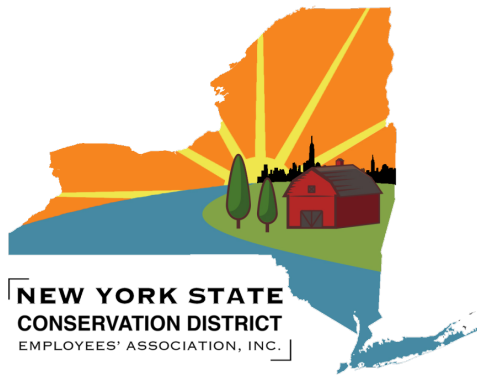




Annual Meeting Minutes
March 11, 2026
Hyatt Regency Rochester
125 East Main St, Rochester, NY

Executive Committee Members

Caitlin Stewart, President
Jessica Armstrong, Vice President
Joann Burke, Secretary
Kristin White, Interim Treasurer
Alice Halloran, Member at Large

Partners and Guests

Richard A. Ball, Commissioner of Agriculture,
New York State Department of Agriculture and
Markets
Elizabeth Wolters, Deputy Commissioner, New
York State Department of Agriculture and
Markets
Bethany Bzduch, Executive Director, New York
State Soil and Water Conservation Committee
Blanche Hurlbutt, Executive Director, New York
Association of Conservation Districts
Sam Casella, President, New York Association of
Conservation Districts
Blake Glover, New York State Conservationist,
Natural Resources Conservation Service

Division Representatives

Rebecca Campbell, Division I
Jason Cuddeback, Division II
Carla Yaw, Division III
Lydia Brinkley, Division IV
Nicholas Klemczak, Division VI
Olivia Cunningham, Division VIII

Absent

Maren Stoddard, Division V
Vacant, Division VII

Minutes

I. Call to Order: Welcome and Introductions - President Caitlin Stewart called the meeting to order at 12:16 p.m. and welcomed everyone to the 2026 Annual Meeting.

II. Roll Call of Districts – President Stewart and Secretary Joann Burke performed the roll call, and the following 51 Conservation Districts were present:

Albany	Delaware	Lewis	Ontario	Steuben
Alleghany	Dutchess	Livingston	Orleans	Suffolk
Broome	Erie	Madison	Oswego	Tioga
Cattaraugus	Essex	Monroe	Otsego	Tompkins
Cayuga	Franklin	Montgomery	Rensselaer	Ulster
Chautauqua	Fulton	Nassau	St. Lawrence	Warren
Chemung	Genesee	New York City	Saratoga	Washington
Chenango	Greene	Niagara	Schenectady	Wayne
Clinton	Hamilton	Oneida	Schoharie	Wyoming
Columbia	Jefferson	Onondaga	Seneca	Yates
Cortland				

III. Keynote Speaker – Stewart introduced Richard A. Ball, Commissioner of Agriculture, New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets, and he proceeded with the keynote address. He welcomed new employees and thanked districts for all the work they do on farms. He stated New York Grown and Certified is turning 10 years old this year and is a great program and continues to grow.

IV. Review Slate of Officers - Past CDEA President Dustin Lewis reviewed the slate of officers and asked for any further nominations. None were made. He mentioned that nominations will be open until the end of the meeting, and it is not too late for others to add their name to the list.

- President – Jessica Armstrong
- Vice President – Nicholas Klemczak
- Treasurer – Mikaela Perham
- Secretary – Joann Burke

V. Reading and approval of the 2025 Annual Meeting minutes - The minutes were emailed in advance of the meeting and included in the packet.

- **A motion was made by Shawn Murphy, seconded by Graydon Dutcher, to approve the 2025 Annual Meeting minutes as written. All in favor. Carried.**

VI. Review and approval of the 2025 Treasurers' Report – The 2025 Treasurer's Report was emailed in advance of the meeting and included in the packet. White reviewed the report, and it is appended to the minutes.

- **A motion was made by Mikaela Perham, seconded by Russ Smith, to approve the 2025 Treasurer's Report as presented. All in favor. Carried.**

VII. Approval of CDEA hiring a lobbyist – Stewart reported that the CDEA lobbyist has been an item of discussion at regular bimonthly and Managers' Meetings, and she hosted a meeting with NYACD partners, District Directors, and CDEA on February 27, 2025. During the January 2025 CDEA meeting, Todd Vandervort of The Vandervort Group, LLC. spoke on how a lobbyist could support District staff and answered questions. Stewart has reported on this activity in her CDEA reports at NYACD and SWCC meetings, and discussions are also included in the CDEA meeting minutes. NYACD President Sam Casella gave CDEA his blessing to proceed with hiring a lobbyist. The CDEA attorney determined that the Association could hire a lobbyist, and it is critical that activities do not exceed financial thresholds.

- **A motion was made by Dustin Lewis, seconded by Kelly Emerick, to permit the New York State Conservation District Employees' Association to hire a lobbyist. All in favor. Carried.**

VIII. Review and approval the 2026 CDEA budget – The 2026 budget was emailed in advance of the meeting and included in the packet. White reviewed the report, and it is appended to the minutes. Discussion ensued.

- **A motion was made by Jessica Hill, seconded by Caitlin Stewart, to approve the CDEA budget. All in favor. Carried.**

IX. Review and approval of the CDEA Bylaws updates – Stewart tabled CDEA Bylaws after receiving thirteen pages of comments just before the meeting. A workshop will be held, and all employees will be invited.

X. Review and approval of unspent NCF Envirothon funds – Lewis stated that \$341,000 remains in unspent National Conservation Foundation-Envirothon funds from the 2024 international event hosted by New York State. The New York State Envirothon Committee seeks approval to dedicate \$300,000 to the Environmental Education Foundation to support expenses related to the participation of New York's winning team, advisers, and NYS Envirothon

committee members in the annual NCF-Envirothon. These funds will be housed in an EEF interest-bearing account. In the future, if the New York State Conservation District Employees' Association chooses to host the NCF-Envirothon, any remaining money of the \$300,000 can be used as seed money for that event. The remaining \$21,413.36 will be housed in the NYS Envirothon account and used to support the NYS Envirothon. Discussion ensued. A correction was made that the actual amount of money in the NCF Envirothon account is \$321, 413.36 instead of \$341,000.

- **A motion was made by Al Fagan seconded by Susan Lewis, to approve dedicated \$300,000 of unspent NCF-Envirothon funds to the Environmental Education Foundation to support expenses related to the participation of New York's winning team, advisers, and NYS Envirothon committee members in the annual NCF-Envirothon to be housed in an EEF interest bearing account, and \$21,413.36 to be housed in the NYS Envirothon account to support the NYS Envirothon. All in favor. Carried.**

XI. Partnership Reports

a. New York State Soil and Water Conservation Committee – Executive Director Bethany Bzduch shared her report, included in the packet.

b. New York Association of Conservation Districts – Executive Director Blanche Hurlbutt shared her report, included in the packet. She asked if districts would complete the survey with the Great Lakes Committee as it is important to move forward to the next step.

c. Natural Resources Conservation Service – State Conservationist Blake Glover shared his report, included in the packet. He added that a year ago, there were 175 NRCS employees and as of today seventy employees were lost. He announced that Astor Boozer is now back in the north and that Emily Armstrong retired.

XII. CDEA Board Reports

a. President – Stewart shared her report, included in the packet.

b. Vice President – Armstrong shared her report, included in the packet. She mentioned that her focus if elected as President would be prioritizing retirement education and understanding benefits, addressing emerging issues and opportunities, increasing employee engagement with the CDEA Board, establishing an Associate Manager position for the Board and strengthening our 4-way Partnership.

c. Member at Large – Halloran thanked Caitlin Stewart, Jason Cuddeback and Lydia Brinkley for serving on the board. She will serve one more year on the board.

d. Division I – Rebecca Campbell's report was included in the packet.

e. Division II – Jason Cuddeback stated Curtis Davis will be the new Division II Representative. He thanked the division for allowing him to serve.

f. Division III – Carla Yaw's report was included in the packet.

g. Division IV – Lydia Brinkley stated she is grateful for representing Division IV for 2 years. Nomination for Division IV Representative will be at 5:05 p.m.

h. Division V – Stewart reported that Maren Stoddard is on maternity leave and her report was in the packet.

i. Division VI – Nick Klemczak stated his report is in the packet. He welcomed Scott Davis as the new Division VI representative. He reminded districts to pick up their fertilizer tablets and banners if they ordered them.

j. Division VII – Stewart congratulated Sullivan County SWCD's District Technician Amber Gray in her new position on the CDEA Board as Division VII Representative.

k. Division VIII – Olivia Cunningham's report was included in the packet.

XIII. Standing Committees

a. New York State Fair/Empire Farms Days and Farm Show Committee – Kristin White shared her report. She highly encourages new employees to volunteer for a shift. NYS Farm Show 2025, Alaina Robarge took the lead. She did a fantastic job but has stepped down from committee and Paul Gier joined the committee as the lead of the NYS Farm Show. Erica Schreiner, a committee member since 2004, is retiring in July. The committee thanks her for her service on the committee and they will be looking for a new committee member.

b. NYS DEC Endorsed 4-Hour Erosion & Sediment Control Online Training – Kristin White shared her report. She stated the training is free for district employees but please contact her when registering.

c. 4-Hour Fund Report – Stewart reported that per the Policy for the Management of Funds Generated from the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation Endorsed 4-Hour Sediment and Control Online Training, New York State Soil and Water Conservation Districts are able to apply for funds to attend, or provide technical or educational workshops or programs that benefit the state's Districts and that are supported and approved by the NYSCDEA Executive Board. In 2025, 4-Hour Funds supported four training courses in the amount of \$13,002.05 that was attended by 87 District employees. The report is in the packet.

d. NYS Erosion & Sediment Control Certificate Program – Jessica Verrigni submitted her report, included in the packet.

e. Conservation Skills Workshop – Tom Eskildsen reminded everyone that Conservation Skills Workshop is your training opportunity and if you have ideas of classes or instructors you would like please reach out to him or any committee member. The committee is always looking for new members to join. Eskildsen recognized John Persch and Stacy Russell who are retiring this year and have been members of the committee for several years.

f. Administrative Conference – Lewis stated fifty-four attendees at the Administrative Conference in Cazenovia. Filling out the review survey is vital in telling the committee what you want. Anyone interested in joining the committee see Dustin.

g. Legislative Committee – Lewis stated with the hiring of a lobbyist that person can take on the responsibility of this committee.

h. Frank Bratt Scholarship – Campbell shared her report, included in the packet. She added that the money raised from the gun raffle, silent auction and raffle items funds this scholarship. Any questions concerning the Frank Bratt Scholarship reach out to her.

i. Water Quality Symposium – Armstrong reminded everyone to keep an eye out for the survey next week. She encouraged everyone to fill it out.

j. New York State Envirothon Committee – Lewis shared his report, included in the packet.

k. Environmental Education Foundation Committee – Stewart stated Committee Chair Mark Gaston submitted his report, included in the packet. EEF Treasurer Lisa Miller of Cayuga County Soil and Water Conservation District, after decades of service, is stepping down. Stewart thanked Miller for her years of dedication to the EEF and encouraged employees to serve as EEF Treasurer. Those interested can contact Gaston for more information.

l. Civil Service Committee – Stewart stated the report is in the packet and this item was discussed during the Managers' Meeting.

m. New York State Invasive Species Advisory Committee – Stewart stated the report is in the packet.

n. CDEA State Programs Advisory Committee – Jennifer Kelly stated the report is in the packet.

o. Northeast Association of Conservation District Employees – Velynda Parker submitted her report, included in the packet.

p. Leadership Institute – Jennifer Kelly reported that the committee is in the information gathering phase. She encouraged everyone to fill out the survey at dinner from the fliers on the tables.

XIII. CDEA Activities

a. New Employee Recognition – Jessica Armstrong recognized and announced all new employees while Caitlin Stewart distributed the welcome gifts. The list of new employees is appended to the minutes.

b. Years of Service Recognition - Each Division Representative recognizes employees with 10 and 15 years of service during the Division meetings. Jessica Armstrong recognizes employees with 20 years and over of service and thanked them for their years of service. The years of service list is appended to the minutes.

c. New York State Retirement update – Stewart shared her report, included in the packet.

d. Ronnie Raindrop® - Stewart reported that CDEA Division V Representative Maren Stoddard oversees Ronnie Raindrop®.

e. CDEA Golf Tournament – Doug Kierst shared his report, included in the packet.

XIV. Resolutions – Stewart reported that employees did not submit resolutions 30 days in advance of the annual meeting and asked for resolutions from the floor with one hundred hard copies.

XV. Other business from the floor – None.

XVI. Election of officers - Lewis reviewed the slate of officers and asked for any other nominations from the floor. None were made.

- **A motion was made by John Persch, seconded by Russ Smith to close the nominations, and have the Secretary cast one unanimous ballot for President (Jessica Armstrong), Vice President (Nicholas Klemczak), Treasurer (Mikaela Perham), and Secretary (Joann Burke). Carried.**

XVII. Next Meeting – TBD

XVIII. Adjournment

- **A motion was made by Caitlin Stewart, seconded by Doug Kierst, to adjourn the 2026 Annual New York State Conservation District Employees' Association Meeting at 1:54 p.m. Carried.**

Respectfully submitted,

Joann Burke

Joann Burke

DRAFT

NYS CDEA, INC.
BANK REPORT FOR ALL ACCOUNTS
As of December 31, 2025

	<u>Dec 31, 25</u>	<u>Dec 31, 24</u>
ASSETS		
Current Assets		
Checking/Savings		
NYSCDEA General Savings	775,357.86	653,190.72
NYSCDEA General Checking	41,791.12	99,349.57
NYSESCC Program	24,361.53	19,087.03
NYS Fair Booth Committee	1,820.74	3,954.18
NYS Envirothon Committee	26,889.93	24,327.87
Leadership Conference	2,463.13	2,463.13
Golf Tournament Event	3,807.43	4,107.03
2024 NCF Envirothon Checking	207,991.26	207,991.26
Envirothon Scholarship Savings	16,105.57	19,151.85
Frank Bratt Scholarship Savings	44,380.07	37,780.43
NYS Envirothon-Savings	2,001.26	2,001.26
Resource Training Savings	0.00	27,082.57
Total Checking/Savings	<u>1,146,969.90</u>	<u>1,100,486.90</u>
Accounts Receivable		
Accounts Receivable	132,422.10	100.00
Total Accounts Receivable	<u>132,422.10</u>	<u>100.00</u>
Total Current Assets	<u>1,279,392.00</u>	<u>1,100,586.90</u>
TOTAL ASSETS	<u>1,279,392.00</u>	<u>1,100,586.90</u>

NYS CDEA General Fund Budget 2026



2025 CARRYOVER

	\$	342,026.84
Total Carryover	\$	342,026.84

INCOME

Income Earned from 4Hour Training Program 2025	\$	475,122.14
Total Income	\$	475,122.14

EXPENSE

4Hour Program Operational Costs

Monroe County Annual Contract	\$	60,000.00
Blackboard Annual Subscription	\$	55,285.00
CDEA Cell Phone	\$	1,500.00
iSpring Subscription Renewal	\$	870.00
Other (upgrades, additional software, laptop maint.)	\$	5,000.00
Total 4 Hour Program Operational Costs	\$	122,655.00

Training Support for Districts

4Hour Funded Training Applications	\$	20,000.00
GIS Support	\$	12,500.00
Water Quality Symposium	\$	175,000.00
Administrative Conference (Committee Request)	\$	16,000.00
Cons Skills Workshop (Committee Request)	\$	14,000.00
Total Training Support for Districts	\$	237,500.00

Other Obligations

CDEA News Montgomery County Contract	\$	4,000.00
Envirothon Scholarship	\$	2,500.00
Sunshine Fund	\$	500.00
Insurance	\$	4,000.00
Ronny Raindrop	\$	-

State Fair (Committee Requested)	\$	2,440.00
Farm Show (Committee Requested)	\$	2,544.00
NYS ESCCP Schuyler County Contract	\$	9,000.00
Division Meetings	\$	10,000.00
NACD Annual Meeting Conference Expense National	\$	4,000.00
NACD NE Conference Expense	\$	3,000.00
NCDEA Membership	\$	200.00
Total Other Obligations	\$	42,184.00

CDEA Operations

Quickbooks Subscription	\$	2,000.00
Legal Council	\$	50,000.00
Lobbyist	\$	75,000.00
Website	\$	500.00
Promotional (Banners, Job Fairs, Ronny Merch, etc.)	\$	15,000.00
Board Meetings	\$	12,000.00
Office Supplies & Postage	\$	5,000.00
Unassigned Reserves	\$	80,000.00
Taxes & Audit Review	\$	10,000.00
Contingency Account (Other Operational Funds)	\$	165,309.98
Total CDEA Operations	\$	414,809.98

Total Expense \$ 817,148.98

Total Income \$ 475,122.14
Total Carryover \$ 342,026.84
\$ 817,148.98

Total Expense \$ 817,148.98

Net Income \$ -