



Meeting Minutes

Thursday, April 09, 2026 Monthly Meeting (Alpena-Montmorency Conservation District Office)

Attendance: Board Members: Brown, Estlack, Skarbek; Associate Director Bill Houston; Staff: Dr. Greg Corace (FAP), John Schmitz (DM), Emily Frechette (CA). Meeting was called to order at 5:01 PM, by Brown, Chair. Not present: Lizon, Lewis, Doan

Additions to agenda:

- NRCS meeting 4/8
- Requests for donations of trees

Approval of Consent Agenda:

Meeting minutes (March, 2026)

Financial Report, Payment of AMCD bills

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

Roll Call vote: Ayes: Estlack, Skarbek, Brown. 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 FAP Report, the MAEAP Report, or the NRCS Report.

Schmitz presents his report. We have a new sponsorship from DTE Energy. ReLeaf wants to go in and plant 20 – 30 trees using volunteers. John is functioning as the liaison between City of Alpena and ReLeaf. These are 2" caliper (8' tall) trees. We will not be a source of the trees – due to the size of the trees there is no opportunity for profit. Discussion about calendar on website.

Discussion on the MDARD partner report and our ability to compete to achieve funding for Invasive Species initiatives. Suggestion to write article in next newsletter on how to eradicate autumn olive, inspiring public to agitate DNR for more support. Possibly write DNR-facing letter for public to send. Federal funding supports autumn olive removal; why doesn't our state support it?

FAP field season's going to start this week. For upcoming subcommittee meeting re: policies on adding, subtracting – Dr. Corace will send agenda early next week. Trout Unlimited group and Alpena Lifelong Learners groups talks went well. Both had exceptionally invested audiences. Very engaged.

Regenerative Ag grant was successful. It is a 9-month grant. \$2700/year coming into district for administrative costs. Upcoming meeting to go over grant process and financials. Grant deadline for CTAP is 1st week of June. Not sure how competitive it is; add Communication as a category in CTAP. Our biggest hindrance in that program is to have more people involved. We will write in about 10K more for communications.

Communications report is briefly discussed with regard to cloud-based files. Discussion about possible future cloud-based filing system. Frechette will create communications metrics to track and report for future meetings.

District Business:

OLD:

Updates on woody plant sale: we're starting to run out of various species. Gross \$46,898 on 178 orders last year by this time. Present gross \$63,149 on 213 orders. We have eight more days of ordering. With live radio broadcast there will be lots of people coming to pick up extra trees. Last year we had over 12,000 extras, so this year we'll have less trouble because we have fewer extras. Bryan Zabel of NRCS has driven sales of shrubs. FSA is advising landowners not to do anything to clean up from ice storm yet, which is the opposite of the advice our office is providing. AMCD's tree sale is an order of magnitude bigger than most other CDs in northern Michigan. Conifers from Evergreen in Marquette are still under several feet of snow and will probably be ready in early May. Schmitz is going to try and go through a different supplier. Skarbek is planning to set up a table at the tree sale with CNA survey, Pheasants Forever seed mixes. POS on sponsorships is requested and Schmitz confirms Landrum has volunteered to help and can take donations via tablet. We still need volunteers for Monday and Friday. (Ask Turkey Federation if they'll help? Doan will be at their dinner this Saturday.)

Brown's edits to the CNA survey made it a lot shorter, less repetitive and faster to complete. Let Schmitz know by Wednesday next week if there are any further changes. The results are not due until 2027 so we are getting a head start on this. Schmitz wants the newsletter, CNA survey, and annual report at every event we attend.

Conservation District Roundtable was Tuesday, April 7th at Canada Creek Ranch in Atlanta. Props to Amy Nowakowski for helping to get people involved. There were seven attendees including three of our staff. The group wants to meet again and next time, possibly in October. Presque Isle CD will host.

Estlack talked to someone on natural resources commission board and they're talking about implementing a change for buck tags. One buck tag per year statewide. Estlack expressed his concerns about private landowners taking issue; by the state withdrawing 2nd buck tag, a whole season of hunting could potentially be eliminated for hunters. Extended to all of NE Michigan, it will affect our economy. Why are they doing it? Bull hunters association wants big bucks. Also talking about combining the youth and Liberty hunts into a single hunt. Last year they were going to require the youth hunters to shoot does. They are now allowing youth hunters to shoot bucks again, but they can only shoot one buck per year. That means after they get one, the youth won't go back to the woods until next year. Landowners who want to remove excess deer have to purchase more licenses. Those types of landowners should get a pack of 10 tags and allow those hunting on their property to use those tags. Currently it is illegal to give doe tags to others. Subcommittee needs to articulate our mission clearly and work on how we can communicate our message effectively. DNR's Emily Sewell hasn't gotten back with Schmitz yet. We've had 5 TB positives so far this year and since the limit is 4, there will be new policies coming out. Schmitz, Skarbek, and Estlack volunteered to serve on the Deer Donation Subcommittee.

Brown and Schmitz went to Lansing for Conservation Action Day. Push is to get Ops grant funding from \$3 million to \$13 million. However, they learned there is a condition to the additional 10 million. Each CD would have to hire a dedicated conservation technician that is directly linked to NRCS. Brown and Schmitz met with Cam Cavitt. They met Hoitenga's aide; she wasn't there. The aide's last day of work was 2 days later. Less than half the other conservation districts attended.

NEW

Frechette presented on the scrap tire recycling grant. Schmitz directed the board's attention to color flyers in their packets showing Frechette's work on the FAP and CTAP banners.

Brown gave overview of Board Self-Assessment utilizing MDARD's Board Governance Element and the Succession & Recruitment Planning Element. Suggests future discussion during board meeting. Estlack

suggests incorporating this into our procedure manual and ensuring there are no incongruities created with rest of manual. Schmitz mentions the future filing system will be accessible via password login to our website.

Additions to agenda: All Saints Melissa Kline requests trees to plant with classroom of 24 children on 4/22. Looking at giving her 25 Eastern white pine.

- Motion made by Estlack to approve giving Kline 25 EWP; supported Skarbek.

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

The PTO of Hinks Elementary in Alpena requests 150 seedlings, one for each child to plant at home. Last year we donated 400 to Brown Trout Festival. We will most likely have those extra.

- Motion made by Estlack to approve giving Hinks Elementary 150 seedlings; supported Skarbek.


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

TASKS TO BE COMPLETED:

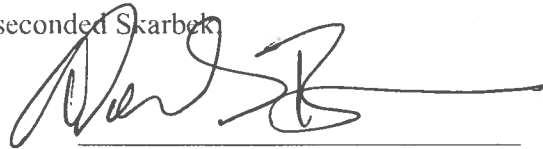
- Have Christie send out revised Ops Manual and send to directors.
- Woody Plant Sale- Pickup and Sale
- Quarterly Reports for MDARD/DNR Grants
- 5-Year and annual business plan review (May)
- Appoint Subcommittee for FY26 Budget Review and FY27 Budget Proposal (June)

Next Board Meeting is **Thursday, May 7th at 5:00 p.m. at Brush Creek Mill in Hillman.**

Motion to adjourn was made by Estlack at 7:07 p.m. seconded Skarbek



John Schmitz, District Manager



Doug Brown, Board Chair

Approved / Amended / Disapproved

