Watershed Agricultural Council
Agriculture ◆ Forestry ◆ Conservation Easements ◆ Economic Viability
33195 State Highway 10, Walton, New York 13856 phone: 607-865-7790 fax: 607-865-4932 nycwatershed.org

MINUTES OF THE WATERSHED AGRICULTURAL COUNCIL MEETING

March 24, 2026

(*via MS 'Teams')

Director's Present:
Wayland 'Bud' Gladstone, *Chair*
Jennifer Grossman, *Secretary*
Karl Gockel, *Treasurer*
Fred Huneke
Steve Reed
Marilyn Wyman
Michael Vander Werff, *NYC DEP*
Jason Helmbold
Dwight Bruno
Tom Hutson, *Vice Chair*
Paul Gallay
Kyle Clark
James Darling
Barbara Hanselman
John Verhoeven
Nancy Wyncoop

Others Present:
Ryan Naatz, *Executive Director*
Carol Bishop, *Director of Finance*
Amy Faulkner, *Director of Operations*
Connor Young, *WOH Agricultural Program Manager*
Serena Orleski, *Easement Program Manager*
Kristan Morley, *Economic Viability Program Manager*
Kayla Henderson, *Head of Administration*
Tom Pavlesich, *Forestry Program Manager*
Mike Morales, *Stewardship Coordinator*
Rebecca Morgan, *Acquisitions Coordinator*
Heather Magnan, *Communications Manager*
Kristan Morley, *Economic Viability Program Manager*
Sara Storrer, *NYC DEP*
Patrick Palmer, *NYS DOH*
Morgan Zyzik-Tarbell, *NYS DOH*

Director's Absent:
N/A

I. Meeting called to order at 10:05 a.m.

II. Approval of Minutes

Motion to approve the minutes of the February 24, 2026, meeting as presented.
Motion: John Verhoeven
Second: Tom Hutson
Approved

Doc ID: 924e74eee79e7d68c88ca1bdaefaf1eb00f84305

III. <u>Executive Director's Report</u> – Ryan Naatz

A. <u>Grant Opportunities</u>

1. Ryan Naatz proposed a grant opportunity, '**2026 *Farmland for a New Generation New York (FNG-NY) Regional Navigator Grant***', for consideration by Council to apply for. FNG-NY is a program coordinated by *American Farmland Trust* which supports a network of *Regional Navigators,* or partner organizations with dedicated staff, that provides training and on-the-ground customized support for farmers and landowners in regions across New York. A Regional Navigator helps connect farmers and landowners to resources or information needed to access, transfer, or conserve farmland. The following key points were highlighted in relation to this grant:

- The online application must be submitted by April 10, 2026.
- For the 2026-27 grant year, $380k in funding is available and will be awarded in late spring/early summer of 2026. Grant funds may be utilized for activities/expenses incurred between July 1 - June 30.

WAC is interested in applying for a modest amount of $25k to put towards a part-time position (25 hrs./week) within the Easement program meant to fill a niche and supplement our work and goals that WAC programs have limitations in pursuing otherwise. Additionally, there is a parallel to the FAD to ensure land we have remains beneficial to our local economy. With Council and DEP support, Ryan is requesting a motion to approve moving forward with the grant application submittal.

Motion to approve the request to apply for the proposed 2026 FNG-NY Regional Navigator Grant.
<u>Motion</u>: Fred Huneke
<u>Second:</u> Tom Hutson
Approved

2. Ryan Naatz proposed a second grant partnership opportunity, ***'ROSES-25** (Research Opportunities in Space & Earth Science) **A. 10 INNOVATE'** (Impactful & Novel Use of NASA Earth Observations & Models for Value-Added Applications, Technology, & Societal Benefits)* for consideration by Council to pursue. This grant is a NASA solicitation that funds projects integrating NASA Earth observation data into practical, decision-making applications, and is open to all non-governmental U.S. entities (*including non-profit organizations*). The following key points were highlighted in relation to this grant:

- Proposals can be submitted anytime until August 31, 2026.
- Projects span approximately three (3) years, with potential funding up to $1M, focusing on near-immediate impacts on business or decision-making workflows.
- WAC would look to be named as a 'co-investigator'. Applicants must register as a NASA participant, qualifying for reimbursement eligibility up to $5k.

WAC will need to determine how best to utilize this technology to integrate satellite data with on the ground interfaces where it contributes directly to our agricultural program. General areas for potential that were noted include vegetation ID, field conditioning monitoring, field boundary verification, potential usage for identifying drainage/run off patterns, buffer area verification, and program monitoring, to name a few. Discussion ensued at length relating to grant details, Columbia

Doc ID: 924e74eee79e7d68c88ca1bdaefaf1eb00f84305

involvement/connections and reassurance regarding farm/farmer confidentiality concerns brought forth by Council members in relation to participation.

Motion to approve drafting a letter of support naming WAC as a co-investigator for this grant.
Motion: Tom Hutson
Second: Jim Darling
Recused: Paul Gallay
Approved

IV. Chair's Report – Wayland "Bud" Gladstone

Bud Gladstone shared that he and another Council member participated in a voluntary community outreach program, 'Conservation Easement Roundtable', hosted by the WAC easement program on March 13 at Hamden Town Hall. There was a good turnout (*more than 30 landowners, farmers, and local officials were in attendance*) along with great discussion focused on inviting participants to weigh the financial, environmental, and cultural trade offs facing farmland across the NYC watershed.

V. Building Committee – Karl Gockel

Cost estimations for the new building project were provided by Ken Gay, Keystone Associates, during the March 17 committee meeting, noting a current projection of $27m and a 5-year projection of $32m. Karl Gockel thanked the forestry program for suggesting consideration of incorporating wood energy/wood-based products within the building designs.

VI. Finance Committee – Karl Gockel

The next committee meeting is scheduled for April 14; will have an updated report available at the next Council meeting.

VII. Governance Committee – Jason Helmbold

A. Draft Bylaws

Proposed changes to the drafted bylaws were presented to the Council for consideration and were discussed at length. Any suggested changes should be sent to Jason Helmbold for review at the next governance committee meeting. Fred Huneke voiced his appreciation to Jason for all his efforts in taking the governance committee to another level as the committee Chair.

VIII. Agricultural Committee – Steve Reed

Highlights from the March 10 committee meeting included extended discussion on biosecurity as well as proposed guideline revisions and program approvals. The next committee meeting is scheduled for April 14 if anyone is interested in participating.

IX. Economic Viability Committee – Jennifer Grossman

Council members are reminded of the change with committee meetings now being conducted bi-monthly. Topics reviewed in the last meeting held focused mostly on grant eligibility updates with further discussion based on the 2026 EV handbook and deliverable updates.

Doc ID: 924e74eee79e7d68c88ca1bdaefaf1eb00f84305

X. Easement Committee – Tom Hutson

The committee met on March 4 with discussion had on various stewardship updates and acquisition project motions/updates. Tom commended the success of the easement program's recent public workshop on March 13 and thanked the Council members that were able to attend.

XI. Forestry Committee – Marilyn Wyman

At the last committee meeting, forestry handbook modifications for 2026 were completed and the 2027 work plan was worked on. Heather Hilson has taken over in-house logger training and is doing really great things in developing connections with loggers. Her efforts are recognized and appreciated.

XII. East of Hudson Committee – Fred Huneke

A full program report update was provided highlighting updates on the Hemlock Hill construction project and the ongoing challenge of filling the EOH Ag Program Manager position. Fred Huneke recognized Amy Faulkner's efforts in covering the position duties during the interim period.

XIII. NYC DEP Report – Michael Vander Werff, NYC DEP

The FAD deliverable is due at the end of this month. Trends, etc. from over the past five years will be reviewed. Michael Vander Werff offered to present on data highlights at the next in-person Council meeting and once made public, will share end results with the Council.

XIV. NYS DOH, US EPA Reports – Patrick Palmer

There are no updates to report on currently.

XV. Executive Session

Motion to enter Executive Session at 12:17 p.m.
Motion: Steve Reed
Second: Tom Hutson
Approved

Motion to come out of Executive Session at 1:00 p.m.
Motion: Fred Huneke
Second: Steve Reed
Approved

XVII. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 1:00 p.m.
The next meeting of the Council is scheduled for **April 28, 2026,** at 10:00 a.m., via Teams.

Jennifer Grossman 05 / 18 / 2026

Jennifer Grossman, WAC Board Secretary Date

Doc ID: 924e74eee79e7d68c88ca1bdaefaf1eb00f84305

Dropbox Sign

Audit trail

Title	March 2026 WAC Meeting Minutes for Signature
File name	March_2026_WAC_Minutes.pdf
Document ID	924e74eee79e7d68c88ca1bdaefaf1eb00f84305
Audit trail date format	MM / DD / YYYY
Status	● Signed

Document History

SENT	**04 / 29 / 2026** 16:25:31 UTC	Sent for signature to Jennifer Grossman (jgrossman@nycwatershed.org) from khenderson@nycwatershed.org IP: 204.14.57.170
VIEWED	**05 / 18 / 2026** 11:51:19 UTC	Viewed by Jennifer Grossman (jgrossman@nycwatershed.org) IP: 72.225.148.61
SIGNED	**05 / 18 / 2026** 11:51:35 UTC	Signed by Jennifer Grossman (jgrossman@nycwatershed.org) IP: 72.225.148.61
COMPLETED	**05 / 18 / 2026** 11:51:35 UTC	The document has been completed.