Alpena-Montmorency Conservation District

ALPENA-MONTMORENCY CONSERVATION DISTRICT

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

Meeting Minutes

Thursday, October 16, 2025 Board Meeting (Brush Creek Mill)

Attendance: Board Members: Skarbek, Lizon, Lewis (late), Brown, Estlack (late, via phone); Staff: Dr. Greg Corace (FAP), Charlie Doan (CTAP), John Schmitz (DM), Emily Frechette (CA). Meeting was called to order at 5:03 PM, by Skarbek, Chair. Not present: Associate Director Houston.

Additions to agenda: Brown requests to discuss opening high-yield savings account using half of incoming grant funds and adding action item section to minutes.

Lizon requests review of meeting with Huron Pines.

Revision to 2025/2026 budget:
District Manager John Schmitz presented the FY2025 Actuals – we are a couple hundred dollars off the actual budget amount but in the black.

Approval of Consent Agenda:
Meeting minutes (September, 2025)
Financial Report, Payment of AMCD bills

- Motion made by Lizon to approve the consent agenda; supported Brown.

Roll Call vote: Ayes: Brown, Lizon, and Skarbek. 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.

Dr. Corace presented his FAP report. He goes 100% or over on his goals every year. There is potential for the FAP grant to be increased. Goals and leveraging his expertise are discussed. Corace currently gives a quarterly forestry talk hosted by AMCD or other groups. Schmitz is working with the library to host. Lizon suggests a Conservation Conference to draw other districts to be involved, NRCS, Huron Pines – not the public. This outreach is the most challenging part of FAP goals. Brown suggests mentoring another forester to reward Corace while capitalizing on expertise. Corace suggests being on his FAP Advisory Committee.

Doan presented his MAEAP/CTAP report. Goals and changes in the CTAP program were discussed. Same difficulty getting attendees at events as FAP. At upcoming Farm/field day in Chesaning, they will go over annual planning. Doan will try to get the CTAP verifier from Petoskey to speak; his area has been restructured to whole northeast lower peninsula and U.P. Doan can prepare paperwork and livestock stuff over the winter & by springtime, he will have several lined up & ready to go. Bottlenecks have occurred due to difficulty getting landowner involvement and subsequent verification. Doan says he can reach most of his numbers in the next year; the number of reverifications is going to be down due to bottleneck caused by lack of verifications from previous verifier.

Frechette presented her Communications report and went over her temporary reduction in hours due to seasonal increase in hours/days at her full-time job. She is working with Dr. Corace to put his previously published articles on a forestry blog. She has interviewed Skarbek and plans to interview another director to tell their stories of working with our personnel on the programs our CD offers. Dr. Corace suggests YouTube videos and negotiating with Alpena News to get a free online subscription in return for his free articles.

Schmitz presented his District Manager's report: he picked up trees for the fall conifer sale and borrowed Charlie's trailer, saving the district lots of money. He is still selling conifers. We sold about 8,000 total trees. Still have between 1500 & 2000 to get in the hands of property owners. Greg is going to use 12 trees of 3 different species in deer exclosure structures for demonstration plots. Schmitz is working on reports for different programs and reviews. We have been paid for 3 of the 4 grants already. HAP is in process; WRM was the first one paid; we have yet to receive the CTAP grant. Christine feels that our district's programs are going in the right direction and we have made improvements the past few years. Schmitz has been working with Visitor's Bureau to do white pine giveaway of 13,000 bare-root seedlings. He will be handing out a sheet with spring tree sale species & his business card, and will have FAP & CTAP handouts available. We did not promote this event until after we had sold as many of our trees as possible. Annual meeting preparations are underway & will be published next week. Annual meeting will occur December 11, 2025 at 5:00PM. Absentee ballots are more challenging to get with current government shutdown situation & locked office. There are two open spots and no challengers. One incumbent from Lewiston has expressed interest.

District Business:

OLD:

- Tree sale was covered in Manager's report.
- Antlerless deer program – by entering AMCD in the comment field, tracking of successful tags can occur. Discussion about doubling the number of permits from 100 to 200. Partnering with Hunter's Harvest to help families get extra meat in their freezer. Clem's Bait & Tackle in Alpena and A-1 Woods & Waters in Hillman are on board. Last year we did radio spot and tags quickly sold out. Only 2-3% response rate from bulk email. We can get info about private/public land from tags. Allocation will need to be approved. Data from tags can be provided from DNR by January 2nd and will be an under-estimate.
- Lizon suggests raffling for free processing (whatever extra we have in budget) as an incentive. Discussion ensues re: extent of processing. Estlack will find out whether Hunter's Harvest wants to cut a check to the district.

Motion to spend $1000 for doe permits is made by Brown; supported Lewis.
Roll Call vote: Ayes: Brown, Lizon, and Skarbek. Nays: None. Motion carried.

NEW

- Full presentations on FAP and MAEAP will be upcoming starting in January (no meeting in February). Could be in work sessions on different days than the board meeting. Work sessions are not mandatory, but it is expected everyone will attend. Most work sessions will be done virtually. Presentations will be 45 minutes to 1 hour and will be done over the winter. Testing or some form of incentive is discussed. Having work sessions after Board meetings is suggested; allocating time for each section of agenda.

Motion to do work sessions during Board meetings was made by Lizon; supported Skarbek.
Roll Call vote: Ayes: Lewis, Lizon, and Skarbek. Nays: Brown. Motion carried.

- Schmitz goes over Policy changes for Holiday Time Off.
- Brown proposes investing some funds in a high-yield savings account. Schmitz says we would need to establish online accounts, both checking and savings. Could keep the same account, but it would take

more time to do transfers (3 days from online bank into savings account). We were down to 35K right before getting grants. Lewis clarifies we would have to move all our funds from local banks into the online banks. Per Schmitz about 25K should be available to move. Return would be between 3.5 and 4% with a high-yield savings account (not a CD). Currently our money market is at 1.8%. Schmitz will research and make a recommendation. Currently our bank is close by and that makes transacting easy.

- Discussion on purchasing $59 LED projector instead of current projector, which throws off a lot of heat.
- Action items should be included in minutes with person responsible, action item, and deadline (highlighted in yellow).
- Review of work agreements for FAP Forester, Communications Associate, and District Manager. Top level of FAP is $81K (includes the 17.5K for admin). Previous max was $73K. Schmitz suggests to increase salaries for Doan and Corace. Skarbek questions whether any guidelines were given on how the money should be spent. There are guidelines on Corace's, per Schmitz. For FAP, $63K+ was for salary and benefits. The $81K means the FAP grant would pay for itself, instead of requiring contribution from District. Discussion: many grants don't pay for themselves. New grants need to align closely with our mission. New CTAP grant would be $85.5K and there are no stipulations on how that is to be spent. Schmitz and Doan will sit down and create a budget for CTAP. These two salary increases make up for the WRM money we lost. There are no levels for the CTAP grants anymore. Corace got a 3% raise for last fiscal year and feels comfortable with his current salary. These two grants combined will bring in about $18K more than previous years.
- For Corace a 2% increase would be $1,232.
- For Doan a 2% increase would be $1,100.
- John received a 5% increase at the last meeting. He recommends the 2% increase for all staff. (2025 cost of living increase is 2.5%.)

Skarbek motions to increase by 2% the salaries of Corace, Doan, and Frechette; supported Lewis.
Roll Call vote: Ayes: Lewis, Lizon, Brown, and Skarbek. Nays: none. Motion carried.

Brown motions to approve the work agreements as amended for Corace, Frechette, and Schmitz; supported Lewis.
Roll Call vote: Ayes: Lewis, Lizon, Brown, and Skarbek. Nays: none. Motion carried.

Next Board Meeting is **Thursday, December 11th at 5:00 p.m. at Brush Creek Mill (this meeting will start with the annual meeting).**

Motion to adjourn was made by Lewis at 7:09 p.m. seconded Brown.

TASKS TO BE COMPLETED:

- Brown – follow up to get materials to be on the FAP Advisory Committee
- Frechette – negotiate with Alpena News to have them comp us a subscription in return for Corace's free articles
- Frechette – list Doug Brown under Silver Donor member on website
- Frechette - backlink from tree sale store to district webpage.
- Schmitz – research and make recommendation on best high-yield investment option
- Corace, Doan, Frechette, Schmitz – sign amended work agreements
- Estlack – check with Hunter's Harvest on preference of payee

John Schmitz, District Manager

Ed Skarbek, Board Chair
Approved / Amended / Disapproved