



Lake Erie Watershed Protection Alliance

Cattaraugus, Chautauqua and Erie Counties

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LEWPA Board Meeting Minutes

Thursday, May 22, 2025 at 1:00 pm

MINUTES

Voting Board Members present: Cattaraugus: Connor Maxwell, Tyler Paar; Chautauqua: Cassie Pinkoski (Chair), Dave McCoy; Erie: Bonnie Lawrence (Secretary), Don Stribick.

Others in attendance: Joanna Panasiewicz (Coordinator), Sandra Notaro, Jeanne Beiter, Kristin Fitzgerald, Stephany Tatarevich, Erin Kane, Taylor West, Kyra Umrigar, Carol Markham, Wendy Paterson, Cole Beale, Jennifer Potter

1. **Call to order** at 1:02 PM by Chair Pinkoski
2. **Welcome** and introductions
3. **Approval of February 27, 2025 minutes.** There was correction under announcements that W. Paterson said she is thinking of applying to the CFA for a **Bennett** Beach project not a Wendt Beach project. A motion was made by D. Stribick to approve the amended minutes, was seconded by B. Lawrence, and was carried.
4. **Financial report by Treasurer** – D. Stribick reported for Treasurer Mark Gaston that the last reported budget was \$110,224.10. There were three interest payments totaling \$140.29 plus one expenditure to the Coordinator for attendance to the Water Quality Symposium in Rochester for \$111.02. The new budget is \$110,253.37. A motion was made to accept the Treasurer's Report as read was made by B. Lawrence, was seconded by C. Pinkoski, and was carried.
5. **LEWPA Coordinator position update** – Joanna Panasiewicz is now managing the Waste Team at Erie County including household hazardous waste and paint collection events, food scrap recycling/composting initiatives, outreach on waste management and reducing consumption. Interviews for the new Watershed Coordinator are scheduled for next couple of weeks.

In addition, Erie County was eligible to apply for funding from a Monsanto PCB Settlement. We performed a gap analysis of PCB monitoring within the Erie County MS4 area (eligible area) and determined there was a need and desire for more PCB testing along Scajaquada Creek. Our application last year was funded and the Resolution to accept the funds is at the Erie County Legislature now for a vote. The new Watershed Coordinator will be working on that project, if approved, to hire a contractor to sample for PCBs in the water and sediment of Scajaquada Creek to assess the PCB contamination issue. There appears to be additional NY Superfund Brownfield funding potentially available for cleanup in Environmental Justice areas and having some additional information in the Scajaquada Creek sub-watershed could potentially be helpful for brownfield cleanup in the Scajaquada Creek watershed.

6. NYSEPF funding – LEWPA is once again in the 2026 NYS Environmental Protection Fund (EPF) for \$250,000. J. Panasiewicz shared the EPF funding for other watershed organizations. We had presented to the WNY Legislative Delegation, who passed a motion to recommend \$500,000 for LEWPA. If we matched FLOWPA funding per acre, LEWPA would have \$670,000/year which would fund a full-time watershed coordinator, watershed monitoring, as well as additional modeling, outreach, and increased implementation funds. The grant-funded Watershed Coordinator cannot lobby. LEWPA needs municipalities, districts, and non-profit partners to advocate for the funding.

- a. Year 2.3 Projects – C. Pinkoski is wrapped up and needs an audit for Chautauqua County projects. T. Paar took over for J. Kelly and is working with Gowanda on Cattaraugus County projects. They have a DEC-approved edited work plan, but are waiting on permit approvals. D. Stribick reported the Erie County is working on close-out. Still need Daemen Salt report study, which is expected by the end of May.
- b. Year 2.4 Projects – C. Pinkoski reported that shoreline plantings and invasive species work is continuing. T. Paar reported that fish habitat in Mansfield Creek is to be completed. D. Stribick reported that projects are anticipated to be completed by end of 2025.
- c. Year 2.5 Projects – C. Pinkoski is waiting to see what is approved by Chautauqua County bed tax program to leverage LEWPA funding. She will include Boat Stewards again and a feasibility study on Chautauqua Watershed Conservancy on reconnecting a flood plain. Cattaraugus County work plan is drafted. Erie County is working on drafting the work plan based on project submissions from Erie County Water Quality Committee. Buffalo Niagara Waterkeeper project is being contracted to work on engaging the public in Evans to determine flooding impacts and develop nature-based solutions playbook of options for Big Sister Creek that can be shared with communities watershed-wide.

7. USEPA project updates

- a. Dunkirk project – contract ends at the end of May. Final plantings, signs, and road repair will happen. Will send to Joanna for final desktop audit.
- b. Muddy Creek project – D. Stribick reported that the Erie County Soil & Water Conservation District (SWCD) engineer is working on final design. Protected turtle species were found in the area. A one year no cost time extension was submitted and approved.
- c. Cattaraugus Creek project – D. Stribick reported the grant is for \$1.4 million for 2 sites on Cattaraugus Creek to protect fields from erosion. Wetland parcel jurisdictional determination came back positive on both sites. Wetland delineation completed for first site. Bids are due back May 28th. Hoping for construction this year. Discussion followed on how wetland regulations are playing out. DEC gave conflicting communication on whether USACE wetland certification will count toward their wetland certification requirements as SWCDs consider training their staff to perform wetland jurisdictions.
- d. Discussion on future EPA potential projects and ECSWCD admin needs – Tabled until M. Gaston returns. K. Fitzgerald reported DEC is still working through last year's projects with EPA. EPA has not asked for new projects this year yet.

8. NYS Ag. & Markets funding Ecosystem Based Management (EBM) Funding – D. Stribick reported that SWCDs are working on reducing nutrients and nutrient transport through cover crops, reduced tillage, and Nutrient Management Plans and erosion control on fields and streams. Chautauqua County is adding a third project to start June 15th with extra funding since first two projects came under budget. Cattaraugus County is working with one landowner. Erie County has 3 or 4 streambank stabilization projects and soil health practices. 600 of 800 acres of cover crops are completed. Will be asking for a no cost time extension.

9. Watershed Management Plan Update:

- a. SVAP update – Stream Visual Assessment Protocol (SVAP) field work is completed. For the reaches that were too deep to walk in lower Cattaraugus Creek, a desktop assessment was completed along the main

branch as well. Katie Eaman is the new GIS intern working on visualizing the SVAP data and should be wrapping up the Canadaway Creek Sub-watershed in the next week.

- b. 9E issues – J. Panasiewicz discussed that DEC funded USGS to perform monitoring and modeling. That report was delayed for years and only released 9 months ago. The WMP grant was in a bit of a holding pattern waiting for that report, which does not include loading numbers for all of the sub-watersheds, only the high and the low numbers are listed. DEC has recommended we move forward with a 9E plan only for phosphorous and all other pollutants can be discussed as part of the DOS watershed management plan. The current work plan with DOS does not include individual sub-watershed implementation plans and there is no time to complete those before the grant ends in September. Discussion followed on how to proceed. Plan is to submit enough of a general plan for 9E for phosphorus and general discussion of other pollutants to comply with DOS grant and 9E requirements and wait for approvals to start applying for implementation funds. A no-cost contract extension was already requested from DOS. We will also apply for Consolidate Funding Application to complete sub-watershed implementation plans, perhaps additional track down monitoring from the USGS results, wetlands delineation education/training, partnering with NY Sea Grant on scenario planning in sub-watersheds like Tipping Point and other municipal assistance. Additional ideas suggested include FEMA map training to public and municipalities and utilizing the Canadaway Creek source water protection plan for Dunkirk with the water intake in Lake Erie. Cassie to help Joanna with grant writing.

10. County Representative update reports:

- a. Cattaraugus County – T. Par reported working through EBM Funding. Stream table outreach scheduled for students at Allegany State Park at Great Outdoor days as well as highway superintendent demonstrations.
- b. Chautauqua County – C. Pinkoski has stream table at conservation field days. There are four agricultural chemical handling facilities going in. They are waiting on permits from DEC. Starting hydroseeding. D. McCoy reported he went to Washington DC for annual lobbying trip. Learned that Army Corps can only fund things they are required to fund by law. Dunkirk and Barcelona harbors need improvements. Lake Erie Management Commission is funding kid fishing sponsorship and PSAs. A Wave attenuation study in Dunkirk was submitted to NOAA. Barcelona dock additions were completed.
- c. Erie County – D. Stribick reported there were 627 tree and shrub sales. Holland HS going to State Envirothon. Field work starting but waiting on DEC permits. Two new technicians started and they started LEWPA hydroseeding program. Buffer program is creating a maintenance program. SWCD is helping federal partners as best they can. J. Panasiewicz reminded everyone to take photos of projects and if people are going back to past projects to submit updated photos, especially of buffer growth over time.

Coordinator to remind SWCD to report to DEC tree tracker for tree plantings (can also put on LEWPA tracker)
<https://dec.ny.gov/nature/forests-trees/climate-change/25-million-trees>

B. Lawrence reported that Buffalo and Erie County Central Library is getting a green roof through NYS Environmental Facilities Corporation. Tree grant funding is federal and is still in play. Healthy lawns program is sharing out of Erie County to Niagara County. If anyone else in LEWPA is interested in information or resources, check out www.erie.gov/healthylawns and let Joanna know.

- 11. **NYSDEC update** – K. Fitzgerald reported the harmful algal bloom reporting tool is up. 2025 framework is open for comment on drinking water source protection program <https://dec.ny.gov/environmental-protection/water/water-quality/dwsp2>. The Consolidated Funding Application opened May 19th including Water Quality Improvement Program, Climate Smart Communities, and Non Ag Non-point Source grants. Informational webinar registration on June 9th at: <https://dec.ny.gov/get-involved/grant-applications/wqip-program#Types>.

There is a seiche workshop in Irving, NY on June 13th. A reminder that Division of Water has monitoring water quality data portal for NYS results. Regulatory wetlands specific questions can also be emailed to:

R9BEH@dec.ny.gov.

12. Announcements and open discussion - none

13. Adjourn - A motion to adjourn was made at 2:26 PM by D. Stribick, was seconded by C. Maxwell, and was carried. Next meeting is August 28th.

Minutes transcribed by J. Panasiewicz and submitted by Secretary B. Lawrence.