

Watershed Agricultural Council

Agriculture ♦ Forestry ♦ Conservation Easements ♦ Economic Viability

33195 State Highway 10, Walton, New York 13856

phone: 607-865-7790

fax: 607-865-4932

nycwatershed.org



Executive Committee Meeting October 17, 2023

I. Call to Order

Meeting called to order at 10:05 a.m. by Bud Gladstone

Members Present: Dave Cammer, via Zoom Karl Gockel, via Zoom
 Bud Gladstone Fred Huneke
 Tom Hutson John Vickers, NYC DEP, via Zoom
 Jennifer Grossman, via Zoom

Others Present: Ryan Naatz Amy Faulkner
 Carol Bishop Connor Young
 Steve Reed, via Zoom Lee Harris, NYC DOI
 Vicki Morris, NYC DOI

II. Approval of Minutes

Motion to approve the minutes of the September 17, 2023 meeting, as presented.

Motion: Fred Huneke

Second: Tom Hutson

Approved

III. Executive Director's Report

- A. AgMip MOU:** Ryan explained the spirit of the MOU, he stated that this is not a contract. An MOU is a good-faith agreement, there are no deliverables or funding included. The most substantive issue is data collection and confidentiality of our participants. The draft MOU was reviewed by HH&K and their comments were provided to the Committee. Columbia University, as a research institution, has additional requirements regarding data security. The MOU speaks to the fact that WAC will rename/re-identify the information so that it cannot be connected to a particular farm. Jennifer added that the MOU identifies five levels of security; 1 - WAC and AgMip having their own policies; 2 - The MOU; 3 - Federal standard that prohibits the disclosure by the USDA and its cooperators, AgMIP; 4 - WAC data provided will be converted to a code that will eliminate the name and property location, and 5 - Columbia University has rigorous review of private protective standards for the data that they collect. This should provide comfort and confidence to the Board and participants. John Vickers added that he feels the MOU looks good, Karl added he was very comfortable with the levels of protection that were included. Dave questioned whether Columbia will be going on site, on farms, to conduct further research. Ryan responded that yes, there will be research conducted with participants that are willing to share the additional information and allow on farm visitation. Fred is hopeful that this study will help to verify the BMPs that we have been utilizing for years. Fred questioned if WAC would have a seat on the scientific

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advisory group, Ryan responded that the technical level committee will include Sara Storrer, as a member of the scientific advisory group and himself as the Executive Director. Jennifer had additional questions on the document including; 1 - MOU is for three years? Ryan responded yes, with an opportunity to extend. 2 - Funding, how does the funding come from NRCS to Columbia? Ryan is not completely clear about the process for Columbia getting funding from NRCS, however there should be few to no funds coming to WAC from Columbia. This posed confusion, as WAC is fully funded, but there is funding available if any expenses arise that would not be reimbursable under the DEP contract. John stated that the scope of work for this project is consistent with the DEP contracts, so WAC staff working on and expenses pertaining to this project should all be reimbursable under the contract. 3 – Will all public facing outreach be reviewed and pre-approved by WAC and DEP, to ensure that WAC and DEP are both equally involved and that contract terms are met. Bud would like a check list of the people that must preapprove before anything is distributed publicly, Ryan assured him that was in place. John added that WAC and DEP will get out of this project what they put into it, if we only provide limited involvement and information, the output will not be as valuable. The only thing Ryan foresees changing in the draft MOU presented is the section regarding points of contact and adding Wayland Gladstone as a signatory. If approved, a copy of the executed MOU will be forwarded to Council in advance of the meeting next week.

Motion to approve the MOU with the modifications to the contact information and to add Wayland Gladstone as an additional signatory, and to approve the execution of the MOU by Ryan Naatz and Wayland Gladstone.

Motion: Tom Hutson

Second: Fred Huneke

Approved

- B. NRCS/WAC MOU:** Connor Young updated the Committee to let them know that NRCS is proposing an extension of the current MOU for five-years at no-cost. Connor is working with Dennis DeWeese to address some of the challenges the program sees now with the MOU. Connor feels that over time, through attrition, the positions will not be backfilled by NRCS within the same location or structure as they currently exist. WAC would need to pick up that workload when that occurs. Connor is suggesting WAC execute the no cost extension.
- C. Demolition of Buildings:** The 10-day notification to the state was submitted on October 10th, demolition is scheduled to begin on October 20th. The bulk of the work is likely to occur in the following two weekends.

IV. Chair's Report

- A. DEP Farm Licensing Program Update:** Fred and Bud met with DEP staff regarding DEP land use licenses. The meeting was requested by Delaware County and included CCEDC and DCSWCD. The goal was to address the concerns that farmers have with the DEP land use licenses and renewals. The group also discussed if and how WAC may be able to assist in this effort. Bud stated that it was clear that DEP is in favor of keeping the farmland available and they recognize the importance of the land being available for farmers. John added that DEP is absolutely in support of the lands continuing to be available for agriculture. He added that the terms of the lease have not changed, but the enforcement of the terms will be done more consistently. One result of this initial meeting was that the group agreed to meet quarterly, and DEP suggested WAC be involved in those quarterly meetings. Fred added that 80% of the agricultural applications were participants in WAC.

Ryan stated that he and Connor have been working with DEP, Jeff Graff specifically, to determine if and how WAC can assist but the first issue to address is that of data sharing. The simple sharing of a list of participants that have applied for land-use permits is seemingly not that simple as DEP also has responsibilities to its participants to not share

their information. Although WAC does track the ownership of lands included in its whole farm plans, it is not done so in a manner that can be queried to easily compile a list of participants that utilize DEP lands, and it wouldn't include data on participants applying for the first time.

John reported that DEP did request approval from applicants to be able to share their information with WAC in order to allow WAC to assist in the development of land-use plans. Ryan added that that concerns him as it insinuates that WAC would assist but doesn't outline how or if. WAC simply does not have enough knowledge and information about what is involved to be able to determine if it is a workload that can be taken on. John responded that he understood that point and will ensure that DEP work with WAC to share the proposed release document so that it does not include some undue expectation that puts WAC at a disadvantage. There is another meeting pending with Jeff and Michael regarding data sharing and expectations, as it seems to be long overdue that WAC and DEP memorialize data sharing.

Motion to go into Executive Session at 11:00am to discuss WAC policies.

Motion: John Vickers

Second: Tom Hutson

Approved

Motion to come out of Executive Session at 11:35am.

Motion: Dave Cammer

Second: John Vickers

Approved

V. Adjournment

Motion to adjourn the meeting at 11:35pm.

Motion: Fred Huneke

Second: Karl Gockel

Approved