Alpena-Montmorency Conservation District

1900 M-32 W
Alpena, MI 49707
989-356-3596 ext. 108

Meeting Minutes

Thursday, May 07, 2026 Monthly Meeting
(Brush Creek Mill)

Attendance: Board Members: Brown, Estlack, Lewis, Lizon, Skarbek; Associate Director Bill Houston; Staff: Bryan Zabel (NRCS), Dr. Greg Corace (FAP), Charlie Doan (CTAP), John Schmitz (DM), Emily Frechette (CA). Public: Chris Busen, Ruffed Grouse Society. Meeting was called to order at 5:01 PM. by Brown, Chair. Not present: Christine Roman (MDARD)

Additions to agenda: Dr. Corace spoke about tree restoration grant opportunity with DNR on Black River and suggests involvement of CA to write a proposal for a fairly large-scale planting. It is possible to get money from DNR to do planting. We could also sell them the seedlings to do the job. Volunteer group trained under our supervision could do this. If we don't apply this year could draft and then apply next year. Corace thinks we can get LOS from Trout Unlimited, Headwaters Conservancy, etc. Concept adding to this of having team of folks to help plant trees. We could eliminate the need for volunteers by paying other organizations to plant the trees.

Approval of Consent Agenda:
Meeting minutes (April, 2026)
Financial Report, Payment of AMCD bills

- Motion made by Estlack to approve the minutes and consent agenda; supported Skarbek.

Roll Call vote. Ayes: Estlack, Skarbek, Brown, Lewis, Lizon. Nays: None. Motion carried

Reports:

The Reports were handed out and reviewed by the Board prior to the meeting. There was no conversation on the MDARD partner report or the Communications Report

Schmitz presents his report. We are still ahead of last year about $2K. This year we had fewer extra trees to sell. CD transfers are no longer listed under expenses. We got CD Operations manual. Woody plant sale is mostly done. All grants have been sent in and paid except the DNR one. Attends Alpena City Council Meetings. Spoke with Dean at the tractor company, got sponsorship. Presented at Alpena Township Association. Will be joining the Alpena Recycling Board. Spoke w Bailey Barr, Exec. Dir. of Michigan Materials Management Authority. Our warehouse is adjacent to new facility location. Total of 112 orders of plugs had second pickup. Almost all the rest have been picked up.

By next week NRCS should know about all their EQIP applications for this year. Newsletter mentions award of $1.5 million grant to applying agencies for infrastructure support. Also mentions USDA state & tribal governments program similar to HAP where they boost public access to private lands. Discussion re: access primarily to agricultural lands.

FAP discussion regarding challenges of dealing with public and landowners across both counties still coping with last year's ice storm. Google Scholar will take you to website with all academic papers. FAP subcommittee had a meeting in April.

CTAP field season has definitely begun. Ice is gone, water table back down mostly. There are more site visits than what's on my report. Big thing for this summer is Regenerative Agriculture Network grant. Participants are mostly vegetable growers, which is different from normal clientele (livestock producers). They have no fuel storage, etc. The environmental risks dealt with are different. Soil health assessment will be done on each of the nine farms in this program. Soon we will be putting together CTAP grant admin request for next three years. CTAP has become a competitive grant. Several districts downstate are funded differently from the others. Contract language is still unavailable. Next Tuesday is our next meeting.

District Business:

OLD:
Updates on woody plant sale: we have about 800 trees left (less than what we had last year). Most are balsam fir plugs. To date we've sold 48,230 trees. $86K revenue with expenses of about $42K, yielding profit of roughly $44K. That is a reasonable goal for each spring tree sale. Compared to most other districts we did very well; other districts' sales are down 20-30% this year. We will start advertising the fall sale once we can get the nurseries to provide their species availability. Last year it was about the first week of July before they would start committing their nursery stock. Highest requests and shortages for us are tamarack & red pine. We sold out of saplings, redbud first and basswood last. Urban customers likely. Our profit margin on saplings was larger than other items.

Schmitz had previously forwarded DNR Emily Sewell's email and has since contacted a couple other DNR representatives looking for a confirmation the answer is not a "no" for our proposed idea. If the venison will go to food banks, then it has to be tested for lead and TB. Maybe we need a waiver from the beneficiary to hold the hunter and processer harmless. Schmitz went to Calvin (processor) earlier this week and he is still willing to do it. We can encourage hunters to use non-lead ammunition. Township association people seemed enthusiastic about this concept. Processors would need to hold the meat until the test results come back.

We are required to have a new budget proposal for FY27. Subcommittee will discuss our priorities and use a template to compose the proposal. Any changed or new priorities will be added and result will be presented in June. Updated five-year plan and one-year business plan must be completed when Schmitz does his reviews at the beginning of July. These are operations grant deliverables for Q3. Brown suggests going over five-year business plan on a regular basis and evaluating our progress towards goals. CNA survey feeds into business plans so results will need to come in first. Board self-evaluation is important too. Subcommittee needs to revise it within next 17 months. New CNA survey is due by July 2027. Our policy may need revision to stay congruent with plans.

- Motion made by Lewis to appoint Brown and Lizon to serve on the subcommittee for Strategic and Business Plan; supported Estlack.

Roll Call vote: Ayes: Estlack, Skarbek, Brown, Lewis, Lizon. Nays: None. Motion carried.

Subcommittee to utilize outreach spreadsheet and decide which opportunities to eliminate. Focus on which ones to pursue and put it in the plan.

- CA to send updated outreach spreadsheet.
- Motion made by Lewis to appoint Skarbek and Estlack to serve on the subcommittee for Outreach Opportunities with Houston; supported Brown.

Roll Call vote. Ayes: Estlack, Skarbek, Brown, Lewis, Lizon. Nays: None. Motion carried.

NEW

Estlack reviewed cost of gas at $4.75 and wants to ensure folks traveling for work are being properly reimbursed, not sure current federal reimbursement is enough. Current rate is $0.725/mi. Our policy states we follow the federal reimbursement. Discussion about supplementary stipend until gas drops below $4/gallon. Comp time could be used instead of payment to equal things out.

- Motion made by Skarbek to give a fuel stipend of 2 hours comp time each pay period to staff making site visits until gas price drops below $4/gallon, to be reviewed on a monthly basis; supported Estlack.

Roll Call vote: Ayes: Estlack, Skarbek, Brown, Lewis, Lizon. Nays: None. Motion carried.

Discussion re: FY26 Budget subcommittee. Projecting next year's budget is easier with a subcommittee. We won't know about CTAP until mid-to late August.

- Motion made by Skarbek to appoint Brown and Lewis to serve on Budget subcommittee; supported Lizon

Roll Call vote: Ayes: Estlack, Skarbek, Brown, Lewis, Lizon. Nays: None. Motion carried.

Discussion about Woody Plants subcommittee to help select trees & shrubs for fall of 2026 and spring of 2027.

- Motion made by Lewis to appoint Estlack and Lizon to serve on Woody Plant subcommittee; supported Brown

Roll Call vote: Ayes: Estlack, Skarbek, Brown, Lewis, Lizon. Nays: None. Motion carried.

District Manager hours: two distinct seasons for our office: February – April and May – January. Schmitz suggests 7:30 AM to 5:00 PM Monday – Thursday and 7:30 AM to 12:00 PM on Fridays from May through January. From February – April, he proposes 7:30 AM to 4:30 PM Monday – Friday. Calls to District Manager's extension roll to Schmitz's mobile phone; voicemails left on general line are forwarded via email. Calls must not overflow to FSA folks.

- Motion made by Skarbek to approve District Manager hours suggested by Schmitz (stated above); supported Estlack.

Roll Call vote: Ayes: Estlack, Skarbek, Brown, Lewis, Lizon. Nays: None. Motion carried.

TASKS TO BE COMPLETED:

- Meet with Subcommittee about 5-year strategic plan / 1-year business plan
- Provide past two years of budget information to Budget subcommittee

Next Board Meeting is **Thursday, June 4th at 5:00 p.m. at the Alpena-Montmorency Conservation District office.**

Motion to adjourn was made by Estlack at 6:54 p.m. seconded Brown.

John Schmitz, District Manager

Bill Estlack Vice Chair
~~Doug Brown,~~ Board ~~Chair~~
Approved / Amended / Disapproved