



Otsego County Soil & Water Conservation District

967 CO HWY 33 – RIVER ROAD – COOPERSTOWN, NEW YORK 13326-9222 – PHONE (607) 547-8337 ext. 4

OTSEGO COUNTY SWCD BOARD MEETING MINUTES

Thursday, August 20, 2020

Held at office and offered remotely on GoToMeeting.com

+1 (571) 317-3116

Access Code: 440-071-429

Members Present:

Les Rathbun, Chair, Grange Rep. (In Person)
Michele Farwell, County Legislator
Ed Lentz, Member at Large
Doris Moennich, Treasurer/Landowner

Staff Present:

Jordan Clements, District Manger
Jessica Miller, Admin. Assistant/
Secretary/Assistant Treasurer

Absent:

Meg Kennedy, Vice Chair, Cty. Rep.
Larry Roseboom, Sr., Farm Bureau
Helene Kraham, Ag Landowner

Guest:

Scott Fickbohm, Regional Associate Environmental Analyst, NYS Dept. of Ag & Markets
Tony Capraro, District Conservationist, NRCS

I. Call to order: Board Chairman, **Les Rathbun** called the online meeting to order at 10:02 a.m.

II. SWCC Report

Due to a lot to cover we hear from Scott Fickbohm, Regional Associate Environmental Analyst, NYS Department of Agricultural & Markets first. Scott Fickbolm discusses the August 2020 New York State Soil & Water Conservation Committee Report. See attached report below for more details. Scott Fickbohm summarizes the report stating that Districts across the region are coming back to work after the coronavirus. Annual plan of work is due November 1st 2020 it's a pretty routine thing. It's a roadmap to guide our actions. The state extends insurance by the State to Districts if activity is in the annual plan of work.

AEM 5-year strategy includes partner updates critical to Ag NPS and CRF applications. Recommends looking at application to pull from and update strategy. There was no SWCC committee this month. They have been using Webex, and meetings have had 50-60 people attend virtually. The committee revised the performance measures to help with Covid-19. The



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performance measures haven't been waived but the dollars have decreased. Attending the SWCC Webex meeting is any easy performance measure to meet.

AgNPS Round 26 is being voted on in September. Applications will be ranked and voted on. It is unknown when they will be officially announced. CRF has a ranking list that has been voted on but awards have still not gone out. For Community Resiliency Training Program Funding questions email Lauren Prezorski. Source Water Buffer Program has 5 million available to support the purchase of development rights on agricultural land to support the protection of active public drinking water sources. There is an online Directors training for District law. The recording is online, send email to document completion of training. Scott also stated he is happy to be here, he's been attending meetings, and is available for questions. Michele has some questions for Scott. Discussion on source water buffer program, the District has tried to work with OLT and landowners interested in program but the landowners' expense have been too high which prevented the application from being put in. Discussion of undersized culvert issue. Mike Lovegreen came out to site, and the road is closed. We are working with the highway superintendent.

III. Approval of minutes:

- Motion was made by **Farwell**, seconded by **Moennich** to approve July's board meeting minutes. All in favor. Motion carried.

IV. Approval of Treasurer's Report & Bills to be paid

A list of July-August's Bills to be Paid and May, June, and July's financial reports were provided to the Board in advance of the meeting.

- Motion was made by **Lentz**, seconded by **Farwell** to approve May, June, and July's financial reports. All in favor. Motion carried.
- Motion was made by **Lentz**, seconded by **Moennich** to approve July-August's paid bills. All in favor. Motion carried.

Scott noted that on the balance sheet Round 19 and Round 20 AgNPS grants have been closed out and the balance can be moved into the general account. Made mention of two grants not showing up on current balance sheet.



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V. District Secretary/Assistant Treasurer Report

- Worked with Angelica twice this month on 2019 4th quarter audit. We have edited groups and item lists to make entries more coherent. We plan on working together again on Tuesday.
- We also went over budget reports, and how-to setup QuickBooks's to itemize the 2021 tree sale by tree species purchased.
- Continued to assist staff with virtual Farm Tour
- BMP Verifications and Data Reporting Updates for Chesapeake Bay Model
- Continuing to file, pay bills, run payroll, and reporting as necessary

VI. District Reports

District Manager, **Jordan Clements**, reported the following:

Jordan contacted the Nature Conservancy for credit for carbon sequestration program. He will be having an appointment to discuss the program in the next two weeks. Dan, Jordan, and the Board are welcome to attend. Hopefully we will be able to pick up where we left off. Staff have been extremely busy with the virtual farm tour. It will avoid concerns with the correct spacing requirements, and will be kept to two hours or less. It will consist of prerecorded conversations and videos. Nothing is better than being on the farm, but virtually is the next best thing. Invitations will be sent out soon.

Round 23 AgNPS construction will be moving forward. Tuesday we have a walk through meeting and should be breaking ground after. Will need to reach out to Scott for more extensions due to the cost of materials (concrete, fencing) skyrocketing, keeping people from breaking ground. Working on AEM 5-year plan. Jordan asks if Tony, NRCS, would like to talk because we have considerable things to talk about.

VII. Partner Reports

NRCS-

Tony Capraro, District Conservationist, reports that he hopes all is well. NRCS is in Phase 1 therefore they can have 1 staff member max in the office, while the rest telework. Tony has been writing contracts for next EQIP round. CSP contracts were finished up last month, there are 6 new additional CSP contracts. Tony has been busy writing contracts and getting them approved. They have over 30 applications for general EQIP. Working with Jordan and Chris



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on RCPP-applications. NRCS is still 1 staff short in the Walton field office, the position keeps getting advertised. CRP/AgNPS grants being worked on to get designed and implemented. The price for concrete has been astronomical \$700-\$800 per yard. It's hard to move forward on construction even with two funding sources. No one can find materials, or afford them. NRCS Cooperstown field office is still taking phone calls and Tony is available for phone calls and emails.

FSA- Did not submit a report.

VIII. Other Business

Jordan Clements reports the following:

The school year is starting back up and Jordan's children's school has opted in for ½ day sessions 5 days a week. He proposed that he would need to leave for 2 days a week early to pick up his kids from school. Starting Sept 9th he would like to work from home for two afternoons a week so he can pick his kids up from school. Chris also has daycare conflicts, he has asked to continue to work two days a week from home. Les feels we have to make it easier on people. Ed is also fine with Jordan working from home, and feels as long as Jordan is comfortable with Chris working from home that it is acceptable. Chris will continue to work on his field work when he is in the office. Jordan would still like to alter the AEM contract once Chris's 3rd CNMP is in for review. Stating again it means more AEM hours, not more money upfront. Jordan attended SWEC meeting to communicate about the budget. Jordan was told by Keith McCarty to talk to Allen Ruffles further because there is talk of zeroing out outside agencies. Just to remind everyone, we have AEM and Part C funds, but that is future monies we rely heavily on the County allocation upfront. If we get zeroed by the county we will have to lay people off. We will continue to try to sell why we are worth being funded. We can show how much money we can leverage for every dollar the County has given us. It was \$15-\$25 on the dollar some years, we bring contractors to the area that spend in our County. Now more than ever we need to show why we need to be funded. Michele mentions that zeroing all outside agencies has not been official and that the County is discussing options. She wouldn't agree to it either. She feels it's not a failure to understand the importance, and that we shouldn't decide plans based on that idea. The County is in a state of not knowing and it hasn't been talked about how low the fund balance can go.

Jordan discusses that when the County cut us the first time at 15% percent that it took a good portion of the former secretary's wages. Allen Ruffles was pushing the District to find documentation that states that the County must fund Otsego County Soil and Water Conservation District. However, unfortunately that is not in District law, no such documentation exists, and Scott confirmed. Scott also stated that districts are planning for



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cuts, and that he is available to strategize budgets. On the State side the EPF was voted on for next year's fund, but we know from the past that the EPF has been tapped into before. Strategy would be to cut programs before direct aid. The District will work to figure out what we would be able to carry over and see what could hold us over. Part A moneys are definite, we could definitely handle some portions of a further cut but not a complete cut. Jordan has been forward with the staff about the situation. For the next board meeting we will have two budgets ready.

Staff is in the field. Dan has been working on the Arnold lake parcel. Rich wanted a rough estimate on projected timber sales. The last few FMP's written have all indicated ash needs to be cut before invasion of emerald ash borer. Did review with Rich that \$45,000 would go to the County after timber sales to give them the refund on their investment. With 12% after that going back towards the forestry program. Hopefully carbon sequestration program will also help.

Jordan spoke about his master's thesis, he is setting up a long-term buffer monitoring program, with that involves installing water monitoring wells. Today his advisor and summer intern are hand digging one of the monitoring wells. He would have been out there with them today but he wanted to run it by the board. Jordan asked the board if they would allow him to work on the wells during work time, he only has a few more to do. He is not asking to do homework during work time. Ed says he doesn't have a problem with Jordan working on digging the water monitoring wells, he just asks that he lets Les know before he goes out to work on them. Michele says working on thesis and accommodating for daycare is not an issue and that Jordan is responsible. Ed mentioned that he is concerned with the unfinished watershed plan. Jordan stated the problem is that 2-3 people have not followed up with Erica on her questions. Jordan will follow up with people and Ed says he wants to see it done, and that it is making the District look bad because it is not completed. Ed will also help with follow up. Jordan is following up with the DEC again for the ESD reimbursement.

IX. Next Meeting: Next meeting to be held on **Thursday, September 17, 2020 at 10:30 am on [GotoMeeting.com](https://www.gotomeeting.com)**

X. Adjournment: Meeting adjourned at **11:15 a.m.**

Respectfully submitted,

Jessica Miller

Jessica L. Miller,

Administrative Assistant/Secretary/Assistant Treasurer



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September 1, 2020

New York State Soil & Water Conservation Committee
August 2020

Coronavirus Updates

General: As a reminder, the SWCC SharePoint (<https://nysemail.sharepoint.com>) site has a link, “**Announcements**” that anyone can access and post their county’s emergency/Continuity of Government plans and other steps the District is taking during this event response, including “reopening” plans to safely resume program, project and operations.

Also, the Governor has extended the suspension of in-person meeting requirements of Open Meetings Law until **September 4th, 2020**. If your SWCD does indeed plan to continue with board meetings in some sort of “remote” fashion, please pay attention to the added requirement of meeting recording and transcription, if applicable.

NYS SWCC News

2021 Annual Plan of Work (APOW): It’s time to start updating your APOW for 2020. The deadline for submittal to your AEA is **November 1, 2020**. This will allow time to review, provide feedback, and recommend to the SWCC for approval by the end of the calendar year. The SWCC understands that there is a great level of fiscal and operational uncertainty going into 2021. All we ask at this time is that SWCDs do their best when trying to assess and document what their activities may be next year. Rest assured that there is always an opportunity for SWCDs to make updates to their Plans of Work if changes are necessary. Please don’t hesitate to discuss with your Regional AEA if there are any questions or concerns.

AEM 5 Year Strategy (2021-2025): A reminder that now is the time to begin working on a 5-year strategy for your local AEM efforts. A core reason for updating your five-year AEM Strategic Plan is to make sure the document is still an effective tool, intended to help the District



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(and partners) address water quality and other natural resource concerns and opportunities related to agriculture. Newly developed or updated Strategic Plans may be submitted to the State Committee anytime between now and **December 31, 2020**. Information regarding the strategy can be found on the SWCC Sharepoint

: [https://nysemail.sharepoint.com/sites/Agriculture/SWCC/AEM%20Resources/AEM%20Base%20Program%20Materials/AEM%20Base%20Round%2016%20Materials/AEM%20Strategic%20Plan%20Update%20Information%20Sheet%20\(2021-2025\).pdf](https://nysemail.sharepoint.com/sites/Agriculture/SWCC/AEM%20Resources/AEM%20Base%20Program%20Materials/AEM%20Base%20Round%2016%20Materials/AEM%20Strategic%20Plan%20Update%20Information%20Sheet%20(2021-2025).pdf)

August SWCC Meeting: The State Committee meeting will not meet in the month of August. They will reconvene with a regular meeting in September. Further details and an agenda for September meeting will be available soon.

Community Resiliency Training Program Funding: The SWCC, together with NYSDEC are pleased to announce the availability of funding for Community Resiliency Training. The purpose of this funding is to provide Community and Municipality-based Training Events to increase resiliency to future flooding and outbreaks of harmful algal blooms in high-risk waterbodies. This opportunity is now available through the NYS Grants Gateway <https://grantsmanagement.ny.gov>. The application (**AGM01-CRTP-2019**) and required uploads found on the NYS Grants Gateway must be used to apply for these funds. **All applicable materials must be submitted through the NYS Grants Gateway. This opportunity has an open enrollment until February 2022.** Questions about the funding opportunity can be directed to Lauren Prezorski, lauren.prezorski@agriculture.ny.gov. **Once an application is submitted using Grants Gateway, please also notify Lauren Prezorski via email.**

Source Water Buffer Program: \$5 million is available to support the purchase of development rights on agricultural land to support the protection of active public drinking water sources. The



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RFA and associated documents are now available on

SharePoint, <https://nysemail.sharepoint.com>. Questions regarding the RFA must be submitted in writing to bethany.bzduch@agriculture.ny.gov.

Director Training: A reminder that your Regional AEA is available to present training modules to your Board of Directors. Most notably the District Law training module which is training required every 3 years under the Performance Measure 1. Please reach out to your Regional AEA if you have any training needs. Additionally, the District Law training module is available to complete virtually via VIMEO at <https://vimeo.com/446525792> If a director chooses to complete the training via the VIMEO presentation, please obtain a communication from the director attesting to participation. This communication will serve as backup documentation should it ever be needed.

Other News/Events

Conservation Skills Workshop: The registration for the 2020 Conservation Skills Workshop is now out! The workshop is offered a little different this year with webinar classes being held the week of September 14th and single day, in-person field classes being held September 21 - 30th regionally across the state. Registrations are due August 31st. Please share this with all employees and any other interested parties. If anybody has any question or concerns you may reach out to Tom Eskildsen at Yates SWCD (tom@ysoilwater.com), Stacy Russell at Cortland SWCD (stacy.russell@cortlandswcd.org) or Mark Burger at Onondaga SWCD (mburger@ocswcd.org).

Penn State's Ag Progress Days: August 9-12, 2020, Penn State Extension educators and faculty have come together provide a virtual learning program filled with the latest in Ag research and best practices. Choose from more than 46 live webinars and get your questions



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answered by the experts. View the live webinar schedule and register online

here: <https://www.cvent.com/events/ag-progress-days-2020/event-summary-7d738e2b61e6466bac989b508ced2111.aspx>

NY's Great Lakes Action Agenda Partners & Projects Webinar Series: The final webinar in the 5-part Great Lakes Action Agenda Partners & Projects Webinar Series will be held next Tuesday, **August 11th at 2pm**. Register info found here:

https://content.govdelivery.com/attachments/NYSDEC/2020/06/03/file_attachments/1465830/Summer2020_GLAASeriesFlyer.pdf

Watershed Wednesdays: Join the 2020 Upper Susquehanna Watershed Virtual Forum on **Wednesdays at 9:30 AM in August** for short conservation orientated presentations. This week's Wat mini session will focus on the Trees for Tributaries program and will focus on helping landowners and municipalities understand how the program helps with reforestation, decreasing erosion, reducing flood damage improving wildlife habitat and protecting water quality. Please join us with Zoom at <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87453133125> Questions can be directed to Wendy Walsh at WalshW@co.tioga.ny.us