



# Lake Erie Watershed Protection Alliance

*Cattaraugus, Chautauqua and Erie Counties*

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## LEWPA Board Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, November 26, 2024 at 1:00 pm

Webex

**Voting Board Members present:** Cattaraugus: Jake Kelly (Vice-chair), Connor Maxwell; Chautauqua: Cassie Pinkoski (Chair), Rebecca Wurster, Dave McCoy; Erie: Mark Gaston (Treasurer), and William Smith.

**Others in attendance:** Joanna Panasiewicz (Coordinator), Sandra Notaro, Jeanne Beiter, Don Stribick, Carol Markham, Kristin Fitzgerald, Taylor West, Erin Kane, Bryan Hinterberger, Madeline Lambrix, Wendy Paterson.

1. **Call to order** by Chair Pinkoski at 1:03 pm.
2. **Welcome and introductions** around the virtual room
3. **Approval of the [August 27, 2024 minutes](#).** A motion to approve the minutes was made by R. Wurster, was seconded by J. Kelly, and was carried.
4. **Financial report by Treasurer.** M. Gaston reported that the account had \$79,253.79 at the last meeting. Of that, \$75,000 was from Erie County for Coordinator position. \$103.46 in interest was earned for three months. Erie County added \$25,000 for Coordinator position (total \$100,000). Total in account is \$104,357.25. A motion to accept the Treasurer's report as read was made by C. Maxwell, was seconded by J. Kelly, and was carried.
5. **Intermunicipal Agreement update** – Signed by Cattaraugus County. Currently being signed by Chautauqua County and then will come to Erie County for another 5 years starting in January 2025.
6. **Outreach Update**
  - a. Erie County Soil & Water Conservation District (SWCD) at Reinstein for Fall Fest 9/21 with LEWPA brochures
  - b. Erie County Fall Fest in Lancaster 9/28 had 2,000 attendees with LEWPA brochures
  - c. Seiche preparedness workshop in Evans 10/17 was well attended with ~50 people.
  - d. Open Buffalo Eco Justice Block Party 11/16 had LEWPA brochures and asked for WMP projects
  - e. NYSERDA wind feasibility study presentation survey – Many municipalities have already passed resolutions in opposition to in-lake wind turbines meaning the issue could be combative. Not a strong desire for a presentation based on survey results. It was decided not to move forward at this time.
  - f. WNY Legislative Delegation presentation on December 4<sup>th</sup>. Discussion followed on what to present.

## **7. NYSEPF funding**

- a. Year 2.2 – J. Panasiewicz reported that projects are closed out and final reports will be sent to DEC shortly. Tracking numbers just need to be confirmed.
- b. Year 2.3 – Projects are wrapping up and expected to be completed in spring 2025. Chautauqua hydroseeding and boat stewards projects are complete. Barcelona, Dunkirk Harbor, and Hanford Bay Proof projects are due by the end of the year. Chautauqua SWCD construction projects are complete. Cattaraugus will finish projects in spring 2025 as soon as able to get into trout streams in May. Erie completed Euglena project and Dresser Creek construction. Daemen salt study is still underway and hydroseeding and buffer planting will be completed in spring 2025.
- c. Year 2.4 – Vouchered for the advance to new state fiscal contact. Payments should be coming shortly for the 2.2 close-out and 2.4 advance.

W. Smith mentioned Evans has sediment study for Sturgeon Point through GZA firm funded by Local Waterfront Revitalization Program. Encouraged a regional approach for sediment study. (Sturgeon Point, Barcelona, Dunkirk, Hanford Bay, etc.) It was also mentioned there is a DEC and UPenn webpage for the Lake Ontario sediment study.

## **8. USEPA project updates**

- a. Dunkirk project – C. Pinkoski reported that there was a fall seeding and planting at the constructed wetland. Working on signage. Will do final planting in spring 2025.
- b. Muddy Creek project – W. Smith reported there were some issues with engineering that went over budget but working with Erie SWCD on final design to work in more habitat and living shoreline properties to the design. Community meeting on Dec 12<sup>th</sup>. Downstream project funded by hazard mitigation grant and tying them together at this meeting.
- c. Cattaraugus Creek project – M. Gaston reported bank stabilization and riparian improvement with the two sites in this project. Contracting is completed for site 1. The engineer has started to survey on this downstream site and will be paired with County highway site near Zoar Valley Road. Goal of having design and permit with construction in summer 2025 and the second project will be in 2026.

9. **NYS Ag. & Markets funding Ecosystem Based Management Funding** – M. Gaston reported that this funding came through the Great Lakes Program and prioritizes nutrient management and erosion and sediment control. Chautauqua County is working on three streambank stabilization projects (beef, vineyard, horse) in T. Portland. Cattaraugus County is working with a private engineer for a project for construction in 2025. Erie County has three projects in design. Two landowners are doing nutrient planning. 4-5 farms participated in cover cropping in Catt Creek watershed (568 out of goal of 800 acres completed). Hoping to wrap up most projects in 2025.

## **10. Watershed Management Plan Update:**

- a. Stream Visual Assessment Protocol (SVAP) update – M. Gaston reported that some sections of Canadaway Creek Sub-watershed was re-SVAPed due to some missing data. Cattaraugus Creek was too high of water in the downstream areas and Erie SWCD will try a desktop analysis of

erosion and buffers from Scoby Dam in Springville to Gowanda. SVAP is for narrower wadable stream. May potentially try a drone review as well.

- b. 9E focus on phosphorous – J. Panasiewicz reported that discussions have started with DEC based on the USGS monitoring and modeling report. Lou out of Finger Lakes Hub has been assigned for technical assistance on interpreting the USGS report findings. After discussions with Karyn Hanson, Phosphorous will be pollutant of concern for the 9E Plan with discussions around nutrients, sediment, salt, and bacteria as part of DOS watershed plan. Discussion followed on potential contaminants including road salt. Chautauqua County may move to brine and upgrading salt storage. Dunkirk may be working on source water protection plan in future. Emergent pollutants in Tonawanda Creek should be included. Consider information on litter/microfibers, steroids, pharmaceuticals, PFAS, etc.
- c. Lake Erie Watershed Regulation Review – Project has wrapped up. J. Panasiewicz gave report on the general findings and next steps including developing a training for Planning Boards on site plan review resource that was developed.

#### **11. County Representative update reports:**

- a. Cattaraugus County – J. Kelly reported that Agricultural Environmental Management planning and Agricultural Non-point Source application planning are underway. A Concentrated Animal Feeding Operation (CAFO) application went in as well. They've been working on flood control structures mostly this year. Down one technician currently.
- b. Chautauqua County – C. Pinkoski mentioned they have been working on shoreline and stream projects through county funding. They finished the Chautauqua Creek mouth project. Future funding to go toward irrigation project and other stream projects next year. Applied for Sunset and Hanford Bay flooding project funding. Pamela Forge reached out for a flood committee in Sunset Bay area. Cassie has flooding application in for a study on Lake Erie shoreline, Cattaraugus Creek shoreline, and railroad runoff for the Sunset/Hanford Bay area through DEC Environmental Planning grant.
  - i. *Lake Erie Management Commission* – D. McCoy reported there will be dredging of Dunkirk Marina and a Sheridan Bay climate resiliency project. Canadaway Creek fishing access improvement project in being planned. Cattaraugus Creek boat launch and Lake Erie planting work in planning stages. Tree removals at Dunkirk Lighthouse to reduce erosion and new plantings scheduled. Nexus will continue lobbying for Chautauqua County to get US Army Corps funding. Take a kid fishing funding and handicapped public access at boat launches also ongoing.
- c. Erie County – M. Gaston reported that SWCD is working on grant applications in various stages. CAFO enhanced nutrient management planning application going for a goat dairy. Climate Resilient Farming funding awards over various years are underway. Technician changes. Fletcher replaced on December 9<sup>th</sup> and another technician is leaving. Erie Wyoming Joint Watershed Board in Buffalo River watershed work ongoing. Safety issues in storms in Buffalo River. Looking for NRCS to mitigate the safety concerns of that area.

J. Panasiewicz reported on the \$5.2 million USDA Forest Service tree grant. 30 trees planted so far. 5-year grant. Currently subcontracting with subawadees.

12. **NYSDEC update** – K. Fitzgerald reported that Great Lakes Action Agenda workgroup meeting on December 4<sup>th</sup>. Lake Erie website under development and will post water quality data online. T. West reported they have concluded Rotating Integrated Basin Studies sampling for the year. DEC Watershed Coordinators are assisting with coastal erosion hazard areas reviews and answering floodplain technical assistance questions.

### **13. Announcements and Open Discussion from Stakeholders**

- a. Community Listening Sessions for WNYEJGP – Unfortunately there were no open in-person sessions south of Buffalo. There is an invite-only session being planned for Dunkirk the week of December 9<sup>th</sup> and the last virtual session was at noon today with about 29 attendees. You can still reach out for one-on-one to Jarrett Steffen if you'd like to learn more and give feedback on how the grant is designed. Application to come out this spring.
- b. Chris Dere with EPA Region 2 has contacted LEWPA for all possible projects. DEC typically has a process for approving projects to go to EPA. EPA Region 5 Great Lakes National program Office will come back to DEC for approval anyway. DEC submits directly to Region 5 with Region 2 copied. February LEWPA meeting time to discuss pitches to EPA. LEWPA need a full-time person to manage EPA grants. M. Gaston to put in for position/admin/audit funding for subsequent LEWPA requests and need eventual Board approval for LEWPA growth plan.

14. **Adjourn** – A motion to adjourn at 3:09 pm was made by M. Gaston, was seconded by J. Kelly, and was carried.

Next meeting will be February 25, 2025. J. Panasiewicz to create 2025 schedule and send out Webex information.