



NYACD Meeting  
Zoom  
Wednesday, January 22, 2025  
7:00 P.M.

**Attendance:**

Sam Casella, President      Rob Carpenter, 1<sup>st</sup> V. President  
Scott Ryan, 2<sup>nd</sup> V. President      Ernie Swift, Treas.  
Bruce Dolph, Secretary      Jim Brick, Div. I  
Rollin Pickering, Div. II      Brian Danforth, Div. IV  
John M. Stortecky, Div. V      Sherri Slater, Div. VI  
Blanche Hurlbutt, Ex. Director

**Absent:**

Dan Farrand, Past Pres.

**Guests Present:** None present.

**Partners Present:** Bethany Bzduch, SWCC Ex. Dir., Blake Glover, NRCS State Conservation

**Absent:** Caitlin Stewart, NYSCDEA' President

**I. Call to Order:** Sam Casella, President Called the meeting to order 7:03 p.m.

**II. Roll Call:** Blanche Hurlbutt, Ex. Dr. gave roll call.

**III. Secretary's Report/Approval of Minutes:**

- A motion by Bruce Dolph seconded by Sherri Slater to approve the December minutes. Carried.  
**#1/22/2025 = A**

**IV. Treasurer's Report:** Ernie gave a fully updated report on the December financial reports. Ernie discussed the need to make a motion regarding the upcoming CD that will expire. Ernie reported that a motion needs to be made to move line items to balance the books.

- A motion by Bruce Dolph seconded by Scott Ryan to approve the December Treasurer's report as provided. Carried. **#1/22/2025 = B**
- A motion by Sherri Slater seconded by Rollin Pickering to approve the December Bills to be Paid. Carried. **#1/22/2025 = C**
- A motion by Bruce Dolph seconded by Rollin Pickering to approve Ernie Swift to renew the upcoming expiring CD depending on the best CD rate when CD becomes due to renew. Carried.  
**#1/22/2025 = D**

- A motion by Bruce Dolph seconded by Sherri Slater to approve the Treasurers request to move line items to balance the books. Carried. **#1/22/2025 = E**

## **V. Partners Reports:**

**NYSCDEA' Report:** Caitlin Stewart, CDEA President was unable to attend due to a prior commitment and no report was provided.

**NRCS Report:** Blake Glover, NRCS State Conservation, reported the resolution that was presented at the annual meeting regarding the backlog in NRCS project cultural resources reviews has been addressed. Caitlin Stewart sent out an email to all soil and water districts asking districts if they had any issues to reach out to Blake directly and he only heard from one district. Two new staff has been hired and will begin in the next couple of weeks.

NRCS has hired two new staff personnel covering Assistant State Conservationist Field Operations in the western part of the state and one Assistant State Conservationist Field Operations for the north east portion of the state.

NRCS is under a hiring freeze and is now public.

A continuing resolution is extended to March 15, 2025. Hoping the budget will pass before that date arrives.

**State Committee Report:** Bethany Bzduch, SWCC Executive Director, provided the following report:

### **NY Association of Conservation District January 22, 2025**

#### **NYS Soil and Water Conservation Committee Report**

**NYS Soil and Water Conservation Committee:** Next meeting will be February 25, 2025. In-person meeting locations will be in Albany and Syracuse and we will have a virtual option as well. We will not be holding a meeting in March 2025. We will also be planning an in-person meeting in April. We encourage all to attend.

**SWCC Strategic Priorities for 2025:** At the February 2025 meeting, the SWCC will be discussing strategic objectives that will be prioritized in 2025. We welcome any feedback or suggestions from Soil and Water Conservation District. Any District wishing to provide comments, please e-mail Bethany Bzduch at [Bethany.bzduch@agriculture.ny.gov](mailto:Bethany.bzduch@agriculture.ny.gov).

**NYS State of the State Address and Executive Budget Proposal:** On January 14, Governor Hochul delivered her State of the State address. A recording of the address and a copy of the State of State book are available here: <https://www.governor.ny.gov/programs/2025-state-state>. The Executive Budget Proposal was announced on January 21, 2025. See below for additional details.

**4 – Way Partnership Initiatives:** Members of the 4 – Way Partnership are working together on the following initiatives:

- Collaborating to gather information from SWCD regarding what types of employees they are looking, employee qualifications, what colleges Districts work with, District internship programs, inventory of BOCES Conservation Programs, etc. This information will be used to continue our work with SUNY to help them ensure graduating students are prepared for careers in conservation.
- Creating project highlights, information to share with NYS legislators to continue building awareness of SWCDs

#### **Funding Updates:**

- Received determination from the Governor's Office and Department of Labor exempting AGNPS projects that are funded by Bond Act from prevailing wage requirements.

#### **FY26 Environmental Protection Fund**

Total appropriations for the FY 2026 EPF are proposed to be **\$400 million**. Appropriations of interest to AGM/SWCC/SWCDs:

- \$15.25 million for the Climate Resilient Farms Program, including up to \$500,000 for the Cornell Soil Health program
- \$18.5 million for Agricultural Nonpoint Source Pollution Control Projects, including \$250,000 for Cornell Pesticide Management Education Program (PMEP)
- \$21 million for Farmland Protection, including \$150,000 for the Cornell Land Classification and Master List of Soils
- \$1.85 million for Biodiversity Stewardship, including \$500,000 for pollinator protection
- \$22.25 million for the Water Quality Improvement Program (WQIP), including up to \$1.2 million for Eastern Finger Lakes Coalition, \$1.3 million for the Lake Erie-Niagara River Basin, and \$1 million for the Allegheny River Watershed Program
- \$22.5 million for the Oceans and Great Lakes which support the Ecosystem Based Management Program
- \$18.55 million for Invasive Species, including \$175,000 for the Cornell University Plant Certification program
- \$17.25 million for Soil and Water Conservation Districts
- \$1.9 million for the Agricultural Waste Management, including up to \$700,000 for the Dairy Acceleration Program
- \$14.275 million for the Waterfront Revitalization Program

#### **Board Report:**

**President:** Sam reported he will be attending the winter NACD meeting in Salt Lake City, Utah in February. Sam reported there will be some changes at the NACD level due to retirements and reassignments of duties/committees.

**Executive Director:** She attended the Great Lakes Commission committee meeting on March 16th by Zoom. They discussed/reviewed the Ohio State University's review of the committees' meeting comments in November related to the eight states concerns and needs. Ohio State University is creating a survey for the states to reach out to their districts locally.

Legislative days is in the works and appointments are still being made. Presently we have fifty-three (53) appointments with more to come.

Blanche reported that she will be sending out a doodle pole to the NYACD Board for a meeting to discuss the NYACD/NE NACD joint meeting set for September. Blanche and Scott met with Linda Benn

at DoubleTree hotel to discuss the contract, our needs, and tour the hotel on January 14<sup>th</sup>. Blanche has reached out to Bethany Bzduch, SWCC, Mark Burger, District Manager, Onondaga SWCD, and Troy Bishop, Grazing, for potential tours and training sessions. Onondaga SWCD will set up two separate tours for two days.

Blanche is working on scheduling appointments for Sam for the annual Fly-In in Washington, DC on March 26<sup>th</sup>.

Blanche and Sam met by zoom with Doug Kierst, District Manager Cayuga SWCD, to discuss concerns and issues with the Owasco Lake Association and their lawsuits. Also, if there was anything NYACD could do to address the issues. At this point it is a wait and see how the lawsuit goes. Bethany stated that Ag & Mkts is trying to have the lawsuit dropped and/or Ag & Mkts dropped from the lawsuit.

Blanche reported that she attended the CDEA meeting today, January 22<sup>nd</sup> and they had a discussion on the possibility of them hiring a lobbyist. Blanche feels there is a disconnect between CDEA and NYACD and misunderstanding of what NYACD does for the districts. It was suggested that NYACD write a letter to CDEA regarding NYACD's mission and list of items related to our goals and expectations. Blanche and Sam will work together to create a letter for CDEA, Directors, and staff regarding the above issue.

Blanche reported on bill 3299 related to NY open water data act. This is a bill regarding data collection and not changing rules and regulations for local municipalities to regulate open water.

#### **Director & Representatives –**

- a. **Division I:** Jim Brick reported on the he has been attending meetings on behalf of his district and NYACD in his area. Jim reported that Wyoming SWCD will be hosting a wilderness first aid two (2) day training session in April. March 1<sup>st</sup> they will be hosting their annual dinner and present their annual awards.
- b. **Division II:** Rollin Pickering reported that his division folks are working on their annual tree and shrub sales program. Rollin reported that Monroe tree orders are above last year at this time.
- c. **Division III:** No representative. No report.
- d. **Division IV:** Brian Danforth reported he sent out a letter introducing himself to his division folks and hopes to have more to report next month on what his division folks are doing.
- e. **Division V:** John M Stortecky reported that he had no report at this time on his divisions.
- f. **Division VI:** Sherri Slater reported that she has reached out to all her districts within her division and has some upcoming board meetings to attend to.
- g. **Division VII:** No representative, no report.
- h. **Division VIII:** No representative, no report.

## Committee Reports:

**2024-2025 NYS Envirothon:** Ernie stated that he missed the January NYS Envirothon and deferred it to Blanche. Blanche reported that the committee is on track with registrations to be handed out at Water Quality Symposium (WQS) and the oral presentation will be up online & to district Envirothon leads by February 1<sup>st</sup>.

### VI. Old Business:

- **Legislative Days** – in Blanche’s report.
- **NYACD By-laws** – Board was advised to review the by-laws and that if they had any questions to let the board know, so we can discuss them fully.

### VII. New Business:

- **Questions:** John inquired about what he needs to share with his district divisions, so that he can do the duties related to his position.
- **Bills #A3299 & S239 d:** Were discussed in Blanche’s report.
- **Donation for CDEA Conservation Skills Workshop:** Blanche reported that she had received an email from Tom Eskildsen, Technician Yates SWCD regarding a donation of \$1,000 from NYACD. Blanche stated that NYACD has made this donation in the past.
- A motion was made by Bruce Dolph seconded by Sherri Slater to approve the donation of \$1,000 for the CDEA Conservation Skills Workshop. Carried. **#1/22/2025 = F**

**VIII. Executive Session:** Entered executive session at 8:27 p.m. returned out of executive session at 9:00 p.m. No action taken.

- A motion was made by Rob Carpenter seconded by Bruce Dolph to move into executive session to discuss Executive Directors concerns. Carried. **#1/22/2025 = G**
- A motion was made by Jim Brick seconded by Sherri Slater to move out of executive session. Carried. **#1/22/2025 = H**

### IX. Adjournment:

- A motion by John Stortecky seconded by Sherri Slater to adjourn the meeting. Carried. **#1/22/2025 = I**

Meeting Adjourned at 9:02 p.m.

Next meeting date is **February 26, 2025, 7:00 p.m.** by Zoom.

Respectfully submitted by

*Blanche L. Hurlbutt*

NYACD Executive Director January 23, 2025

**May Motions Meeting:**

**#1/22/2025 = A Approval December Minutes**

**#1/22/2025 = B Approval December Finances**

**#1/22/2025 = C Approval December Bills to Pay**

**#1/22/2025 = D Approval CD Renewal**

**#1/22/2025 = E Approval Line Items**

**#1/22/2025 = F Approval CDEA Con Skills Donation**

**#1/22/2025 = G Enter Ex-Session**

**#1/22/2025 = H Exit Ex-Session**

**#1/22/2025 = I Approval of Adjourn**