

**MINUTES**  
**ORANGE COUNTY SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT**  
**BOARD OF DIRECTORS**  
**September 16th, 2024**

The **MEETING** was **CALLED TO ORDER** by the Chairman at 9:03 AM. Directors P. DeBlock, J. Wright, P. Ruskiewicz, B. Cheney, and G. Constable were present along with K. Sumner (SWCD), E. King (SWCD), M. Held (SWCD), O. Velez-Juarbe (NRCS), and M. Martire (NRCS).

**2024-9-1 DeBlock made the Motion, Ruskiewicz seconded, to approve August's Board Meeting Minutes as written. All in favor.**

Cheney asked the Board a question regarding SourceWell which is the source of the proposal from John Deere for the new planter we are seeking. Cheney asked whether the Board needs to edit the District's procurement policy for this to be allowable bidding platform. Sumner explained that the District's procurement policy states that the District can make purchases through State bid. However, Sumner wanted to confirm that SourceWell is deemed acceptable for State Bid requirements. Cheney confirmed that it is. This means that the District's current procurement policy covers using the Sourcewell bid.

**ACTIONS TAKEN BETWEEN MEETINGS** – Some bills were paid and are listed on the Bills for Board Approval. The Board of Directors gave approval via email to write a reimbursement check to Sunflower Valley Farms & to Greystone Stables. Sumner reported that the District made an additional payment to Brian Ford for construction fees. Sumner explained that the funds were taken from the County special project appropriation fund. This bill is listed under the Bills to Be Paid document that is available to the Board. Sumner gathered that it would be allowable to wait until the meeting for Board approval since the funding was already approved by the Board.

**CORRESPONDENCE**

- Bank Statements
- Collateral Agreements
- Region 5 Monthly SWCC Report from Ben Luskin
  - Sumner highlighted that Luskin stated that Part B project proposals must be submitted by 11/1/24. Sumner stated that these project proposals will need to be approved by the Board at October's meeting. Per Sumner, the total available funding in Part B is \$6,000.
- Letter from B&L RE: Comments the NYSDEC Received About the Celery Avenue Rock Ledge Project
  - Sumner presented the Board with a copy of the letter from B&L, which was provided to the DEC, in response to the public comment letters on the Celery Avenue Ledge project. This letter was provided to the NYS DEC. Wright felt that the B&L's responses to the public comments was reassuring for the likelihood of the DEC's approval. Sumner felt that the comment which suggested the Ledge project would negatively impact a road in Goshen was weak at best. Such other comments include worries that it will eliminate wildlife habitats, increase the flow of the river, and increase the likelihood of the Wallkill freezing. Sumner is expecting that the DEC will accept B&L's responses as addressing the public concerns. Cheney referred to a response from a comment that debris north of the Ledge has not been cleared for years. Sumner stated that the District is committed to enhancing conditions

downstream and is actively pursuing funding. Cheney asked Sumner to clarify whether maintaining the river conditions downstream is the responsibility of the County or the District. Sumner stated that B&L cannot speak for the County, but Sumner admitted that the response should list Soil & Water as the party responsible. Sumner suspects that B&L mistakenly listed the County instead of the District since people use those two words interchangeably. Sumner understands why people do this since the District and the County have a close partnership in this regard.

- NYACD Letter to Directors: September 2024
- The Empire State Granger: September/October 2024 Edition

**FINANCIAL REPORTS-** The District added more detailed notes under the dedicated fund summary so the Directors will know how the numbers are changing month to month. Sumner noted that the District has a sizeable undedicated fund balance. For this reason, Sumner is asking the Board to front some of the State funds for some of our farm projects who are waiting on the State contracting process. Sumner feels that the District is in good shape to accommodate this action. Sumner mentioned that the no-till receivables are not of an outstanding number.

**2024-9-2 Constable made the Motion, Ruszkiewicz seconded, to file August’s Financial Reports for audit review.**

**All in favor.**

**BILLS FOR BOARD APPROVAL-** Sumner explained that item #2, the Ernst Conservation Seeds bill, will be deducted from a future payment from the project contractor since it was part of his bid for the Phase 4 Bench project. As previously discussed, if the Board approves paying these bills, the District will be fronting State money for some of the farm projects. For example, item #3 details a substantial payment to Crist Brothers Orchard. Sumner is confident that the District can afford this with our current cash balance. Sumner reminded the Board that the CRF Round 7 contract started in November 2023, but the District is still waiting on funding from the State. Sumner does not want farmers to have to wait to start their funding until the State delivers. Sumner does not want farmers to front the money since they were expecting grant reimbursement on these projects. Sumner explained to the Board that the \$100 donation to CDEA for the NYS Envirothon, was made possible from the selling of the bale chopper that was used during the Pellet Island project. Sumner stated that the bale chopper has been sitting for a long time and therefore depreciating in value. Ron O’Dell expressed an interest in purchasing it, so Sumner cleared the sale with the other counties involved with the Pellet Island Project. The other counties gave approval to sell the equipment to O’Dell for \$100 and they, the District included, would donate the \$100 to the NYS Envirothon. DeBlock asked Sumner whether the bale chopper was the last piece of equipment associated with the Pellet project. Sumner admitted that it is not and that there is still a Little Giant elevator, which is stored in Coldenham, at the home of the mechanic for that project. The elevator was purchased from Phil Johnson. Sumner believes that the elevator is the last of the affiliated equipment with the Pellet project. Per Sumner, most of the high value equipment was donated back to SUNY Colbeskill. Cheney asked whether there should be a Board motion to dispose of the property to alleviate the burden from Sumner. Sumner explained that the difficulty with that is that the elevator was owned by Resource Conservation & Development Council, RC&D, which is now defunct. Sumner assured the Board that he has email documentation that he sought approval from three counties that were former members of the RC&D. Sumner continued that item #12 is a farm reimbursement that the District is fronting with State money. Lastly, #13 on the Bills to be Paid is the payment to Brian Ford for the Phase 4 North Project.

**2024-9-3 Ruszkiewicz made the Motion, Cheney seconded, to pay the bills as presented. All in favor.**

**GRANT REPORT UPDATE-** Sumner presented the Board with August’s grant report and noted that any updates from July’s report are written in red ink.

**INTERAGENCY REPORTS**

**CCE:** Schellenberg was unable to attend the meeting, but provided King with a written update which she shared with the Board.

*CCE is still finalizing the CIG contract with NRCS right now. They aren't sure whether they want the OCSWCD money to be a sub-award or if those funds should be under equipment line item. The two options will have implications for those who have to do the actual paperwork of purchasing, and we will hear their decision this week.*

**NRCS:** Martire introduced himself to the Board as the new Resource Conservationist with NRCS in the Middletown office. Martire has been with NRCS for five years. Velez-Juarbe reported that NRCS obligated 15 contracts for Orange County and 60 total for the District's team. Sumner informed the Board that the District Conservationist with Suffolk County took a promotion, so that position is currently vacant. As a result, Velez-Juarbe will be overseeing Suffolk County's domain on & off in the meantime. NRCS opened a new office in Brooklyn and needs to hire a District Conservationist and Soil Conservationist for that location. These positions were posted for applicants on 9/13/24. NRCS has already hired an engineer, who is at the State office level, for Brooklyn's office.

**FSA:** DeBlock reminded the Board that there is a Program Technician from Oneida County that was selected for the training program who will then assume the CED position in Orange County.

There were no representatives from NYSS 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)-** Held reported that since August's meeting, she has not had a chance to further develop her proposal for the pollinator garden project. Held reminded the Board that the project's participants, homeowners & farmers, would receive funding to incentivize them to make a pollinator garden. Held hopes to further develop the project plan once the fall equipment rental program slows down. Held reported that O'Dell got the Ferri mower running, but he needs to purchase parts to stabilize it. Held commented that Greystone Stables, which is involved in Ag NPS Round 29, have additional potential projects that the District will consider funding. This would be both beneficial environmentally and benefit Greystone. Held provided the Board with an update to Jessy Raap's Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plan, CNMP. Held reminded the Board that Raap is interested in a composted bedded pack barn project, but needs to have a CNMP done beforehand. Luskin recommended contacting Agricultural Consulting Services, ACS, to have the CNMP done. Held explained that AEM will reimburse the plan up to \$51/hr if they submit a timesheet to the District. Sumner noted that the District has not had an issue with running out of AEM staff funding, but that was before Held and King were charging hours to it. A representative from ACS told Held that a CNMP takes an average of 40 hours, not including traveling, to complete. Per Held's estimation, AEM could cover ~\$2,040 in expenses, but any remaining costs would be the responsibility of the landowner or District. Held continued that the estimated total for the CNMP, not including soil/manure sampling, was quoted at ~\$5,802. Therefore, it would leave a remaining balance of ~\$3,762 to be paid by either the District or farmer. Per ACS, the District is allowed to do the soil and manure testing, and it can be funded through AEM. Alternatively, the District could fund the plan through AgNPS. Luskin clarified that the application can only be for planning and no implementation through AgNPS. Per Luskin, there is a high success rate of being funded through AgNPS apparently. Velez-Juarbe asked Held how soon she is hoping to have the CNMP done. Held wants the CNMP completed within 2025. Sumner felt that if the Board can decide today on what the District is willing to contribute towards the estimated the \$5,800, it would allow Held to give ACS the green light to start the plan. Although these are estimates, Sumner feels confident that ACS will not return with a higher number in the future. As the project moves forward, if costs increase significantly then it would be wise for both the LO and District to have the option to back out of the program without penalty. Sumner suggested that the LO agrees to fund ½ of what the District cannot be reimbursed from the State, then the District will cover the remaining 1/2. The funds could be taken out of the Part C fund if need

be. Cheney asked Held if she knew what the approximate cost of the soil sampling would be. Held estimated that since basic nutrient management testing is \$20/ per sample. Held estimated that with 36 needed samples it costs \$720 for the field samples. Sumner confirmed that the collection of manure & soil samples can be charged to the AEM contract and is eligible for reimbursement. Sumner noted that Raap has been asking for this project for many years. DeBlock is okay with paying ½ of the initial cost. Sumner clarified that staff time is not something that needs to be considered. Sumner reported that the breakdown can always be tabled again if the expenses become unmanageable. Velez-Juarbe stated that if the LO is uncomfortable funding all the conservation plans, then they can apply for funding through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program, EQIP. Velez-Juarbe noted that the funding is released in January. Once NRCS has the contracts, the next step relies on how quickly ACS can have the CNMP done. Velez-Juarbe does not know if there is a deadline to sign up, but if there is he assumes it would be in November 2024. Velez-Juarbe will review the plan and so long as it meets NRCS' SPECS, then it will move forward. Velez-Juarbe clarified that it will not fully fund Raap's expenses, but given his current operation size, ~35 cows, he could possibly get ~\$2-3,000 depending on the plan's components. Sumner confirmed with Velez-Juarbe that the District would still be able to cover our remaining share since EQIP would cover the LO share. Sumner noted that if the EQIP funding worked out, then the District can record in the minutes at a future meeting that the money for the project is coming from elsewhere.

**2024-9-4 Constable made the motion, seconded by Ruskiewicz, that the District will commit up to \$2,000 towards the CNMP with an equal match from the LO, Jessy Raap. All in favor.**

**Roller Crimper-** In regard to the roller crimper project, Held noted that she has not received updates from CCE. Held obtained updated quotes for equipment, which includes a 10.5" roller crimper with a swing hitch and one without. The updated quotes can be found in Held's written report. Held added that I&J will custom make a roller crimper for a 15.5" roller crimper. This means that instead of a stiff frame swing hitch, it will fold in to allow for narrow transport. Wright suggested to Held that the Board discuss what their recommendations are. Sumner believes that the District should purchase the 10.5" since it corresponds with the four row planter. Sumner's idea is that if farmers plant first, then the width of the roller crimper really does not matter. However, not everyone will use that approach and any farmers that will rent the District's equipment will be using a four row planter. Sumner continued that the 15.5" roller crimper is set up for a six-row planter, but that method is not as popular amongst farmers that work with the District. Sumner told DeBlock that it would not be feasible for a farmer to use the 10.5" roller crimper with a six-row planter. Sumner explained that the user wants to roll the rye down in the same direction that they are planting. Sumner acknowledged that there is a debate over whether you should plant or roll first. Sumner reported that CCE's CIG grant has more money available for the roller crimper than the District's. Sumner suggested that the District buy the 10.5" crimper with the District's project money. Once the CIG money is finalized, the District could possibly purchase the 15.5" crimper with the CIG funds. Sumner reminded the Board that they need to decide soon regarding this matter. Sumner noted that the planters are made to order, so if the District wants one for spring 2025, then it should be ordered soon. Per Sumner, the 10.5" roller crimpers should be built on the lot, but if it is made to order than more time needs to be allotted.

**E. King (SWCD)-** King asked the Board whether they had a chance to review the link from the State's website to a sexual harassment prevention training video that she recently sent them. King explained that she reached out to fellow office managers to learn how they provide their Board of Directors with the mandated sexual harassment training. A senior office manager recommended to King that the Board of Directors should watch it all in person and use a sign in sheet to confirm their attendance. By using this approach, the District would have a stronger defense since it would be documented in the minutes. Sumner recommended the Board discuss the training in addition to the accompanied worksheet, which would be documented in the minutes. If the Board decided to watch the training at a meeting, the District employees would complete their training with them. Sumner proposed, out of accommodation for everyone's schedules, that the Directors watch the training on their own time and discuss it at the next Board meeting. The Board agreed with Sumner's proposal and will plan to have the discussion at October's meeting. Wright

asked King if she can send a reminder email, with a link to the training, to the Board a few weeks before the next meeting.

**K. Sumner (SWCD)**- Review “Old and New Business” for further information.

**OLD & NEW BUSINESS**

**Phase 4 North**- Sumner informed the Board that he does not have any updates on the title work for the Bench Phase 4 easements. The District is waiting on Pine Island Turf Nursery to confer with their attorney and get back to the office. Sumner reported that the Phase 4 North project is progressing well. The District assigned the 2024 Part B funding to help augment the tree planting for the Phase 4 North. Sumner reminded the Board that the Part B funding totals \$6,000. Held’s pollinator project is a contender for the 2025 Part B funds, but if the project does not come to fruition, then the application will need to be revised again. Sumner suggested that once Held’s project is stronger than the Board can select another fund for it. Most likely, the District will select a project they are sure will occur for the 2025 Part B funding.

**Celery Avenue Ledge Lowering Project**- Sumner reminded the Board that last month they decided to try to solidify support from the farmers who are advocating for the Ledge project. Sumner prepared individualized draft letters for ½ dozen farmers to sign as is or edit them. Sumner gave them to Rob Schrebeis who was going to collect their signatures for the District. Sumner has not received any of the signed letters back yet. Ruszkiewicz stated that he spoke with Kevin Shuback to remind him that the District needs the support letters. Once the District has the permits and support letters, then the next big step will be determining where the money will come from. Sumner does not expect construction to start on the project until summer of 2025 at the earliest.

**SHPO Update RE: Hoyt Project**- Finally got the archaeological study approved by the State Parks department who issued a no effects letter for the Hoyt project. Sumner noted that 90% funding has been requested for all six of the AEM Tier 4 projects and once the landowners are ready, the District can proceed. Still waiting on contracts for the three CRF Round 7 projects. These are the three irrigation projects which include the Wright Family Farm, Crist Brothers Orchard, and Kevin Shuback. Luskin informed that one CRF Round 7 contract has left the State Comptroller’s Office. Luskin is expecting that the District will receive our contracts within two weeks. Soil Health Practice sign off, the requirements that need to be submitted to Luskin before he can decide whether to sign off on them still need to be worked on. More time is elapsing between the finish date of these projects and when we’re trying to get the money. With the funding that we are getting from the State, as well as the Part C funding, which can be used at our discretion, it seems better to pay it out of local money rather than dealing with the State.

**Revision of the Walkkill Maintenance Agreement**- Sumner reminded the Board that the revision, which would allow leftover funds at the end of the year to go to Soil & Water for flood mitigation work had a public hearing on 8/26. Both Sumner and Ryan McGuire from the DPW spoke at the hearing, but there were no public comments. The District is waiting on the administrative process to finish their review. Sumner assumed the District would need a revised agreement for the four towns to review and sign. Sumner is unsure whether this will be accomplished by the end of year in time for the District to receive the leftover funding from 2024. Cheney will check with the County law department to see whether the legislative office authorized the maintenance agreement or whether the law department has drafted a revised agreement

**Winslow Therapeutic Project**- Sumner reported that construction began last week on the Winslow Therapeutic Stream Crossing Project. Per the conditions of the permit, the construction crew needs to vacate the stream by 9/15. Sumner felt that the crew was in good shape since the pipes were installed on 9/13 and they were already placing the rip rap stone protection. The railing and approaches still need to be built on the crossings, but Sumner is not concerned about the 9/15 deadline since they are installed out of the stream.

**Wawayanda Gas Purchase-** Sumner has no update to provide from the proposed purchasing of gas from the Town of Wawayanda. The last Sumner knew was that the Town referred the idea to their attorney.

**Covered Barnyard Project in Warwick-** Sumner broached the subject with the Board about the District funded covered barnyard project in Warwick. Sumner explained that the intended use of the project was to provide shelter for his cows, but twice now it has been used to store hay and equipment. In fact, it is currently being used to store hay. Sumner clarified that not having cows under the barn is not out of compliance, but storing hay in the barn is. Sumner confirmed that the District does not have funding available for hay barn projects. Sumner noted that the District has a process where projects are reviewed and the findings are sent to the LO. The project was completed four years ago and per the conditions of the ten-year agreement, the farmer is out of compliance with the current use of the area. Sumner shared these results with the LO and made him aware that he is violating the terms of the contract. So far, the LO has not responded to the project review. The District decided in the past that they are not really inclined to alert the County law department to try to recoup the money. However, Sumner will leave that up to the Board to decide. Per Sumner, it would not cost the District any money to enlist the County law department's services. Sumner does not recommend that the District allow the LO to rent equipment or work with him again in the future. Sumner wants to know how the Board feels about this matter. Cheney asked whether there is a claw back provision in the contract. Sumner could not recall, but stated that he would review the contract to find out. Sumner reported that the contract templates come from Albany, and usually have every contingency covered. There is language in the construction plan, specifically operations & maintenance, that the LO must agree to. DeBlock suggested that the District send the LO a certified letter stating that he is no longer eligible to work with the District or rent equipment. Cheney would like to review the agreement to learn if there are any provisions that can direct the District on how to proceed with this situation. Should there be, Cheney wants the District to adhere to it. The Board agreed that the District should wait to send the letter until the contract is reviewed. The District would rather refer it to the County law department than hire a private sector attorney.

**O'Dell PDR Project-** Sumner discussed the potential purchase of development rights, PDR, for the O'Dell farm. In 2023, the State expressed disinterest in the project since the O'Dell's owned the house on the farm that would be in the easement. Even if the O'Dell's subdivided the house from the rest of the property, they were still not okay approving their application. The O'Dell's agreed that they would subdivide the house off, relinquish ownership in order to adhere to State requirements. O'Dell spoke with Lou Lain, the chairperson of the Orange County Land Trust, to let him know that they wanted to renew their funding application. Per O'Dell, Lain indicated that the Land Trust was ready to restart the funding application. However, after a few months, Sumner spoke with Shanna Abeles, the Conservation Project Manager, who did not have any updates on the O'Dell farm project. O'Dell recently spoke with Lain who relayed the message that the State has no interest in funding the project. O'Dell wrote a letter to the Land Trust, asking for a written explanation as to why the State won't fund their project and what the Land Trust's position is on it. O'Dell received an email from the Land Trust that they received his letter and will respond soon. Sumner expressed his disappointment with the current situation. Per Sumner, the O'Dell's project has plenty of reasons as to why it should be sponsored, apart from being one of the few remaining dairy farms in Orange County. Sumner noted that the farm has a lengthy history of installing conservation practices, has good infrastructure, and has a young farmer at the helm. Constable suggested that O'Dell reach out to Liz Miller from Senator Skoufis' office to see if she could be of any help. Constable noted that she attended the Farm Bureau meeting last week and reiterated her willingness to help. Sumner stated that the Land Trust has funded projects in the past that are of a smaller acreage and are support land to a nearby operation. Sumner is considering having the O'Dell's approach the three towns that their property falls on to request funding rather than relying on money from the State. Sumner wants a better understanding of how the Land Trust prioritizes projects and how much money they receive from the County to support their staff time. Cheney does not know if the Land Trust gets money from the County, but he will ask to confirm. Cheney noted that the County is a partner with the Land Trust. The Board discussed recent land purchases made by the Open Space Institute, such as Tuxedo Farms, which will be annexed by the Palisades Interstate Park Commission as an addition to Sterling Forest State Park. Wright noted the Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board, AFBP, meeting is on 9/18. Sumner asked Wright to keep the O'Dell's project on the AFBP's radar. Sumner

## ORANGE COUNTY SWCD SEPTEMBER 2024 BOARD MEETING MINUTES

reminded the Board of a concept he has been working on that involves a 'block' of farmland in area where the three towns of Greenville/Minisink/Wawayanda come together. Cheney asked Sumner whether the District is interested in speaking with Alan Sorensen, the County's Commissioner of Planning, to discuss the County allocating funding and farmland blocking to local farms rather than the State. Sumner has a map prepared that indicates the properties and their proximity to each other of potential participants. Sumner confirmed that he would like to meet with Sorensen for an exploratory meeting. Cheney noted that he will work on facilitating that. Sumner mentioned that it would be beneficial for the District to reach out to farmers, prior to going beyond the initial exploratory meeting, to gauge their interest in this.

**Flooded Farm Tour-**Wright discussed the notice from Alan Sorensen regarding the event presented by Orion Blake to tour his rice farm, Flooded Farm, on 9/20. Flooded Farm is in the Wallkill River Watershed. Ruszkiewicz noted that Blake is proposing that the peatlands of Orange County, the Black Dirt, be reclaimed for rice production. The field day is sponsored by the Wallkill River Watershed Alliance. Sumner noted that while this is a potentially innovative farming technique, there are many questions about its viability as an economically successful alternative to the types of farming currently being practices in the Orange County Black Dirt region.

**Pete Ewanciw's Project Deadline-** Sumner reminded the Board that Pete Ewanciw has a project in AEM Round 18 Tier 4. The funding is available until the end of 2025. Sumner noted that Ewanciw had an application in AEM Round 17, but never completed the project. The District approved Ewanciw's resubmittal on the conditions that the project be completed by the end of September 2024. The District chose these terms to reassign Ewanciw's funding to another applicant if he did not make the deadline. Sumner received photos from Ewanciw that showed some progress, but there is still work to be done. The Board agreed to extend Ewanciw's deadline to the end of October.

**2024-9-5 Ruszkiewicz made the Motion, Constable seconded, to extend Pete Ewanciw's project deadline to the end of October 2024. Opposed by DeBlock & Cheney. The other three Board members voted yes – motion carried.**

**Possible Sale of the District's Mowers-** Sumner reminded the Board to discuss whether it is sensible for the District to keep the boom mower and slide out rotary mower. Kristen O'Dell Brown expressed interested in buying the boom mower. Sumner noted that the District would have to put the mower out to bid, but her interest is something to consider. Sumner suggested to Brown that she rent the mower, since it is now operable, to see if she likes it. Sumner noted that the District received low bids the last time it was put up for auction. The Board needs to factor in that the mowers are taking up space that could be potentially used for the new equipment storage. Held will contact Reuben Kline to inform him that the mower will available to rent once O'Dell has it functioning. Constable suggested that the District sell it since he knows that the equipment requires repairs often. He explained that cylinder rods need to be replaced, and the arms of the mower tend to get bent. Held reported that the arms of the District's mower are bent and are making it difficult to stabilize. Sumner advises the Board to revisit this decision next month when hopefully it will have been repaired and it has been rented a few times.

**Next meeting date: October 28<sup>th</sup>**

Sumner reiterated that the Board will need to approve the Part B Project and the Annual Plan of Work at the next Board meeting. The Part B Project and Annual Plan of Work are due for submission by November 1<sup>st</sup>, 2024. Additionally, Sumner stated that King will send the Board the sexual harassment prevention training before October's meeting. Sumner clarified that the Board has until the end of 2024 to have the post training discussion in case there is no time at the next meeting.

### **ADJOURNMENT**

**2024-9-6 Cheney made the Motion, seconded by Wright, to adjourn the meeting at 10:42 AM. All in favor.**

ORANGE COUNTY SWCD SEPTEMBER 2024 BOARD MEETING MINUTES

Minutes Prepared By:

Emily King, Secretary to the Board



Report to Board            KMS

September, 2024

### **Wallkill Flood Projects –**

No updates on the title work for Phase 4 Bench easements from last month

### **Floodplain Bench Phase 4 North**

Bench excavation and seeding of one of four areas has been completed. The weather has been favorable, unlike last year's bench project. Trees have been ordered for expected planting in early November.

### **Other Flood Control Items**

**Celery Avenue ledge lowering project** – I prepared draft support letters for six farmers thought to be advocates for this project, and supplied them to Rob Schreibeis. We have not received any letters back yet. Our response to the comment letters received by NYSDEC was submitted (copy in correspondence). According to email from DEC, they have until October 7 to make a final decision on the permit application.

**Carbon Farming Project** – Still waiting on final payment of \$4,268.32 on Southway project (same status as last month). They are having a 'close out' event for this project in Dutchess County on 10/17.

**AEM Round 18** –The Hoyt project archeological study has, after revisions requested by OPRHP, finally been accepted and a 'no effects' letter issued.

**CRF Round 7** – Work Plan materials for all three projects have been submitted to NYSSWCC – awaiting contracts. All staff are working to advance these projects while we await funding. (Same status as last month.) Wright irrigation project plans have been approved by engineer. Crist irrigation project progressing quickly – two wells have been installed. Second payment on this project is before the Board for review/approval this month. We would be fronting the State funds.

**'Sign Offs' on Soil Health Practices** –We are still working on determining if NYSSWCC staff will be able to sign off on our projects.

**Revision of Wallkill Maintenance Agreement** – Public Hearing took place on 8/26. Ryan from OCDPW and I spoke. There were no public comments.

**Climate Resilient Farming Round 8 Proposal** – Waiting for results of project ranking/awards.

### **Roller Crimper Project Update**

**The AgNPS Round 29** project at Greystone Stables is complete.

The AgNPS Round 27 Stream Crossing project at Winslow Therapeutic is in progress.

Other Items for Discussion

Gas Purchase From Wawayanda – No updates from last month.

The O'Dell's are frustrated in trying to get their farm considered for PDR, and are requesting assistance. I will discuss this more at the meeting.

Covered Barnyard project in Warwick that has been discussed before for non-compliance (used for hay and equipment storage) appeared recently to be transitioning to intended usage. But now is mostly filled with hay. A written review was prepared and sent to landowner.

Listened in to a DEC webinar on their wetlands program. They are transitioning away from 'Regulatory Maps' and will be regulating smaller wetlands.

**Emily King**

**Secretary to the Board Update**

**9/16/24**

I wanted to note that my one-year anniversary of employment at Soil & Water was on 9/13. I wanted to express my gratitude for this job and that I thoroughly enjoy working with Sumner and Held, as well as the Board. I look forward to the years to come at Soil & Water!

I corresponded with various office managers to seek their counsel as to how they provide their Board of Directors with the mandated sexual harassment training. I found a training video on the State's website, with an accompanying assessment form, that was confirmed to be satisfactory by the other office managers. One of the senior office managers recommended that it is wise to have all the Board of Directors view it in person and use a sign-in sheet to confirm attendance. The office manager explained that if there were ever an incident, the District would have a stronger defense since it would be documented in the minutes. Furthermore, she confirmed that all Directors, no matter if they are paid or volunteer, need to take the training since it is part of the performance measures.

Out of curiosity, I emailed Taylor Pawliczak, the personnel assistant, from the County's Department of Human Resources to learn what resources they provide their employees' for their sexual harassment training

I contacted the chair of the NYS Envirothon to find out who the District should make the check payable to for our donation. Organized and updated the bills for Bills to be Paid. I began updating the District's 2025 Annual Plan of Work which is due to Luskin by November 1<sup>st</sup>, 2024 to Luskin. I shared my first draft with Held and Sumner to review. Held, Sumner, and I attended a webinar presented by the DEC, which covered the proposed changes scheduled for 2025 to NY's freshwater wetland regulations.

I helped Sumner prepare multiple seed varieties, such as Virginia wild rye, soft rush, and partridge pea, that will be planted in specific areas on the Floodplain Bench. I went with Sumner and Held to take survey grade shots at the site of the Wallkill Floodplain Bench Phase 4 North. Periodically, I updated the No-Till invoices, receivables, and recorded/processed payments. I spoke to Mary regarding invoices that accrued interest and mailed the updated ones.

I attended the County Budget Hearing with Sumner, DeBlock, and Wright which went well. The County's Commissioner of Finance, Kerry Gallagher, requested a copy of the District's 2023 Independent Auditor's Report. I have reached out to the auditor who oversaw our most recent audit, but I have not received the report yet. I contacted Gallagher to let her know that I am waiting for the report and have not forgotten about her request.

As the Board knows, I contacted them to request approval to write a reimbursement check to Sunflower Valley Farms for expenses paid to CEC Excavating under the Phase

4 North project. I downloaded the emails containing their approval and saved it to the Share Drive for future reference.

I spoke with Sumner regarding Ronnie O'Dell's timesheet, specifically about his FIT & NYS Income tax deductions. I consulted forms from the State and the IRS to determine his appropriate deductions. I reviewed O'Dell's previous deductions dating back to his start date in April 2020. Once I had approval from Sumner, I provided O'Dell with his payroll check.

Also, I emailed a request for reimbursement to Gina Scott with the Department of Public Works. The request pertains to the CEC Invoice #24049, which details expenses for the Wallkill River Maintenance Project. Per Sumner's instruction, I reviewed BMPs he prepared for Greystone Stables (Ag NPS Round 29) & Crist Orchards (CRF Round 7.)

Finally, I updated the various grant ledgers, as well as the receipts, disbursements, and payroll Excel spreadsheet. I updated the online bank accounts to reflect the total listed on August's dedicated fund summary. Since there are now funds available in the AEM Round 18 grant, I renamed the former AEM Round 17 online bank account to now be AEM Round 18. I restructured the note section on the Dedicated Fund Summary to account for a more detailed report.

Thank you,

Emily

## OCSWCD Technician Update

Mary C. Held

9/13/2024

Happy one year work anniversary! Thank you for the opportunity to be employed here. I have enjoyed my time here and I hope to be useful in the years to come.

I am still digesting the pollinator project ideas and how to exactly approach the project between farmers and homeowners. I think our trial round should include 3 – 5 projects that will be decided once we get an idea of people's interest in the project. There will be a lot of prep and creation in offering a new service, but I believe this will be, if not simple, at least an interesting project to put our time and effort into.

### Equipment:

No-Till Equipment Rentals: Seeding season is underway with a few rentals already.

Mower: Mechanic has started working on the boom mower, but we have yet to receive an update.

Roller Crimper Project:

No updates on farmers ID'ing any fields for crimper use. From the last meeting:

Rowe, Chuck: Can't participate in Cornell project due to year-to-year lease, but is still very interested in using a crimper through SWCD. No fields ID'd yet.

~~Smiley, Russell: Can't participate as he is planning to turn many of his fields into permanent pasture~~

Ronne, Alex: ID'd fields he could use in the program. Total of around ~25 acres.

Conklin, Sue: Wants to pick fields after seeing how cover crop comes up, will pick fields with the fewest weeds. Planning on 4 acres of crimped cover and would like to try some upland and some low land.

Touw, Jason: ID'd fields he could use in the program, total of ~9 acres

Johnson, Phil: No fields ID'd for crimping yet

O'Dell, Mike: ID'd fields for use & agreed to test the roller crimpers for us.

**New: We got a few updated quotes for roller crimpers:**

Organic Roots Way (rollercrimpers.com)

10.5' roller crimper w/ swing hitch: \$11,160

10.5' roller crimper w/ swing hitch: \$17,890

15.5' roller crimper w/ swing hitch: \$19,410

I&J Manufacturing (<https://i-jmanufacturing.com/crop-rollers/>)

10.5' roller crimper w/ swing hitch: \$16,000

15.5' roller crimper w/ out swing hitch: \$18,000

15.5' roller crimper w/ folding arms: \$33,000

### **Wallkill River Phase 4 North:**

Kevin graciously took me out to practice surveying at the river bench again. I'm not sure surveying is my strongest suit, but I do feel like I'm understanding it more.

### **Local Cost Share Program:**

Cover Crop contracts were sent out and we are currently waiting to hear back from farmers. The allocation goes as follows:

Tom Owens (Hillcrest Farm) – 175 acres  
Mark Hoyt (Hoyt Farms) – 175 acres  
Mike O'Dell (O'Dell Family Dairy) – 150 acres  
Chuck Rowe (Rowe & Sons) – 175 acres  
Alex Ronne (Possible Farms LLC) – 35 acres  
Brad Meres (Hoeffner Farms) – 30 acres  
Jessy Raap (R&R Farm) – 15 acres  
Sue Conklin (Pine Hill Vegetable Farm) – 15 acres  
John King (Royal Acres) – 5 acres

### **CRF Update:**

Round 6: No updates have been made aside from trying to understand what is required of us when the grant closes out. I've been looking into the soil carbon amendment requirements, and I have been meeting with Greg and Ben to better comprehend what the State expects from us.

Round 7: No updates.

Round 8: No updates.

### **AGNPS Update:**

Round 27: Contract End Date: March 2025

- Marty Lain: Successfully closed out.
- Troy Vellenga: Reached out to ask if he was planning on carrying out his projects. Still waiting to hear from him.
  - Access Control System:
    - State: \$15,166
    - SWCD: \$3500
    - LO: \$4,667
    - Total: \$23,333
  - Silage Leachate Control and Treatment System:
    - State: \$26,541

- SWCD: \$6,125
- LO: \$8,167
- Total: \$40,833

Round 29:

- The project at Greystone Stable has been completed and we have paid out the remaining funds left indicated by their invoices. We are waiting to see if they want to bill for the gates to earn the rest of their \$480 remaining in their budget.

Round 30:

- No updates.

**AEM Update:**

*Round 18:*

Interim report has been submitted to Ben. Working on his notes before submitting again.

I have started working on updating Kevin Shuback's file to reflect the necessary information for the Celery Ledge project, as it is my understanding that he will be sponsoring the project.

*CNMP Update for Jessy Raap:*

I've been in contact with a technical service provider (TSP) for a comprehensive nutrient management plan (CNMP) for Jessy Raap, who is interested in having a bedded pack barn through us. In order for him to be eligible for a bedded pack barn, he would need to have a CNMP done.

AEM will reimburse for the plan up to \$51/hr. Patty Larkin at Agricultural Consulting Services, ACS, estimated a total of 40 hours as the standard amount of time spent creating the plan, not including travel. That being said, AEM could potentially reimburse \$2,040 (give or take) if we submit a time log provided by ACS. Additional services would have to be covered by the District or landowner.

The estimated total for the CNMP, not including soil/manure sampling, was quoted at \$5,802. If the average number of hours is used on this project (40), that will leave OCSWCD with a remaining balance of \$3,762 to be paid either by us or the farmer.

ACS has agreed to let the District provide technical assistance for soil sampling and manure sampling – 36 soil samples and 1 manure sample will have to be gathered and tested. These will be additional charges for OCSWCD to deal with. However, these can be billed through AEM.

Alternatively, we could fund the plan through AgNPS. Ben said we could include the cost of the plan into the planning application. The application can only be for planning and no implementation through AgNPS. They have a high success rate of being funded through AgNPS apparently.

I think our current plan is to fund the majority of the plan through AEM (as much as possible). However, I don't think it'd be out of the question to ask the farmer to provide a share of the cost.