

MINUTES
ORANGE COUNTY SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT
BOARD OF DIRECTORS
November 24th, 2025

The **MEETING** was **CALLED TO ORDER** by the Vice Chairwoman at 9:06 AM. Directors P. DeBlock, B. Cheney, P. Ruszkiewicz, and G. Constable were present along with K. Sumner (SWCD), M. Held (SWCD), E. King (SWCD), and M. Martire (NRCS), T. Ferry (SWCC).

The Chairman was not in attendance at today's meeting. The BOD & other meeting attendees introduced themselves to T. Ferry who is the new Associate Environmental Analyst with the Soil & Water Conservation Committee for Region 6.

2025-11-1 Cheney made the Motion, Constable seconded, to approve October's Board Meeting Minutes as written. All in favor.

ACTIONS TAKEN BETWEEN MEETINGS – The Board approved issuing a BMP payment to John King of Royal Acres Farm for expenses related to his road improvement project in AEM Round 18. Additional bills were paid and are indicated on the Bills for Board Approval.

CORRESPONDENCE

- Bank Statements
- Collateral Agreements
- Region 6 Monthly SWCC Report from Travis Ferry
- Town of Montgomery Reply to Aden Brook Miller, LLC Re: Miller Farm Easement Violations
- Warwick Valley Telephone Notice: Discontinuation of Services
 - WVT will no longer offer phone and internet service to the District as of 1/28/26.
- Selective Insurance Notice of Reduction in Coverage
- IRS: Determination of 2026 Deposit Requirements for Form 941
- CCE 110th Annual Meeting & Awards Presentation

FINANCIAL REPORTS- King explained that she is working out formatting differences between the QuickBooks Online financial report and the District's prior reports. The fourth quarter County Appropriation & the two reimbursement requests from the Wallkill Maintenance project will be reflected in November's financial report. King explained that the receipt of these funds will decrease the current negative unobligated fund balance on the DFS which is \$41,149.83. King updated the dedicated fund summary to correctly reflect the reallocation of funds after October's meeting and the creation of new accounts.

2025-11-2 Ruszkiewicz made the Motion, Cheney seconded, to file October's Financial Reports for audit review. All in favor.

BILLS FOR BOARD APPROVAL

Sumner noted that number four and number six on the bills to be paid are towards the Floodplain Bench Phase 2 North planting which is covered by the 2025 Performance Part B measure funds.

2025-11-3 Cheney made the Motion, Ruskiewicz seconded, to pay the bills as presented. All in favor.

CONTRACT REPORT UPDATE- Per usual, the updates to the report are highlighted in red ink. The individual farm payments are not up to date on the contact report, but the ledger balances for each project are up to date. Sumner noted that there are currently half a dozen construction projects in various stages of completion.

INTERAGENCY REPORTS

NRCS: Martire reported that he is working on sixty applications for the 2026 program year for Orange County. The agency expects there will be more changes to the program from the current administration.

SWCC: Ferry highlighted aspects of his written report which was made available to the Board. Ferry reminded the District that their five-year strategic plan for AEM Round 19 needs to be presented to and approved by the Board before the end of the year. Sumner asked Ferry whether Ben Luskin would be involved in the end of year grant close outs and procurement requirements. Ferry noted that he will handle grant close outs that were previously overseen by Luskin and defer to him with any questions that may arise.

Comments from Directors RE: FSA: DeBlock noted that the FSA staff in Middletown are back in the office following the government shutdown.

There were no representatives from CCE, FSA, or WCC present at the meeting.

STAFF REPORTS

*Sumner, King, and Held emailed their written staff reports to the Board prior to the meeting for review.

M. Held (SWCD)-

CRF Round 9- Held and Sumner submitted the CRF Round 9 applications last week for Pine Island Turf Nursery & Jessy Raap. Additional information will be discussed during Sumner’s report to the Board.

Local Cost Share Program - The latest addition to the LCSP cover crop reimbursement is Mark Hoyt. Alex Ronne and Mike O’Dell have not yet provided the needed information for cover crop approval, but Held expects they will be at December’s BOD meeting.

Certified Crop Advisor Exams: Additionally, Held passed two of the three partial exams for her certified crop advisor certification. She passed the international and regional versions of the soil & water management tests, but did not pass the pest management exam. Per Held, the CCA exam can be broken down into eight individual sections.

District Vehicle Purchase- Held received confirmation that the truck that the District ordered, the 2026 Chevy Silverado 3500 from G&H Auto Group, is built and should be delivered to the District in the next three to four weeks.

E. King (SWCD)-

Department of State Grant- King is working with Sumner on providing the necessary materials and completing the forms requested from the Department of State for the Celery Avenue Ledge Lowering project grant. These are necessary to establish the District as an entity that can receive funds within their system.

Spectrum Installation- King has continued to coordinate with both Spectrum, the landlord, and the District's IT specialist to have the proper equipment installed. King spoke with the landlord this morning to learn when the electrician will install the RG6 cables. Spectrum is booked to install the internet on 12/3.

NYS Sexual Harassment Prevention Training- King shared the NYS sexual harassment prevention training with the Board and District staff who must complete it before the end of year.

Performance Measures- Cheney confirmed that he attended the NYS SWCC meeting in November which satisfies one of the Directors attendance requirements. Ruskiewicz reported that he attended the New York State Vegetable Grower's Association Annual Meeting earlier this year. Ferry will find out if that satisfies the terms of the performance measure. King will send a reminder email to the BOD with the information pertaining to the December NYACD & NYS SWCC meetings. Constable noted that he will attend one of these meetings.

Website Updates- Additionally, King is updating the District website and will be working closely with Sumner & Held to post updated content. King will contact the BOD as well to discern whether they want any changes made to their bios on the website.

K. Sumner (SWCD)- Sumner provided the following reports and discussions to augment and add to his written staff report. Review "Old and New Business" for further information.

OLD & NEW BUSINESS

Wallkill Floodplain Bench- The Bastek Partnership's accountant told the District that his clients would like to receive the first payment of their conservation easement this year. Sumner has yet to receive confirmation from the title company as to whether they agree with what was submitted. The District aims to have a closing schedule finalized before the end of the year.

Department of State Grant: Sumner began working with an appointed technical contact on the workplan, which is a generic six-page generic workplan, that the District needs to complete. The workplan assumes that the District does not have permits, plan designs, contractors, or consultants, which in fact the District already has. Sumner has not received any useful advice from the technical contact about how to correctly show this in the workplan. Sumner will submit his own version of the workplan and see what their response is. Sumner asked the technical contact whether the District can use their current request for proposal method for grant construction projects. This process entails the farmer soliciting three proposals and the District selects the lowest bidder. Thereafter, the farmer pays the contractor, and the District reimburses the farmer. The technical contact did not know whether this is allowable, but will check with the fiscal department.

Otherwise, the District will need to adhere to the request procedure outlined by general municipal law and minority and women owned businesses. The monitoring contractor that the District received a proposal from is a minority & women owned business. However, the District expects these fees to total \$20,000, which is nominal considering the total grant cost. As it stands, the workplan indicates a goal of 40% of the grant dollars to go to minority & women owned businesses. Sumner stated that the likelihood of construction happening over the winter is slim, but is still possible. There are a lot of variabilities such as when the funding will be received and the weather that impacts the start date. The District cannot start the project until the contract is in place.

Floodplain Permits- Sumner reported that the District received the floodplain permit for the Celery Ave project from the Town of Wawayanda, but not yet from the Town of Goshen. The District responded to the Town of Goshen's consultant regarding the concerns he had about the town's involvement in the permit process. Cheney suggested to Sumner that he update Rob Schreibeis on this matter and that he may be able to draft a plan to expedite this process. The Town of Goshen Supervisor, Joe Betro, told Schreibeis that the permit approval process is proving to be more difficult than expected. There has not been a decision made yet as to whether Town will waive permit filing fees for the District.

AEM Round 18- Sumner reminded the Board the AEM Round 18 ends 12/31/25. Even with the deadline approaching, Sumner feels confident that the remaining projects will be finished by the end of December. Sumner reminded the Board that time extensions and carrying over funds is not possible in the AEM base program.

Soil Health Sign Offs- Sumner reminded the Board that most of the money is tied up in the CRF Round 6 grant that had a lot of soil health practices in it. There is around \$58,000 in expenditures related to this, and if the District does not receive official sign off, the money will be returned to the State.

Walkkill Maintenance Agreement Amendments- The second amendment to the Walkkill Maintenance contract is not fully executed. Sumner has been checking in with the four town supervisors, and the process is proving to be cumbersome. The Town of Minisink signed the amendment, returned it, but never passed a resolution to certify it. Sumner shared a draft resolution with the Town of Minisink and advised that their attorney review it prior to signing it. Sumner is hopeful that this snafu will not complicate the four towns making their full 2026 contributions if the amendment is not fully executed. The Town of Warwick is confused about the draft amendment. Sumner has been doing his best to be the liaison between the towns and Joe Mahoney from the County Attorney's office.

Secondary Fuel Containment- Sumner reported that the preparation of the secondary fuel containment plans, which were prepared by B&L, cost more than expected. The District aims to use the plan on future projects and get our money's worth. There are two secondary fuel containment projects in Ag NPS Round 27, which are both 275-gallon tanks, and the District can easily use the same plan set for both. The District received a contractor bid in the amount of \$21,500, which is ideal, but since it is over \$20,000, we need two more contractor bids to provide proposals. Sumner feels that both will be completed prior to the grant end date in March 2026. The tanks can easily be installed over the winter, but pouring concrete is dependent on weather conditions.

Ag NPS Rnd 27-There are projects in Round 27 that are partially done or no work has been done so far. For example, Winslow Therapeutic's stream crossing is completed, but the railings still need to be installed. The District is still waiting for paperwork from these participants.

Skoufis Equipment Award- Sumner does not have any updates to report from the State agency regarding the equipment award fund.

CRF Round 9- As previously stated, the CRF Round 9 applications were submitted last week. Sumner provided the Board with the cash match for the projects submitted. The District did not make any cash contribution to the Pine Island Turf Nursery irrigation project because the owner agreed to cover 30% of the project cost. This is an above average local contribution on the LO's part, so Sumner deemed it unnecessary for the District to contribute. As a result, this allowed the District to contribute a larger amount of funding to Jessy Raap's bedded pack barn project in the amount of \$37,500. The final budget for Raap's project is \$450,000. The District will learn whether this project was awarded funding prior to the start of Ag NPS Round 31.

O'Dell PDR Project- The District scheduled a Teams meeting with David Behm from NYS Ag & Markets and the O'Dell's regarding the status of their PDR project. The O'Dell's have been working towards being accepted into the

program for a few years now. The O'Dell's own an operating dairy farm and support half a dozen pieces of property. Their property falls within three towns, but unfortunately the towns are not prepared at this time to provide funding towards the O'Dell's application. The O'Dell's have invested time and money in this process. For example, they had a subdivision to take the house off since Ag & Markets did not want it to be part of the farm or in the O'Dell's ownership. The District hopes to learn more about the funding cycles and other information from this meeting with David. Sumner expressed frustration with the OC Land Trust, who explained that they cannot help with the O'Dell application until 2027. Sumner is hesitant to oversee that application himself given that it is an arduous process. The Land Trust normally leads this application process. Sumner would appreciate more transparency and would like to see the Agriculture & Farmland Protection Board, AFPB, extend more oversight over the Land Trust's PDR application reviewal. Sumner asked if Ruskiewicz or Cheney could ask Alan Sorensen about this application process. Cheney suggested a three-way call with Sorensen, Cheney, and Sumner to discuss this matter.

4 Hour Contractor Training- Sumner was contacted by a laborer's union to present the 4-hour contractor training to their members. Sumner has led this session over a dozen times during his time with the District and he feels that the responsibility should not fall on him any longer. Sumner feels that the training should be offered at a time and location that is convenient for the contractors. There is a trainer in Ulster County & Dutchess County. Ferry has offered to co-present with another local District employee. Sumner asked State Committee and the NYS DEC to help with this situation since they mandated that the contractors receive this training. Sumner did not hear from State Committee about his request, but the DEC did respond.

Miller Farm Easement- The Town of Montgomery told the landowner that he is in violation of the easement and needs to submit a mitigation plan. The LO did reply to the Town, but did not provide a mitigation plan by the due date. Initially, the LO asked to wait until next year so he could show the Town the yields from the land where the fill was added. The Town denied this request and gave him a new due date in early December to submit the plan. It currently remains unclear as to whether lawyers will get involved in this matter. The District stresses that a precedent must be set to deter other landowners from violating the terms of their conservation easements.

Employee Performance Appraisals- Sumner will postpone the employee performance appraisals until the December Board of Directors meeting.

Board of Directors Election- DeBlock informed the Board that Wright asked her if she were interested in running for chairwoman of the Board in January '26. Wright's current schedule does not allow him to satisfy the terms of being chairman that mandate that he must be on the AFPB. Wright will continue to serve as a director on the Board. DeBlock noted that she would like to remain treasurer and asked the Board if they had any comments or recommendations. Cheney asked whether there would be any issues with DeBlock serving as the chairwoman & treasurer. Ferry will look more into that on the District's behalf. If need be, Sumner could attend an AFPB meeting in the chairperson's stead and can vote.

Sexual Harassment Prevention Training- King, Ruskiewicz, and Cheney have completed their mandatory sexual harassment prevention training. King reminded the Board and staff that it needs to be completed prior to the December meeting. DeBlock will complete another training due to personal reasons.

NY MuniTrust- The senior vice president, SVP, of NY MuniTrust informed King that their executive director found that NY counties do not pledge their full faith and credit of their SWCD investing in NY MuniTrust. Therefore, the SVP stated that the District does not qualify to invest. However, if the District receives support from the County to invest, then the District is eligible to invest. Cheney spoke with the Commissioner of Finance, who is a director with the NY MuniTrust board, who told him that the District cannot invest in NY MuniTrust. Cheney will speak further with the Commissioner of Finance and report back. Ferry commented that the NYS Comptroller's Office will not provide a written approval to SWCDs to invest in NYCLASS, but will provide the necessary criteria. Even without the written

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approval from the Comptroller's Office, the District can still invest with NYCLASS. The Board will revisit this decision at December's meeting.

Next meeting date: December 15th.

ADJOURNMENT

2025-11-4 Cheney made the Motion, Constable seconded, to adjourn the meeting at 10:27 AM. All in favor.

Minutes Prepared By:

Emily King, Secretary to the Board

Report to Board

KMS

December, 2025

Wallkill Flood Projects –

Floodplain Bench

Bastek (Phase 4 North) Easement Status – we have a closing date of 12/29 at Hill-n-Dale Abstractors in Goshen. We plan to make both the 2025 and 2026 payments at time of closing (2026 payment will be dated in January).

Celery Avenue ledge lowering project – I have provided info to DOS for preparation of a Work Plan, the ball is in their court now. They estimated April/May for a fully executed contract. I asked about starting before that possible, and they indicated it was possible, if we were willing to front the expenses. This would be difficult for us, unless the County was somehow able to assist with the cash flow concern.

Wawayanda Floodplain permit received, no word from Goshen since last month's meeting (same status as last month).

Carbon Farming Project – Still waiting on final payment of \$4,268.32 on Southway project.

AEM Round 18 –Simpson project still under construction. Ewanciw project reported complete, awaiting field check.

CRF Round 7 - We are working on collecting the information needed from Shuback and Crist to certify the Irrigation Water Management practice that is needed to satisfy funding requirements.

'Sign Offs' on Soil Health Practices –

Revision of Wallkill Maintenance Agreement –Reimbursements submitted to the County earlier this year were finally received. There has been some correspondence with the Town Supervisors and County Attorney's office regarding the second version of Amendment 2 of the Agreement (full contribution each year), but not there yet. I am trying to help coordinate this (same status as last month).

AgNPS Round 27 -

Wieboldt – We have the required number of contractor proposals for the fuel storage project.

Soudant – Construction continuing on barnyard project, estimated 75% complete. Issued partial payment.. We have the required number of contractor proposals for the fuel storage project. I have asked B&L to prepare a construction plan set.

Winslow –. Waiting on submittal of invoices to issue new payment on completed practices. Unclear how much of their remaining funding will be earned.

Troy Vellenga funding will get returned to NYS.

Contract end date – March, 2026.

AgNPS Round 29 –. No activity to report

Equipment Planning

Skoufis Equipment Funding –Asked Skoufis’ office for help again on 10/20 – still not resolved which State agency will handle contracting.

CIG Grant –.

Miller Farm Easement Violations

Landowner has retained legal representation. His lawyer has requested extension of time to respond from 12/12/25 to 1/30/2026.

Other Items

O’Dell PDR – O’Dell’s have addressed, or in the process of addressing, obstacles to NYSA&M application. I would like to discuss possibility of having someone other than OCLT progress an application for the O’Dell’s on a more aggressive schedule than that offered by OCLT.

Sell Dodge?

Started working on AEM Round 18 contract close out

Started working on other E-O-Y reports

Secretary to the Board Update

The District is officially a customer of Spectrum Internet & I am actively working on setting up our new phones through Ring Central. I will cancel our subscription with Warwick Valley Telephone this week once I have the phones in order. Another goal I will set for myself is to work with our IT provider on transitioning our email domain from IPower to Spectrum. The District's email is very temperamental and often does not deliver emails or allow emails to be received by Kevin & Mary.

I worked on the AEM Round 18 newsletter with Kevin, primarily focusing on the formatting and spellcheck. The newsletter highlights the seven farm projects that participated in the 2024/2025 grant cycle. This newsletter will be distributed to fellow SWCDs and County legislators.

Additionally, I began updating the District's website to promote the newer completed ag projects from the various grants. I am conferring with Mary & Kevin as to what material they want posted and what articles can be archived. I am working on reformatting the site to make it more user friendly and engaging to the viewer.

I virtually attended the CDEA manager's meeting on 12/9/25. The primary topic of discussion was whether the New York Association of Conservation District, NYACD, will hire lobbyists to advocate for SWCDs in Albany. If NYACD does not hire a lobbyist, it was suggested that the CDEA hire their own lobbyist. An in depth conversation amongst the managers, provided them with a few actions to take if NYACD does not hire a lobbyist. I have to speak with Mary & Kevin about this, but it was recommended by the CDEA that the Districts send a thank you letter to Governor Hochul to thank her for the continued funds in the Environmental Protection Fund.

The District was contacted by CEC Excavating who explained that the District has a few outstanding invoices. Kevin and I reviewed these invoices and confirmed that they were indeed not paid. The payments will be recorded based on which grants or accounts they are charged to.

I reviewed several cover crop payments that the District will issue, pending Board approval, with funds from either the LCSP or CRF Round 6. The District received the bill for our NYS Statutory Disability and Paid Family Leave. I prepared an Excel workbook with the calculations I used to project our 2026 figures and shared them with Kevin. I intend on paying this bill this week.

I prepared the profit and loss report for November via QBO with a bit more ease this time. When needed, I will consult with the CPA at DeBellis & Associates firm in Goshen. I updated the online bank accounts to reflect the total listed on November's dedicated fund summary. As always, please let me know if you have any questions or concerns. Thank you!

-Emily

OCSWCD Technician Update

Mary C. Held

12/12/2025

Intro:

Stormwater Model: Erik from CCE has agreed to put up funding for a new Stormwater Model to replace the Enviroscape model that was lost. Kevin and I are still bouncing back and forth the idea of a new stormwater model. The EmRiver EM2 model that a number of other districts use is upwards of \$7,000, but very interesting and engaging. We are trying to weigh our options between getting a new Enviroscape model or just getting funding towards a new model from CCE.

We would like to make a decision on this soon, so if we could come up with a plan of action at the Board meeting, that would be great.

The 2026-2030 AEM Strategic Plan is ready to be reviewed for Board Approval. The Board should have received a digital copy Wednesday to review and offer feedback. A hard copy has been provided today, with note of a few additions since the draft was sent to the Board. We have requested insight and comments from adjacent ag entities such as FSA, NRCS, OCLT, and County/AFPB. The Strategic Plan is due at the beginning of 2026.

Equipment:

Conklin – 2006 (plan to pick up Friday 12/12) – needs bearing and spring fix
Lombardo – 2022 (plan to pick up Monday 12/15 after Board meeting)

Project Roller Crimper Plan for 2026:

Jason Touw

- Farm 2680 tract 8843 Field 1 (rye)
- Farm 1360 tract 7407 Field 45 (rye)

Alex Ronne

- Farm 1433 tract 791 field 3 (rye)

Phil Johnson

- Farm 2864 tract 8752 field 6 (rye)

Mike O'Dell

- (still has to get me cover crop information but plans to crimp a number of ac in spring)

LCSP:

Please see Bills to be Paid

John King – 2.75 ac

Alex Ronne – 29.74 ac

Both farms confirmed cover crop with farm visit.

CRF Update:

Round 6:

Please see updated spreadsheet of CRF6 allocated funding versus paid and remaining.

Dec 2025 Payments:

Phil Johnson
Jason Touw

2025 Total CC Payments:

Russell Smiley
Phil Johnson
Jason Touw

CASH Soil testing complete for 2025:

Phil Johnson
Bob Stap
Jason Touw
Keith Stewart
Matthew Southway

Still needed:

Alex Kocot CASH tests
Russell Smiley CASH tests
~~Matthew Southway manure testing (No longer has compost to test)~~

As of now, total remaining \$\$\$ unspent in CRF6 grant = \$36,624

Waiting on NRCS sign-off on Cover Crop package for Alex Kocot before sending more over to make sure we have everything we need. Have informed them that we need these looked at and approved before Feb, as grant closes in March.

Jason Touw Cover crop has come up and been ID'd by site visit and photos. Alex Kocot may still have a cover crop payout but after request for information has not approached the office about it despite efforts to remind him of payment.

Contract end date: March 2026

Round 9: No update. Jessy Raap and Chip Lain applications were submitted. I've been told to expect notifications about this grant in February. If Jessy Raap has not been funded through this grant round, we will submit through AGNPS.

AGNPS Update:

Round 27: Contract End Date: March 2025 (was extended)

- No update

Round 29:

- No update from technician.

AEM Update:

Jessy Raap CNMP: Reached out to CNMP planner numerous times via text and email to request time sheet and update on completed plan delivery, no reply as of 12/12.

Round 18 Tier 4 Projects:

John King: Project complete, received cancelled checks 12/10 and 12/11

Alex Ronne: complete, requested proof of payment

Greg / Leonard DeBuck: Received proof of payment among other close-out materials.

AEM Activities:

- Tier 2s in progress
- Tier 2s completed
 - o Juckas Stables
- Tier 3s being put together
 - o Alex Ronne – grazing plan
 - o Marc Suffern – grazing plan
 - o Juckas Stables – HUA / grazing plan

CCA Testing

Remaining CCA test sections:

- NE Regional nutrient management
- NE regional crop management
- International nutrient management
- International crop management

- International pest management

Plan of accomplishment: Finish all competency area tests in 2026, submit application for CCA, start on CNMP application / plans.

Truck purchase

We received the truck on 12/9/2025. Fighting with dealer and DMV on getting plates, but making progress daily. Started with the lack of manual, then the lack of title, then the lack of correct paperwork to get specialty plates. But we are moving forward, slowly but surely.

So, currently, it has no plates, but it's insured.