agricultural Program	6,114,528	53
Forestry Program	1,335,785	12
Conservation Easements Program	851,752	7
Economic Viability and Outreach Programs	485,323	4
Administrative Support	1,955,426	17
Net Investment Activity (losses)	689,315	6
Total Expenses	\$ 11,432,129	100%

Thank you to our collaborative partners: New York City Department of Environmental Protection, 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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The Watershed Agricultural Council not only recognizes change, we embrace it. This year, long-standing efforts in Agriculture, Forestry, Economic Viability and Conservation Easements proved resilient to restore programming and find new ways to support the regions' working landscapes. We are proud to be a vital part of the watershed community and look forward to aiding landowners as their operations expand, evolve and transition, as we resume full program implementation in 2023.

—Ryan Naatz, Executive Director

■ ■ ■ ■

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Agriculture

..... Precision Feed Management Program Expands

Beef cattle production in the NYC Watershed is a major agricultural enterprise which makes up 57% of the farms enrolled in the Watershed Agricultural Program, is a third of the total animal units, and takes many forms. While cow-calf production is the most common, stocker, backgrounder, grass-fed, freezer, finisher and dairy breed beef operations are all represented. Not surprisingly, the freezer beef business is expanding rapidly as a result of food supply concerns driven by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Compared to typical beef herds in the rest of the US, the herds in the NYC Watershed are relatively small. The size of the NYC Watershed beef industry is steadily increasing as many farmers slowly shift from dairy production to beef production. As a result, there is a significant opportunity to manage the nutrient mass balances on these farms to protect water quality in the NYC water supply system.

Given this, the newly initiated Beef Precision Feed Management (PFM) Program was created as a companion to our existing Dairy PFM Program. The program currently includes 18 active farms in the NYC Watershed. Beef PFM as a best management practice nearly doubles the number of animals enrolled in PFM, and further enhances the program's capacity to protect water quality. The PFM planning team's primary focus is to increase the adoption of 'precision oriented' management practices on the participating farms, such as routine laboratory analyses of their feeds, and matching those feeds to the appropriate groups of cattle.

Minimizing the overfeeding of nitrogen and phosphorus is key to the PFM Program, as they are the primary nu-

trients of water quality concern. The routine benchmark analyses utilized by PFM planners is an effective tool for assessing the feeding precision of the beef herd, and ultimately reducing nutrient excretions. Accurate determination of the bodyweights of cattle is critical for achieving the precision necessary for meaningful dietary analysis. Thus, fine-tuning the process of gathering weight data is a primary goal of planning staff.

It was learned early on by the planners that mineral supplementation was inadequate amongst beef producers, providing an opportunity to enhance their economic viability by growing animals more efficiently without overspending on unneeded feed inputs. To meet this need, the PFM team set out to create a mineral mix specifically designed to match the feeds produced by our beef producers. With the help of an independent nutritionist and the support of local feed mills, a customized mineral mix was formulated and brought to market in June 2022. This product meets the nutritional needs of their cattle, but most importantly protects water quality in the NYC reservoir system by providing a mineral mix without excess nitrogen or phosphorus. Beef Precision Feed Management in the NYC Watershed is truly a science-based win-win endeavor.



244 Active Farms • 145,000 Acres

35 Educational Events • 1,875 Projected Cover Crop Acres

Conservation Easements

..... Farm Transitions – A Cause for Celebration

2022 was a time of transition for the Easement Program with the addition of new staff, some familiar faces accepting new roles, and the Easement Committee welcoming new members. Our program has seen an unprecedented amount of second and third generation landowners establishing themselves as new stewards of the land this year. Staff are motivated by the successes of our new landowners, as eased lands staying in production is a critical component of the Watershed Agricultural Council's (WAC) mission to keep agriculture and forestry economically viable in the NYC Watershed. This year we wish to highlight two young farm families—both share the commonality of purchasing former dairy operations protected by WAC conservation easements, and are continuing the farming legacy.

With greenhouses and other season extension strategies, Berry Brook Farm in Hamden, NY, produces organic vegetables, utilizing about 20 acres of land year-round. The farm is operated by Eleanor Blakeslee-Drain and Patrick Henneberry, who first moved to the area in 2011. By 2019, they purchased their forever farm down the road from their first location, "in large part because [it] had an Agricultural Conservation Easement with the WAC, making the farm more affordable and less desirable to non-farmers who would want to develop the property." Transitioning the farm involved quite a bit of sweat equity including soil amendments, ad-

ditional greenhouses, and converting the dairy barn into a wash/pack and produce storage space. Patrick and Eleanor "are honored to steward their beautiful farm, to keep it in agricultural production, and to provide a sustainable livelihood in agriculture for all who work at Berry Brook Farm."

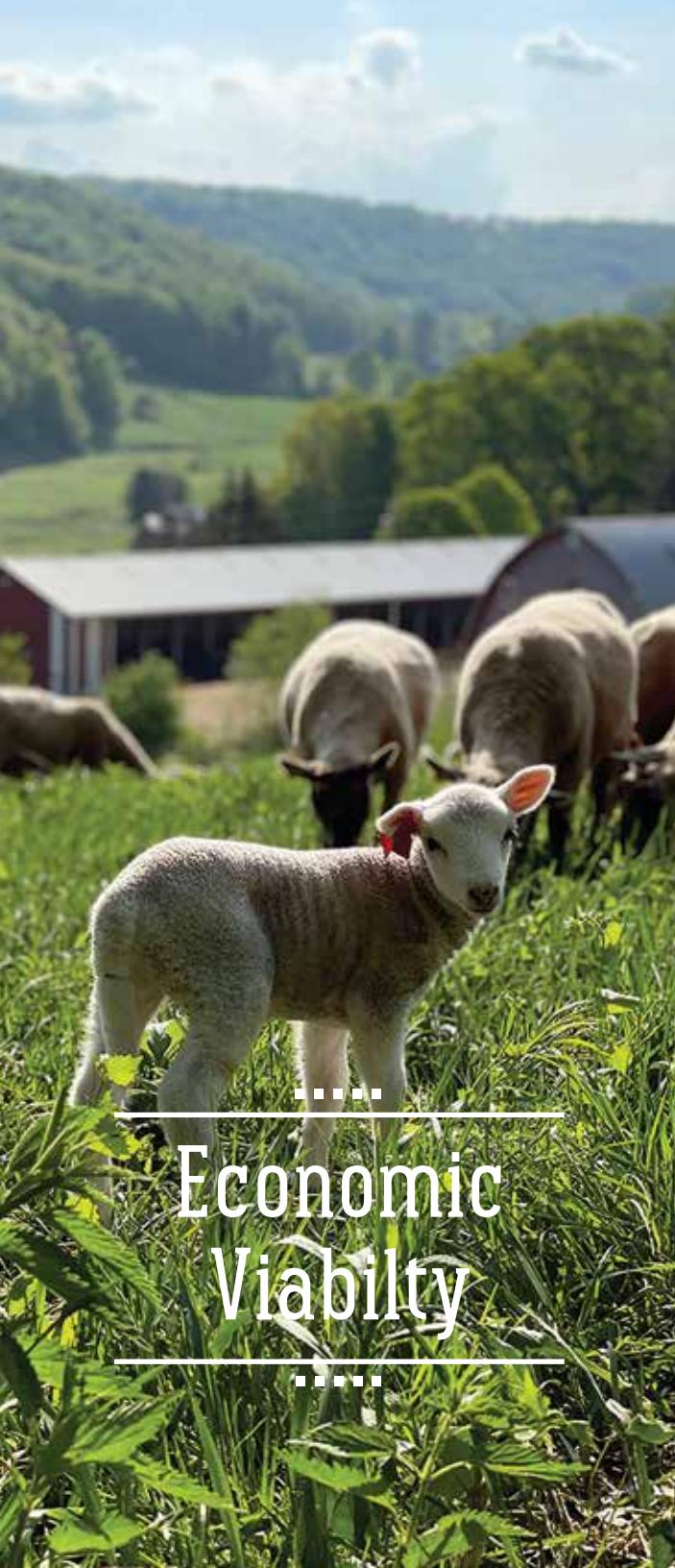
Nearby in Delhi, NY, is Platner Brook Farm, a family-owned sheep operation. Dominick and Dorothy Frabizio purchased the farm in May 2021. They employ rotational grazing techniques with their sheep and lamb, and recently added Belted Galloways to the mix with a primary goal of selling direct-to-consumer. In their own words, "We are honored and feel very privileged to be here working at keeping this a thriving farm. Land conservation is important to our family because once it's gone, it's hard to get back. Our goal here is to operate in such a manner that is beneficial for our animals, the wildlife and creates/maintains a diverse ecosystem."

Although periods of transition may have their moments of hardship, they create space for reflection, excitement and opportunity. Program staff remain encouraged by new landowners who are proud easement stewards, and as the year inches toward a close, we are eagerly re-engaging new easement acquisitions. We encourage any potentially eligible landowner interested in protecting the future of farming to give us a call.



32,419 Conserved Acres • 210 Eased Properties • 45 Activity Requests

Economic Viability



..... Preparing for the Next Generation

This year the Economic Viability (EV) Program is thrilled to highlight our newly launched Farms and Forests in Transition Reimbursement Program (FFIT). The goal of this initiative is to support farm operations seeking professional services in transition, estate planning or succession planning. Eligible activities include but are not limited to the following elements:

- Professional legal services
- Estate planning
- Succession planning/Retirement planning
- Wills/Trusts
- Developing an LLC
- Developing a farm lease
- Farm transfer planning
- Professional accounting services
- Financial planning/analysis associated with the planned transition
- Tax implications of conservation easements
- Transaction costs associated to purchasing a farm and/or getting a conservation easement

FFIT rounds out the Watershed Agricultural Council's previously launched Business Planning Reimbursement Program and Micro Grants Program. As the EV Program continues to grow and evolve to meet the needs of our farmers, we are proud to be approaching their needs proactively. By providing funding for business plans we hope to better position our farmers and foresters for improved economic profitability and sustainability. Similar to that, our micro grants encourage the implementation of activities that can enhance the economic viability of farm and forest businesses in the NYC Watershed.

We are proud to have accomplished the next phase of the EV Program after years of development, as we help prepare for the transition to the next generation of land stewards in the NYC Watershed.

For more information visit: nycwatershed.org/economic-viability



- 325 Pure Catskills Members • 10+ Watershed Events Attended/Sponsored
- 9 Micro Grants Approved Totaling \$34,298
- Farms & Forests in Transition Reimbursement Program Launched – 1 Application Approved Totaling \$5,000

Forestry



..... Women Owning Woods in the NYC Watershed

Forestry is historically a male-dominated field, but in recent years there has been a surge of interest among female land-owners to take a more active role in the management of their woods. In response to this interest, groups are popping up all over the country that bring women together to share forest experiences and learn about their woods.

In the fall of 2019, the Watershed Agricultural Council's Forestry Program partnered with Cornell Cooperative Extension of Columbia and Greene Counties and the Columbia Land Conservancy to create Women Owning Woods—Catskills | Hudson Valley (WOW). The group met for the first time in November of that year, and since then have run regular programming, both virtually and in-person. These events have included informal gatherings, presentations and workshops, all of which are led by the interests of the group. Plant and animal ID lessons, how to grow forest crops like ginseng, and ways to manage invasive species are common topics of interest.

In the winter of 2022, the group hosted a virtual birding program that was done in partnership with New York Audubon. This



program was promoted through their advertising channels, and it has been our most popular program to date; 466 people signed up to watch the webinar, approximately 150 people attended live, and 124 people have since watched the recording. The promotion from Audubon created interest not only for our birding event, but also for the group as a whole. Overnight, our Facebook group nearly doubled from 112 members to 222.

Most recently, we held a program at the Mountain Top Arboretum in Tannersville, NY, that guided WOW members through different ways to connect to their woods. We led activities on common Catskills plant ID and walked the group through various forest bathing techniques. Our future includes organizing another virtual gathering and setting up a spring program about understanding deer impacts in forests.

If you're interested in learning more about WOW or receiving our eNewsletter email wow@nycwatershed.org or visit womennowingwoods.com.

WOMEN OWNING WOODS PROGRAM STATS

Program/Event	Total Number of Participants
Inaugural Gathering	23
Virtual Happy Hours	40+
Forest Tour	11
Plant ID Webinar Series	19
Birding Webinar	270+
Connecting with Your Woods	9
Facebook Members	222
eNews Recipients	126

- 7,700 Acres Enrolled in the 480a Forest Tax Law
- Water Quality BMPs on 31 Timber Harvests • 67 Forest Stewardship Projects on 340 Acres
- 43 Virtual Watershed Bus Tours

East of Hudson

..... Providing Critical Support to New Farms

Agriculture in the East of Hudson (EOH) Watershed is under pressure from rising land values, urban expansion, development, increased regulation, and the loss of essential agricultural infrastructure. The Watershed Agricultural Council's (WAC) EOH Program is the primary source of support for farms, playing a critical role providing technical assistance, implementing Best Management Practices (BMPs) and creating a network to support agricultural operations in Dutchess, Putnam, Westchester and Fairfield Counties. In the past year, the WAC welcomed three new farms into the EOH Program; Castle Hill Farm, Salinger's Orchard and Bluestone Stables.

Castle Hill Farm is a 43 acre equestrian training facility located in the town of Southeast, NY and is owned and operated by five-time Olympian, McLain Ward. In response to a request from NYC Department of Environmental Protection, the EOH Program provided technical assistance to address a resource concern and

worked with the farm to develop a Whole Farm Plan (WFP) to upgrade the farm's existing nutrient storage and management plan.

Salinger's Orchard is a 78 acre farm located in the town of Southeast, NY. The orchard has been in production since 1901 and is currently run by Tim Salinger, the fourth generation of his family to operate the farm. With support from Putnam County Department of Planning, the WAC worked with the farm to complete the Agriculture Environment Management (AEM) assessments and developed a WFP to protect water quality and improve farm operations. The EOH Program has eight BMPs planned for implementation including an agrichemical handling facility, a compost facility, waste water infiltration and a nutrient management plan.

Bluestone Stables is a 20 acre sport horse facility located in the town of Lewisboro, NY and is owned and operated by Amy Lowrey and Faith Pedowitz. The EOH Program was recommended to the farm owners by Arcadia Farm, a long-standing participant. Bluestone is located in a high-priority basin and is bordered by protected wetlands and the Waccabuck River. The EOH Program worked closely with the farm to identify resource concerns and develop a WFP that protects water quality in this highly sensitive area. There are eight BMPs scheduled for implementation at the farm including two heavy use areas, fencing, waste water infiltration and nutrient management planning.

The EOH Program continues to provide crucial support for our farm partners to protect water quality while supporting working farms in the NYC Watershed.



• 83 Whole Farm Plans • 7,426 Acres

• 2,430 Animal Units • 818 BMPs Implemented



Events and tours were back in full swing in 2022. The Communications Department and Economic Viability Program attended and participated in various events across the NYC Watershed. The Meredith Dairy Fest was back for the first time since 2019, and had a great turnout. The team also participated in the Delaware County Fair, Family Farm Day, Andes Community Day, Bovina Farm Day, Taste of the Catskills, Delaware County Clean Sweep and more. In addition to these events, the Forestry Program attended Boonville Woodsman Days and the Deposit Lumberjack Festival.

The Cornell Cooperative Extension Dairy Tour was held on three local farms this year, including two Ag Program participants Mushkoday Farm and Sher-Brook Farm. We hosted new leaders

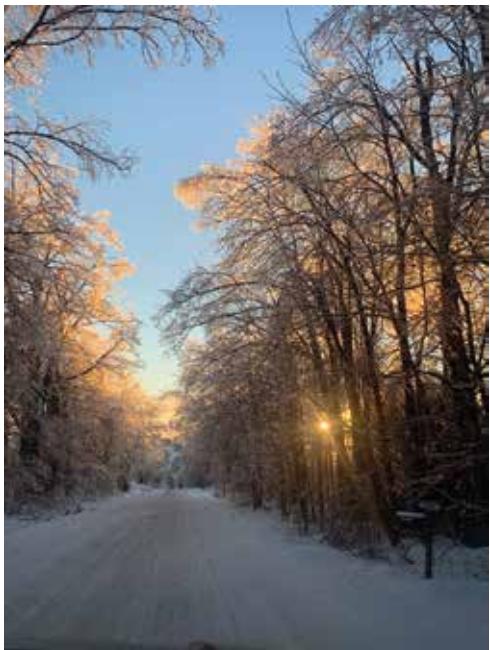


from the NYC Department of Environmental Protection on farm and forest tours to showcase how our programs work. Our Ag Program Tour was held on Albano Farms and highlighted several Best Management Practices as well as their new calf housing facility. The East of Hudson Program tour visited five participating farms that included some of the top equestrian facilities on the East Coast. The WAC also hosted Bard College students at Bye-brook Farm, as we continue our partnership with their Environmental Policy Master's Program.

We look forward to attending and sponsoring more events and tours in 2023!



..... Around the NYC Watershed



Help Us Save Farms and Protect Water Quality

A wide-angle photograph of a rural landscape at sunset. The sky is a gradient from blue to orange and yellow. The sun is low on the horizon, casting a warm glow over the scene. In the foreground, there are fields with some snow or frost on the ground. In the middle ground, there are trees and a body of water. The overall atmosphere is peaceful and scenic.

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.

Now, more than ever, we need your help. Help us safeguard these irreplaceable resources — our rural landscape and our family farms — by protecting regional farmlands and working landscapes.

Donate today to help our programs continue to support farm and forest landowners.

nycwatershed.org/donate

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