Alpena-Montmorency Conservation District

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*Alpena, MI 49707*
*989-356-3596 ext. 108*

# Meeting Minutes

## Thursday, September 24, 2026 Monthly Meeting
## (Brush Creek Mill, Hillman)

**Attendance**: Board Members: Skarbek, Brown, Lizon, Lewis, Estlack (by phone); Staff: Dr. Greg Corace (FAP), Charlie Doan (CTAP), John Schmitz (DM), Emily Frechette (CA). Meeting was called to order at 5:13 PM by Brown. Not present: Associate Director Bill Houston, Bryan Zabel (NRCS)

**Public Comment:**

**PUBLIC HEARING**

- 5:15 pm - Motion made by Lizon to open the public budget hearing; supported Skarbek.

Schmitz provides overview of revenues and expenses and a revenue breakdown by category. There is an additional 490K that goes onto the addendum. Until we get the signed copy of the agreement, we are not including it in our budget. We have been told with FAP and HAP we will be getting the same amount as last year. Oakland Hunt Club is no longer purchasing large quantities of jack pine. CFNEM 7K is confirmed. Dallas Safari Club is donating another 1K this year for doe tags. This does not include the 10K grant from Alpena Area Convention & Visitor's Bureau for sapling give-away that we just received. The 4400 expense for that is not yet in the budget either. Additional 20K for Biosecurity grant is available.

Treasurer Lewis reports 3 recommendations:

1) Gas reimbursement is difficult to include in budget; proposes removal.
2) Stipend for Frechette – payment-in-lieu-of-insurance for other full-time staff is 5K per year. Once a person gets to ¾ time, they get a portion of that payment. If after 6 months everything is going well, Frechette would get 75% of that 5K benefit annually. 33.855 for Communications includes 30 hours per week and the ¾ stipend in 6 months.
3) A 5% performance-based raise for District Manager Schmitz, to increase from 63K to 66.150. Schmitz has gotten grants and is doing good work building relationships. Range for DMs is between 42 and 105K. Estlack and Brown recommended raise after Schmitz' annual review to finance committee based on his above-average performance in all categories.

- 5:36 pm – Skarbek motions to approve the FY27 budget and close the public budget hearing, supported Lewis. Roll Call vote: Ayes: Brown, Skarbek, Lizon, Lewis. Nays: None. Motion carried.

Discussion regarding process for budget amendments / transfers between line items in budget. The WRM grant has changed from being pass-through to reimbursement. Money may need to be pulled out of CDs to enable up-front payments. Discussion re: forecast of what's in pipeline, our financial position, benefits of participating in WRM; efficacy of fencing to prevent bovine tuberculosis (bTB) and congruence with our mission.

- Motion made by Skarbek to choose Option 2 on transfer authority in the General Appropriations Act; supported Lewis. Transfers between budget line items can only be made with board approval.

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

**Approval of Consent Agenda:**
Meeting minutes (August, 2026)
Financial Report, Payment of AMCD bills
Staff Reports

- Motion made by Lewis to approve the consent agenda, supported Skarbek.

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

**Committee Updates:**

1. Board Governance Work: A Board Governance committee has emerged following Director training. Brown will present at the next meeting: 1) How committees are formed & populated; 2) Board policy outlining staff / director roles & responsibilities; 3) policy for committees and procedures. Discussion regarding whether procedures should be included in the policy manual or put in a separate operations manual. After there is policy on committee, committees can follow it to generate procedures.

2. Hunter-Harvest- Update: Doe permits to the public are $5 each; disease permits are $10. Calvin has dropped out of the program b/c he is short-handed. John will be doing radio show in next 10 days or so. Kevin from M-32 is very excited. Per Frechette a head from each animal is required for the processor to collect for DNR pickup and disease testing. Our donor agreement states the hunter will be required to file a harvest report before donating and provide that harvest report number to the processor. The DNR has requested an additional refrigerated trailer to be stationed in Atlanta, and has offered to do pickups more often. Hillman needs additional freezer space to store heads. Frechette speculated that if Hillman were enrolled in the head pickup program through SIGMA, they would get more dependable pickups of deer heads plus $20/head. Doan offers to donate his freezer. Following discussion, consensus is that we don't want to mandate food safety testing of deer heads for our program and need to revise the language in our donor and receiver agreements.

3. Budget-Finance- see public hearing section

4. Outreach- No Report

5. Forestry- Update: Language has not yet been drafted for a transparent, defensible way to get professionals listed on our website and updated. A report will be forthcoming.

6. Tree Sale- Update: We have about 6000 trees and 1 week left; total of 16,000 trees ordered; 2nd year plugs are much more popular than 1st year plugs. We don't yet have a final list of spring 2027 species, and need to work with NRCS to be sure we are offering the species they need for their programs. With our grant from the Visitor's Bureau, we will have saplings to give away in May.

7. Annual Business Plan – Update: Recruiting director with fundraising experience would be good. More aquatic-focused content should be included. Try not to set meetings on dates of conference.

- Motion made by Lewis to approve the consent agenda; supported Lizon.
  Roll Call vote: Ayes: Brown, Lewis, Lizon, Skarbek. Nays: None. Motion carried.

**District Business:**

**OLD:**
Consider Board Meeting dates for 2027 calendar year. Meetings would be moved from the 1st Thursday to the 2nd Thursday of each month. Annual Meeting in September, so we can have more of an outdoor celebration.

There is a February meeting scheduled, although we may not have quorum.

**NEW:**

Discussion and make recommendation on 2026-27 Antlerless Deer tag program. Each year we have given 1K to the doe tag program. We will get the 1K from Dallas Safari Club.

- Motion made by Skarbek to provide $1500 for the antlerless deer tag program for FY27, supported Lewis. Roll Call vote: Ayes: Brown, Lewis, Lizon, Skarbek. Nays: None. Motion carried.

Consider moving December Annual Meeting/Board Meeting from December 3rd to December 17th, 2026 at Brush Creek Mill.

- Motion made by Lewis to move the December Annual Meeting/Board Meeting from December 3rd to December 17th, 2026 at Brush Creek Mill; supported Skarbek. Roll Call vote: Ayes: Brown, Lewis, Lizon, Skarbek. Nays: None. Motion carried.

- Motion made by Lizon to donate $250 to Future Farmers of America; supported Skarbek. Roll Call vote: Ayes: Brown, Lewis, Lizon, Skarbek. Nays: None. Motion carried.

TASKS TO BE COMPLETED:

- Finalize Spring 2027 Tree Order
- Complete Annual Report
- Begin Work on January Newsletter
- Board Elections- Including Publications
- Update Policy Manual
- Work Agreements

PUBLIC COMMENT:

PUBLIC ACTS:

CORRESPONDENCE:

Next Board Meeting is **Thursday, October 8th at 5:00 p.m. at the Alpena-Montmorency Conservation District office.**

Motion to adjourn was made by Lewis at 7:24 p.m. seconded Brown.

John Schmitz, District Manager

Doug Brown, Board Chair
Approved / Amended / Disapproved