



Albany County

Soil and Water Conservation District

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Albany County Agricultural Environmental Management 2026-2030 Strategic Plan



The mission of the Albany County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) is to advance comprehensive natural resource management on a voluntary basis to residents, landowners and units of government. The District leads by providing science-based technical and educational assistance and coordination of resources from Federal, State, and Local governments, and other sources.

Background Information

This Agricultural Environmental Management (AEM) Strategy has been compiled by the Albany County Soil and Water Conservation District staff with direction from the following agencies:

- Albany County Soil and Water Conservation District (ACSWCD)
- Albany County Water Quality Coordinating Committee (ACWQCC)
- Cornell Cooperative Extension of Albany County (CCE)
- Albany County Office of Natural Resource Conservation
- Albany County Farmland Protection Board
- USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA)
- USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) - CGRASS Working Group - Columbia, Greene, Rensselaer, Albany, Schoharie, and Schenectady Counties

AEM Vision: Promote environmentally sound and economically viable farms in Albany County.

AEM Mission: Through the voluntary AEM process of farm assessment, planning, implementation and evaluation, we will strive to protect and enhance the environment, while promoting the economic sustainability of farms and the agricultural community within the County. The approach will be locally led to efficiently and cost effectively address all natural resource concerns on farms.

Agricultural Environmental Management

The Agricultural Environmental Management (AEM) program is a voluntary, non-regulatory, confidential program, led by the local Soil and Water Conservation District, designed to help farmers protect soil, water and other important natural resources. This is a state program that is offered to help improve management of local farmland, water supply, and environmental conditions.

In Albany County, the program is run through the Albany County Soil and Water Conservation District (ACSWCD) and offers technical, educational, and financial resources. ACSWCD staff work with farmers to gauge interest, document existing stewardship, and identify potential environmental concerns. By participating in AEM, farmers can document their environmental stewardship and further advance their positive contributions to their communities, our food systems, the economy, and the environment. Farm-specific conservation plans are developed in partnership with the farmer using a five-tiered approach, and District personnel provide technical assistance to help implement Best Management Practices (BMPs) identified in those plans.

Farmers work with local AEM resource professionals to develop comprehensive farm plans using a tiered process:

Tier 1 – Inventory current activities, future plans, and potential environmental concerns.

Tier 2 – Document current land stewardship; assess and prioritize areas of concern.

Tier 3 – Develop conservation plans addressing concerns and opportunities tailored to farm goals.

Tier 4 – Implement plans utilizing available financial, educational, and technical assistance.

Tier 5 – Evaluate to ensure the protection of the environment and farm viability.

All AEM participants were invited to complete an online survey to help in the update of the strategic plan, the results of which have been incorporated into this plan.

Agricultural Nonpoint Source Abatement & Control Grant Program

Led by the New York State Soil and Water Conservation Committee, in coordination with the Department of Agriculture and Markets, the goal of the Agricultural Nonpoint Source Abatement and Control Program is to reduce and prevent the nonpoint source contribution from agricultural activities in watersheds across the state by means of

supporting the Agricultural Environmental Management (AEM) framework. Cost-share funds are provided through Soil and Water Conservation Districts for plans and the implementation of Best Management Practices (BMPs) Systems, as defined in Section 3 of the Soil and Water Conservation Districts Law.

The Program awards water quality protection projects that focus on environmental planning and best management practice systems. Projects include conservation measures such as nutrient management through manure storage, vegetative buffers along streams, and conservation cover crops.

The program is a competitive grant program, with funds applied for and awarded through county Soil and Water Conservation Districts. State funds come from the New York State Environmental Protection Fund.

Drinking Water Source Protection Plans (DWSP2)

Through the DWSP2 state-supported program, several municipalities in Albany County are in the process of creating, updating or finalizing plans. These plans help municipalities take action to improve and protect drinking water sources. In concert with these plans, the District has been tasked with increasing participation in the AEM program, as well as encouraging more implementation of Best Management Practices.

Goals and Objectives

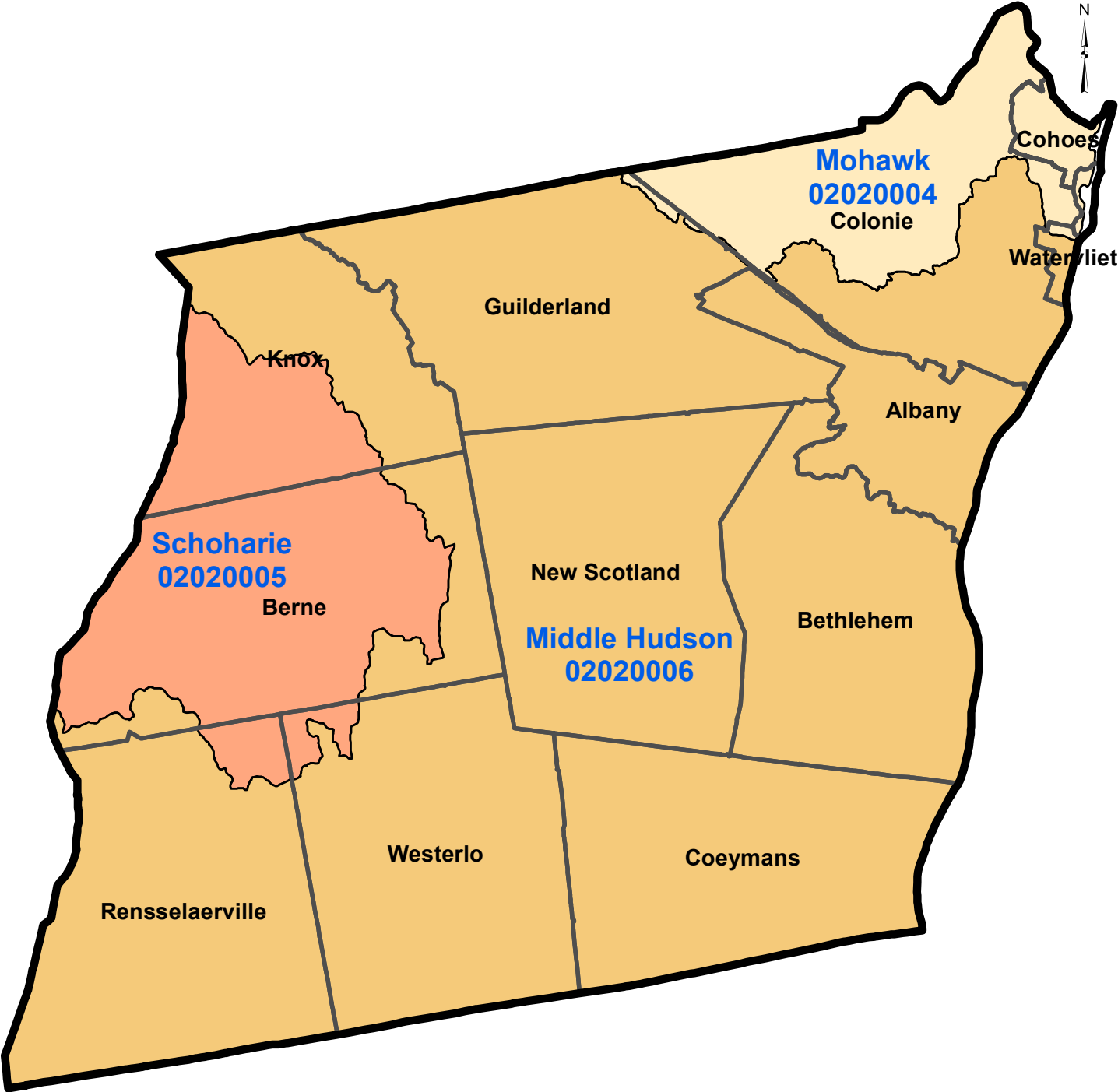
Successful implementation of the Strategic Plan is a priority, and the District will continue to pursue the outlined goals and objectives over the next five years.

- 1) Goal: Increase the number of farmers that are aware of and interested in the AEM program and the services the SWCD can offer to the agricultural community.
 - Objectives
 - a. Feature the AEM Display at educational events throughout the year
 - b. Provide written articles for the local newspaper as well as the District newsletter
 - c. Utilize social media to promote the program
- 2) Goal: Reduce the flow of nutrients into waterways, streams, ponds, and reservoirs.
 - Objectives
 - a. Develop CNMPs for farms working with the AEM Program
 - b. Apply for funding to implement Best Management Practices identified in farm plans
 - c. Host workshops covering topics from grazing management to feed management
 - d. Encourage soil sampling to help reduce the application of unnecessary nutrients
- 3) Goal: Reduce silt/sediment entering waterways, streams, ponds and reservoirs.
 - Objectives
 - a. Promote the installation of riparian buffers and cover cropping throughout the County
- 4) Goal: Reduce pesticides entering waterways, streams, ponds and reservoirs.
 - Objectives
 - a. Develop AEM plans to address pesticide use
 - b. Promote workshops and trainings that educate farmers on the proper usage of pesticides
- 5) Goal: Improve local market opportunities for farmers.
 - Objectives
 - a. Foster participation in “Harvest Connection” and “Hudson Valley Bounty”

Planning Units Defined

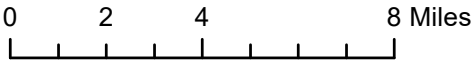
There are 3 major watersheds in Albany County categorized with 8 digit Hydrologic Unit Codes. They are: Middle Hudson Watershed, Schoharie Watershed and Mohawk Watershed. (See map below)

Watershed Boundaries - 8 Digit Hydrologic Unit Codes - Albany County



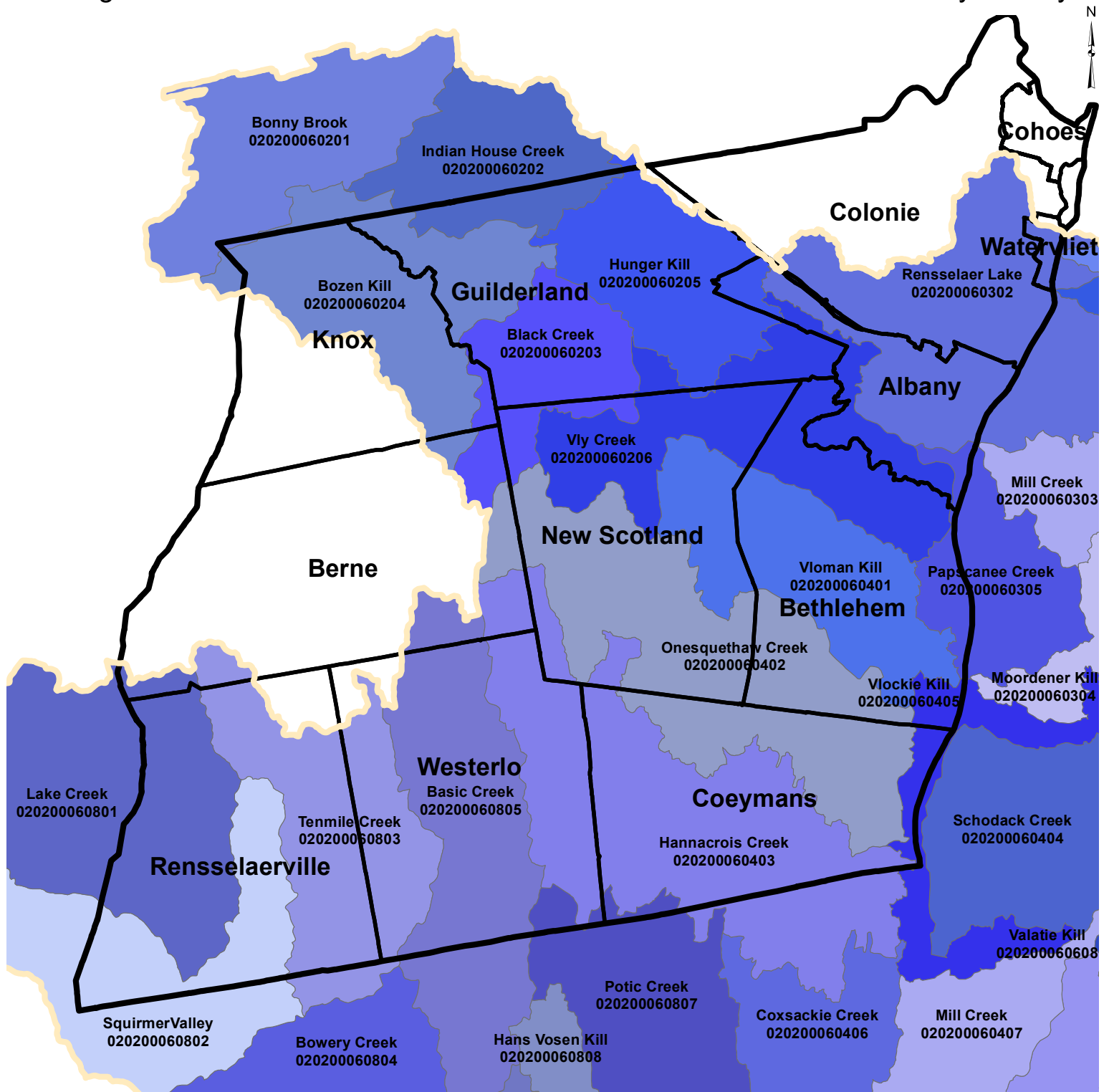
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1 inch = 4 miles



Priority Unit #1 Middle Hudson Watershed

12 Digit HUC Watershed Boundaries - Middle Hudson Watershed - Albany County



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1 inch = 4 miles

0 2 4 8 Miles

The **Middle Hudson Watershed** covers the majority of Albany County. It comprises several watersheds that were previously used as planning units for the original county AEM Strategy. The following table lists the watersheds and 12-digit Hydrologic Unit Codes (HUC) that make up the Middle Hudson Watershed in Albany County:

020200060202	Indian House Creek	1311-0018	A	Upstream of Watervliet Reservoir, tributary of Upper Normanskill, suburban encroachment, source of water supply is stressed (unconfirmed), chloride listed as water supply pollutant, fishing fully supported (unconfirmed). Fishing pollutants include dissolved oxygen, nitrite, pH.
020200060203	Black Creek	1311-0024	C	Flows to Watervliet Reservoir, highly developed, Black Creek Marsh. High gradient in escarpment area. Fishing is impaired due to dissolved oxygen (unconfirmed).
020200060204	Bozen Kill	1311-0017	C	Flows to Watervliet Reservoir, high gradient, karst topography, many active farms, recipient of wastewater treatment plant discharge. Aquatic life support in Bozen Kill are known to experience minor impacts due to nutrient and organic loads believed to be from municipal sources. Known pollutants include nutrients (phosphorus). Possible pollutants include dissolved oxygen/oxygen demand and ammonia.
020200060205	Hunger Kill	1311-0002	B	Urban-suburban development, recipient of wastewater treatment plant discharge. Fishing is stressed due to dissolved oxygen levels (unconfirmed).
020200060205	Watervliet Reservoir	1311-0001	A	Water supply, aquatic life and recreational uses in Watervliet Reservoir may experience minor impacts due to algal blooms and aquatic weed growth. Water supply is confirmed to have elevated levels of iron and manganese. Fishing impaired by dissolved oxygen (confirmed). Primary and Secondary Contact Recreation impaired by total phosphorus (unconfirmed).
020200060206	Normanskill	1311-0010	C	Highly erodible land, active horse farms, urban development, recipient of wastewater treatment plant discharge (CSO). Fishing is impaired (unconfirmed) due to aluminum, nitrate and pH.
020200060206	Vly Creek	1311-0021	C(T)	Village of Voorheesville, diverse watershed. Gravel deposits and wetlands, fishing fully supported (unconfirmed) but impacted by dissolved oxygen and pH. Division of Water's Stream Monitoring and Assessment Programs lists pH & DO as pollutants. Algal blooms in the Vly Creek Reservoir caused a musty odor in Bethlehem residents' taps in October of 2024.
020200060401	Vloman Kill	1301-0239	C(T)	Lower Vloman Kill. Active farmland, nutrients. Fishing is impaired by nitrite (unconfirmed).
020200060401	Vloman Kill	1301-0240	C(T)	Upper Vloman Kill. Highly erodible, entrenched stream, buffer potential. Fishing is stressed by pH (unconfirmed).
020200060402	Onesquethaw-Coeymans	1301-0095	C(T)	High nitrate levels found in municipal wells, nutrient enrichment from nonpoint source runoff, fauna vulnerable to pollutants in karst bedrock, wastewater treatment plant discharge upstream, fishing impaired by pH (unconfirmed).
020200060402	Onesquethaw Headwaters	1301-0233	C(TS)	Aquatic life support in Onesquethaw Creek is thought to experience minor impacts due to nutrient enrichment, siltation and other pollutants from agricultural and other nonpoint sources, recipient of wastewater treatment plant discharge. Unassessed segment
020200060403	Hannacrois Creek	1301-0020 1301-0230 1301-0231	C(T) A(TS)	Upper and middle portions of creek are A(TS) class. The lower portion is C(T) class. Cropland in floodplain, public drinking water in Ravena. Fishing is stressed by pH in upper and lower portions of creek (unconfirmed). Fishing impaired by pH in middle portion of creek (unconfirmed). Upper portion has impaired water supply source from iron pollution (unconfirmed).
020200060405	Vlockie Kill	1301-0238	C	Along the Hudson River, cropland in floodplain, Coeymans to Glenmont. Unassessed segment
020200060801	Lake Creek	1309-0011	C(T)	High gradient streams. Fishing fully supported (unconfirmed), but some dissolved oxygen and pH pollution.
020200060802	Squirmer Valley	1309-0011	C(T)	High gradient streams. Fishing fully supported (unconfirmed), but some dissolved oxygen and pH pollution.
020200060803	Ten Mile/Eight Mile	1309-0030	C(TS)	Livestock farms. Fishing is stressed (unconfirmed). Some pH pollution.
020200060805	Basic Creek Above	1309-0028	A(TS)	Threats due to nutrient enrichment from agricultural and other nonpoint sources. Water supply impaired by high levels of iron (unconfirmed). Fishing fully supported (unconfirmed). Fishing is impacted by dissolved oxygen and pH.

020200060805	Basic Creek Below	1309-0027	C(T)	Active farmland, mostly hay/ pasture. Fishing fully supported (unconfirmed) but impacted by dissolved oxygen and pH.
020200060805	Basic Creek Reservoir	1309-0001	A	Algal blooms, excessive aquatic vegetation, heavy nutrient and sediment loads. Heavy impairment within fishing and primary and secondary contact recreation (confirmed). Heavy impairment of the source of water supply (unconfirmed). Fishing impacted by total phosphorus and dissolved oxygen. Secondary and primary contact recreation impacted by total phosphorus. Source of water supply is impacted by iron and total phosphorus.

Classification of waters

AA or A is assigned to waters used as a source of drinking water.

B indicates a best usage for swimming and other contact recreation, but not for drinking water.

C is for waters supporting fisheries and suitable for non-contact activities.

(T) indicates the potential for supporting trout; (TS) indicating it may support trout spawning.

The following sub-watersheds drain to the Normanskill and eventually to the Hudson.

Black Creek	020200060203
Bozenkill	020200060204
Hunger Kill	020200060205
Watervliet Reservoir	020200060205
Vly Creek	020200060206
Normanskill	020200060206

Normanskill Watershed

Water Quality Problem Statement:

The Normanskill Watershed contains several water bodies that have been listed in the NYSDEC Lower Hudson River Basin Priority Waterbodies List. Many of the impairments are attributed to the large degree of urbanization within this watershed, however pollutants impacting the Bozenkill, Black Creek, Indian House Creek, Vly Creek and Watervliet Reservoir may also stem from agricultural practices. The Watervliet Reservoir, located in Guiderland, is owned by the City of Watervliet and is the City's sole drinking water source. It is also the primary drinking water source for the Town of Guiderland. Water supply use of the Watervliet Reservoir is stressed by algal blooms and excessive aquatic vegetation. The Reservoir is fed by Indian House Creek, Black Creek, Bozenkill, and parts of the Hunger Kill.

Significant development pressure within this watershed renders responsible farming practices a necessity for open space preservation and good community relations.

The Watervliet Reservoir Watershed Protection Plan authored by the Capital District Regional Planning Commission examines water quality/nonpoint source pollution problems of the Watervliet Reservoir:

“More recently the relationship between land use and water quality has become better understood, however, development pressures and a lack of sufficient water quality protection measures continue to threaten the long-term viability of the reservoir as a drinking water source.”

- The Watervliet Reservoir Watershed Protection Plan – March 2023.

“When managed properly, agriculture can help improve water and soil quality, protect wildlife habitat and biodiversity, and reduce the emission of greenhouse gasses.”

- The Watervliet Reservoir Watershed Protection Plan – March 2023.

Suspected sources of nutrients and sediment as related to agriculture are:

- Streambank Erosion

- Over grazed pasture - Livestock
- Manure/fertilizer spreading and storage – Nutrient loading
- Cropland Erosion - silt/sediment
- Heavy use areas including barnyards

Desired Future Condition:

A significant decrease in nutrient and sediment entering the watershed from agricultural operations is the goal. Actively encouraging the establishment of riparian buffers where pastures and croplands meet waterways aids in this effort. Furthermore, by promoting soil health principles such as reduced tillage and the widespread use of cover crops, the incidence of bare soil significantly lessens.

Onesquethaw-Coeymans Watershed 020200060402

Onesquethaw Creek 020200060402

Water Quality Problem Statement:

Onesquethaw Creek is a Class C waterbody [portions are class C(T) or C(TS)]. Municipal wells located near Clarksville have been known to exhibit high nitrate levels. An assessment indicated that resident fauna in Onesquethaw Creek is especially vulnerable to pollutants that may be rapidly transported through the highly fractured karst bedrock. Aquatic life in Onesquethaw Creek is thought to experience minor impacts due to nutrient enrichment, siltation and other pollutants from agricultural and other nonpoint sources. The habitat, particularly the loss of stream flow through fractures in limestone stream bed, may influence the sample results.

Coeymans Creek is a Class C(T) waterbody. Aquatic life in Coeymans Creek is known to experience minor impacts due to nutrient enrichment (phosphorus), siltation and other pollutants from agricultural and other nonpoint sources.

Through AEM, the SWCD has inventoried farms in the watershed and identified and prioritized environmental practices and concerns. This information has been used to identify the highest priorities. Practices include stream buffers, improvement of manure storage facilities and manure spreading practices, and drainage improvements.

Suspected sources of nutrients and sediment as related to agriculture are:

- Barnyards
- Livestock
- Manure/fertilizer spreading and storage – Nutrient loading
- Silage storage and nutrient rich leachate
- Cropland Erosion
- Streambank Erosion - siltation

Benthic aquatic habitat at the Coeymans Wildlife Management Area was found to be unfavorable through the assessment completed by Jeremy Dietrich, IA Environmental in January 2020 (An Assessment of Water Quality in Lower Coeymans Creek Using Aquatic Macroinvertebrate Populations). “Habitat limitations, indicated as siltation by Bode (2004), likely contribute to the lower taxa richness, implying a semi-impacted reach.”

Desired Future Condition:

While agricultural activity in this watershed is viewed as having an impact on water quality, there is opportunity to work with farmers who are stewards of large areas of undeveloped land toward goals of water quality improvement and stream corridor protection. Cover cropping should be encouraged in this watershed, to build organic matter in the soil. Better nutrient management on the larger farms will help to allocate nutrients according to soil test results.

Catskill Creek Watershed

Tenmile Creek 020200060803

Water Quality Sampling A biological (macroinvertebrate) survey of Tenmile Creek at multiple sites between Oak Hill and Rensselaerville was conducted in 1997. Sampling results presented in the Tenmile Creek Biological Stream Assessment Report (Bode, et al., April 1998) indicated slightly to non-impacted water quality conditions. Four of five sites were assessed as slightly impacted, while the farthest downstream site was found to be non-impacted. Nutrient enrichment was identified as the primary source of the impacts. However, nutrient biotic evaluation determined these effects on the fauna to be minor. Aquatic life is considered to be fully supported in the stream, and there are no other apparent water quality impacts to designated uses. (DEC/DOW, BWAM/SBU, June 2005) A previous assessment reported minor impacts below the Hamlet of Rensselaerville that may be the result of wastewater treatment overflows serving a small cluster of homes. Rensselaerville is now served by a community wastewater system (septic tank, sand filter with subsurface disposal).

The data is very old and sampling should be conducted again in this watershed to see if there are changes to stream health.

Squirmer Valley 020200060802
Lake Creek 020200060801

A biological (macroinvertebrate) survey of Catskill Creek at multiple sites between Leeds and Livingstonville was conducted in 1997. Sampling results presented in the Catskill Creek Biological Stream Assessment Report (Bode, et al., September 1998) at two sites, including one at Preston Hollow in this reach, were assessed as slightly impacted but were very similar to the non-impacted sites. Nonpoint sources of nutrient enrichment were identified as the primary source of the impacts. However, nutrient biotic evaluation determined these effects on the fauna to be minor.

Water Quality Problem Statement:

Catskill Creek is a Class B waterbody [portions are class B(T)]. Investigations have identified possible water use impairments stemming from certain agricultural activities in this watershed. The 1999 NYSDEC Lower Hudson River Basin Priority Waterbodies List reports that public bathing and aesthetics in Catskill Creek may be impaired by pathogens, nutrients and sediment. Although the portion of Catskill Creek listed in the PWL is within Greene County (downstream), a biological assessment by the NYSDEC found slight water quality impacts from nutrient enrichment and siltation in Preston Hollow (Albany County).

Suspected sources of nutrients and sediment as related to agriculture are:

Albany County Department of Health Source Water Assessment of Ten Mile Creek Watershed (subwater-shed of Catskill) found agricultural land cover (i.e., pasture) to be a potential source of contamination.

- Streambank erosion
- Barnyards
- Livestock

Desired Future Condition:

Assess farms in the Preston Hollow area that may be contributing to nutrient enrichment and siltation issues, and implement effective strategies to mitigate these concerns. Severe streambank erosion has been observed in Preston Hollow, requiring attention as part of broader efforts to enhance water quality. Additionally, prioritizing the identification of soil erosion issues on farms in the Eight and Tenmile Creek areas is essential for comprehensive environmental management.

Basic Creek Watershed

Basic Creek 020200060805

Water Quality Problem Statement:

Basic Creek is a Class A(TS) stream that extends for 54.1 miles. Aquatic life is thought to experience minor threats due to nutrient enrichment from agricultural and other nonpoint sources. Although aquatic life is supported in the stream, nutrient biotic evaluation suggests the level of eutrophication is sufficient to threaten aquatic life support.

The Basic Creek Reservoir is the backup water supply to the City of Albany. When the primary source, the Alcove Reservoir, needs to be supplemented, the connection between the reservoirs can be opened. That will allow for water to flow from the Basic Reservoir down to the Alcove through a controlled outlet pipe to a tributary to the Hannacrois Creek. This is a potential contamination concern due to the impaired state of the Basic Reservoir with excessive nutrients and phosphorus. The Reservoir has a regular occurrence of Harmful Algal Blooms as a result of the nutrients. Poor conservation practices on agricultural lands in the reservoir watershed are thought to contribute to heavy nutrient and sediment loads, which encourage plant growth.

The NYSDEC Division of Water's Stream Monitoring and Assessment Programs lists dissolved oxygen, pH and Iron as pollutants within the Basic Creek Watershed.

The Basic Creek Reservoir Dam is considered a "high-hazard" and is in need of repair. High-hazard dams are those whose failure would cause significant damage to downstream residents and properties, but that designation alone does not indicate an imminent risk.

"The Basic Creek Reservoir has been declared an 'impaired water body' under Section 303(d) of the Federal Clean Water Act. The impairment from the water quality standards is due to a concentration of Phosphorous, the principal source being from agriculture activities in the drainage basin."

- FIVE YEAR CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM (2022-2026) Arcadis U.S., Inc.

Suspected sources of nutrients and sediment as related to agriculture are:

- Barnyard runoff from livestock
- Manure/fertilizer spreading and storage
- Silage storage and nutrient rich leachate
- Cropland Erosion
- Streambank Erosion

Desired Future Condition:

Identify farms that might be contributing increased levels of nutrients to the stream above the reservoir. Focus and implement practices that are associated with high levels of phosphorus. Encourage farmers to adopt cover cropping and better nutrient management, introduce farmers to programs that will increase or create riparian buffers in areas of concern, and promote rotational grazing where land base allows.

Vlomanskill Watershed

Vloman Kill	020200060401
Vlockie Kill	020200060405
Papscanee Creek	020200060305

Water Quality Problem Statement:

The Vlomanskill is a Class C waterbody [portions are class C(T)]. Investigations have identified possible water use impairments stemming from certain agricultural activities in this watershed. The NYSDEC Lower Hudson River Basin Priority Waterbodies lists this waterbody needing verification, with pH as a suspected pollutant for stressed fishing use. AEM investigations conducted by the Albany County SWCD have identified agriculture as one of the contributors of nonpoint source pollution. Significant development pressure within this watershed renders responsible farming a necessity for open space preservation and good community relations.

Suspected sources of nutrients and sediment as related to agriculture are:

- Streambank Erosion
- Barnyard runoff from livestock
- Manure/fertilizer spreading and storage
- Silage storage and nutrient rich leachate
- Cropland Erosion

Desired Future Condition:

Identify problematic agricultural areas of concern and implement BMP's. Encourage conservation tillage, cover crop use, riparian buffers and proper nutrient management.

Hannacrois Creek Watershed

Hannacrois Creek 020200060403

Water Quality Problem Statement:

The Hannacrois Creek is a Class A(TS) stream. The watershed contains the Alcove Reservoir which acts as the main drinking water source for the City of Albany. Much of the surrounding land area is City owned and therefore agriculture is not a major detriment to water quality in the Alcove Reservoir. However, there are a few small farms in the area that have the potential to have an impact on the reservoir. The Hannacrois Creek downstream of the Alcove is impounded in Deans Mill for use as a water supply to the Village of Ravena. Investigations have identified possible water use impairments (nutrients, sediment, pathogens) within the lower watershed stemming from certain agricultural activities.

Suspected Sources of nutrients and sediment are:

Agricultural land cover (ie: pasture) has been determined to be a potential source of contamination. There is also noteworthy contamination susceptibility associated with other discrete contaminant sources, like landfills. Additional sources of potential contamination include: septic systems (along State Route 143 and near intake), golf course and pasture (very near intake).

Suspected sources of nutrients and sediment as related to agriculture are:

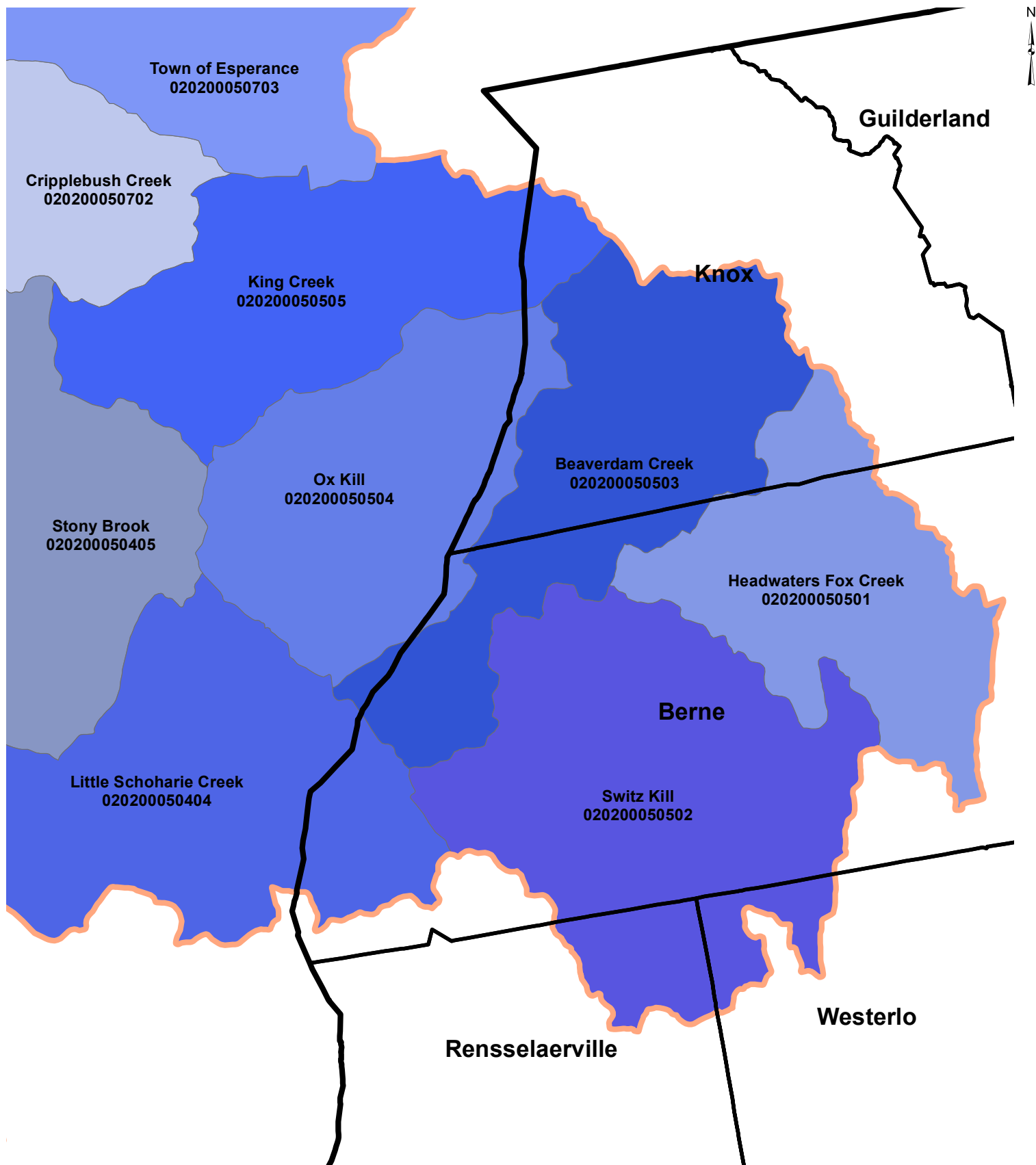
- Streambank Erosion
- Barnyard runoff from livestock
- Manure/fertilizer spreading and storage
- Silage storage and nutrient rich leachate

Desired Future Condition:

Identify the farms in the area that have streams on their property, making them a priority. Implement water quality practices surrounding these streams, such as encouraging riparian buffers and proper stream crossings. Prevent nutrient enrichment to waterbodies.

Priority Unit #2 Schoharie Watershed

12 Digit HUC Watershed Boundaries - Schoharie Watershed - Albany County



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1 inch = 2 miles

0 1 2 4 Miles

The **Schoharie Watershed** is located in the northwestern portion of the county. It is comprised of the following sub-watersheds:

12 Digit HUC	Watershed Name	PWL ID	Class	AEM NOTES
020200050404	Little Schoharie Creek	1202-0047	A(TS)	Silt and sediment from streambank erosion. Unassessed segment; above the Middleburgh water supply
020200050501	Headwaters Fox Creek	1202-0004	C(T)	Rotational grazing, recipient of wastewater treatment plant discharge
020200050502	Switz Kill	1202-0007	C(T)	Streambank erosion, Rotational grazing
020200050503	Beaverdam Creek	1202-0043	C	Several beef farms, Rotational grazing, wastewater treatment plant discharge upstream
020200050504	Ox Kill	1202-0041	C	Streambank erosion, Rotational grazing, wastewater treatment plant discharge upstream. Fishing is stressed (unconfirmed) and is impacted by pH pollution.
020200050505	King Creek	1202-0008	A	Streambank erosion, Rotational grazing, wastewater treatment plant discharge upstream. Fishing is stressed (unconfirmed) and polluted with dissolved oxygen. The source of water supply is stressed (unconfirmed) and contaminated with arsenic.

Water Quality Problem Statement:

Fox Creek is a Class C(T) stream throughout most of its length in Albany County. Investigations have identified possible water use impairments stemming from agricultural activities in this watershed. SWCD AEM assessments indicate opportunities for improvement on a farm-by-farm basis. Tier 2 analysis indicates resource concerns from improper grazing techniques, lack of riparian buffers, and a need for conservation tillage improvements.

Suspected Sources of nutrients and sediment as related to agriculture are:

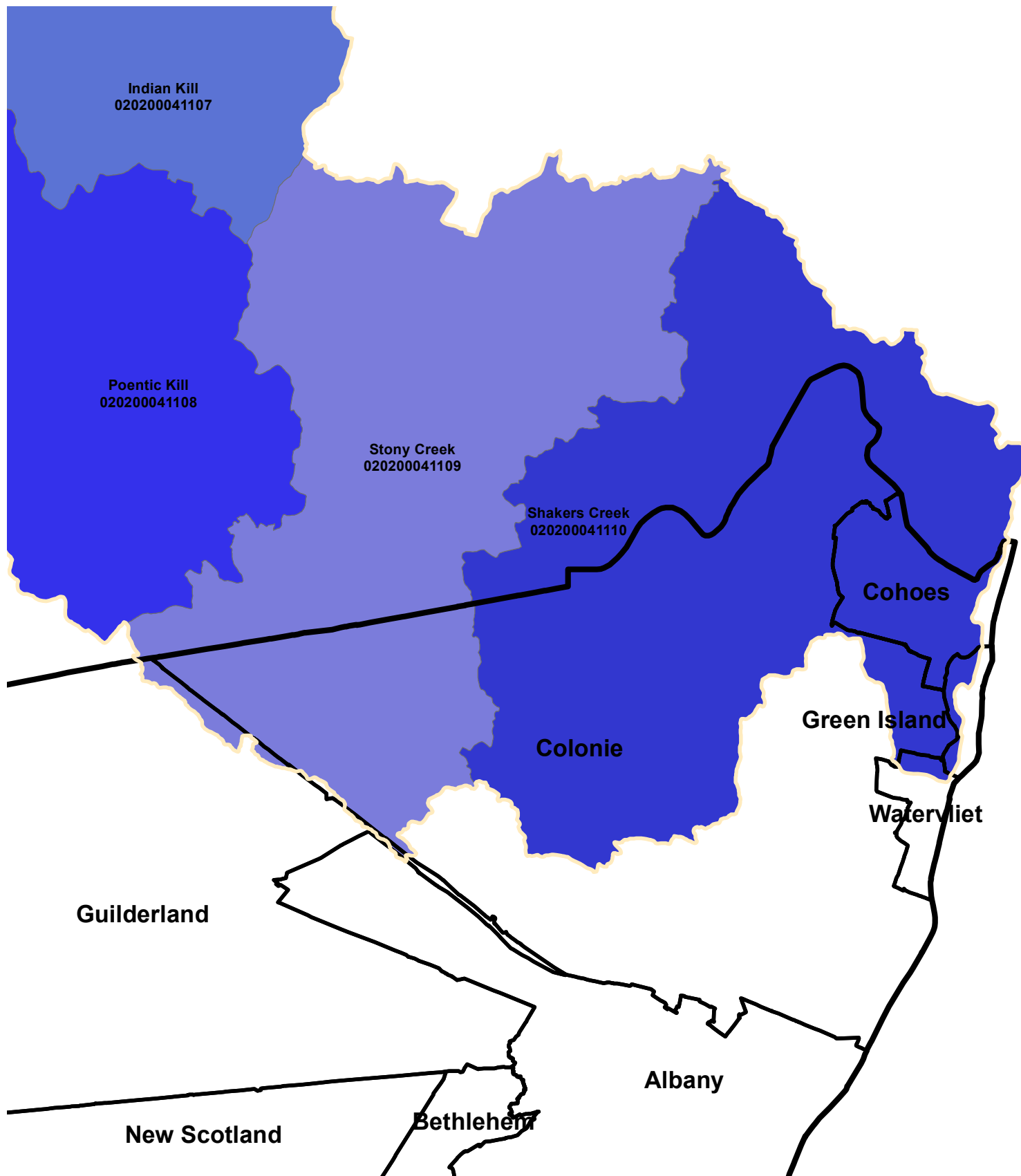
- Barnyards
- Overgrazed pasture from livestock
- Manure/fertilizer spreading and storage
- Silage storage and nutrient rich leachate
- Cropland Erosion
- Streambank Erosion
- Petroleum/oil product storage
- Chemical/Fertilizer mixing facilities

Desired Future Condition:

Identify livestock farms that could implement prescribed rotational grazing into their farm operation. Adopt best management practices that prevent the incidence of overgrazing of pasture thereby reducing the sources of contamination. Where possible, prevent or limit livestock access to streams and improve stream crossings. On cropland, implement cover cropping to prevent nonpoint source pollution. Implement secondary containment for petroleum storage tanks. Identify farm operations that need chemical/fertilizer mixing facilities.

Priority Unit #3 Mohawk Watershed

12 Digit HUC Watershed Boundaries - Mohawk Watershed - Albany County



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1 inch = 2 miles

0 1 2 4 Miles

The **Mohawk Watershed** is located in the northeastern portion of the county. It is comprised of the following sub-watersheds:

12 Digit HUC	Watershed Name	PWL ID	Class	AEM NOTES
020200041109	Stony Creek	1201-0074	B(T)	Horse farms and vegetable/fruit production. Fishing is stressed (unconfirmed) and impacted by dissolved oxygen and pH.
020200041110	Shaker Creek	1201-0079 1201-0095	C	Vegetable and fruit production. Fishing is impaired around Colonie due to TDS (unconfirmed). Fishing is also stressed around Latham and Cohoes due to pH (unconfirmed).

Water Quality Problem Statement:

This planning unit consists of the small, urbanized watersheds in the northeastern portion of the county that drain to the Mohawk River. Although these watersheds are highly urbanized, there are a few scattered farms that produce vegetables, hay and livestock pasture (mainly equine). Agricultural sources of water pollutants are minimal in comparison to residential/commercial/industrial sources; however, it is suspected that nutrients and sediment may be exported from these operations.

Suspected Sources of nutrients and sediment as related to agriculture are:

- Barnyards
- Livestock
- Manure/fertilizer spreading and storage
- Cropland Erosion
- Petroleum/oil product storage

Desired Future Condition:

Identify potential sources of contamination and seek to implement practices to prevent nonpoint source pollution.

Status of Agriculture in the County

2022 Census of Agriculture for Albany County New York

According to the 2022 census conducted by NASS there are 349 active farms* in the County: 50,151 acres of land in farms with an average size farm of approximately 144 acres. County farms contribute over \$47.9 million to the local economy and hire a significant number of employees. (see **Table 1**).

Table 1 – Top Ranking Commodities – USDA NY Agricultural Statistics Service

2017 CENSUS OF AGRICULTURE		Albany County
MARKET VALUE OF AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTS SOLD (\$1,000)	Sales (\$1,000)	Ranking in State
Total value of agricultural products sold	47,919	44
Value of crops including nursery and greenhouse	33,908	27
Value of livestock, poultry, and their products	14,011	46
TOP FIVE ALL COMMODITIES - VALUE OF SALES (\$1,000)		
Nursery, greenhouse, floriculture, and sod	25,553	4

Milk from cows	(D)	44
Other crops and hay	2,515	44
Cattle and calves	(D)	24
Vegetables, melons, potatoes, and sweet potatoes	(D)	27
TOP FOUR LIVESTOCK INVENTORY ITEMS (number)		
Cattle and calves	5,764	-
Layers	3,733	-
Sheep and lambs	942	-
Broiler and other meat-type chickens	675	-
TOP FIVE CROP ITEMS (acres)		
Forage (hay/haylage)	21,279	-
Corn for silage/ greenchop	4,249	-
Corn for grain	482	-
Oats for grain	(D)	-
Vegetables harvested	255	-

*The census definition of a farm is any place from which \$1,000 or more of agricultural products were produced and sold, or normally would have been sold, during the census year. This definition is consistent with the definition used for current USDA surveys. (D) Withheld to avoid disclosing data for individual operations.

In 2018 the Albany County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board completed an update to the Albany County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan. The mission is “*To develop goals and strategies to support and enhance Albany County’s agricultural industry and agricultural resources*”. While many challenges that the agricultural industry face are out of our hands, we are fortunate to have AEM as a tool to promote environmentally friendly farms. As the next generation takes over the family farm or considers a new career in farming, they can look to AEM as a model for operating a sustainable business. The AEM model supports farmers’ desire to be stewards of the land, serves as an example of good land management, and allows farmers to provide earth-friendly products that are very important to consumers.

Natural Resource Concerns

Nutrient Management

During Tier 2 farm assessment visits, it is clear that farmers wish to follow nutrient recommendations and guidelines. Fuel cost and labor issues have been an impediment to properly allocating manure and fertilizer based on Cornell guidelines. A growing number of farmers are looking to use soil health management systems to improve the health and function of their soil. Through proper soil health management, farmers can save energy and inputs, save water and increase drought tolerance, reduce pests and disease, improve water quality, increase organic matter, increase water infiltration, increase soil carbon and reduce CO2 emissions. These results can be achieved with a number of conservation practices, such as:

- Cover Crop
- Conservation Tillage
- Prescribed Rotational Grazing
- Conservation Crop Rotations

Livestock Access to Waterbodies and Inadequate Forage

There are many farms in Albany County that allow livestock to access the waterbody on the farm in order to be sure they can have drinkable water throughout the year. When livestock have full access to streams and other water bodies, they create water quality problems by loafing in these areas. Mud and manure can degrade water resources, and contaminate drinking water sources. By fencing streams and providing an alternative water source, animals have access to clean water, which results in better health and weight gain, while protecting water quality.

In addition, the pasture lot is typically over grazed due to inadequate fencing infrastructure. By implementing prescribed rotational grazing systems, animals are provided with adequate forage to meet their nutritional needs without overgrazing pastures. When pastures are overgrazed, bare soil is susceptible to erosion and compaction. Overgrazed pastures can result in muddy conditions during the winter months. The SWCD continues to encourage the use of rotational grazing as a management tool.

Water Quality Contamination of Surface and Groundwater (nutrients, sediment, pathogens)

The County's water supply is obtained from both surface reservoirs and subsurface aquifers. The main surface water sources are the Alcove, Basic, Watervliet and Vly Reservoirs. NYS Department of Health Source Water Assessment of Public Drinking Water Supplies identified six surface waterbodies and nine municipal wells as having elevated susceptibility to pollution or substantial potential risks. Agricultural activities have been identified as possible sources. (See map on page 18)

Erosion on Cropland

Soil erosion is a major concern on much of the cropland in Albany County. The hazard of erosion is related to the slope of the land, the erodibility of the soil, the amount and intensity of rainfall and the type of plant cover. Loss of soil through erosion results in a loss of nutrients and water, formation of gullies on hillsides, deterioration of tilth, detrimental sedimentation downslope, and pollution of streams and water reservoirs. Many tillage and conservation practices help control erosion. Minimum tillage, no-till, cover crops, crop residue on the surface and a cropping system that has a high proportion of sod crops are effective in controlling erosion (Albany County Soil Survey). Reduced tillage and conservation practices could potentially have an economic benefit to farms given fluctuating fuel costs and labor issues.

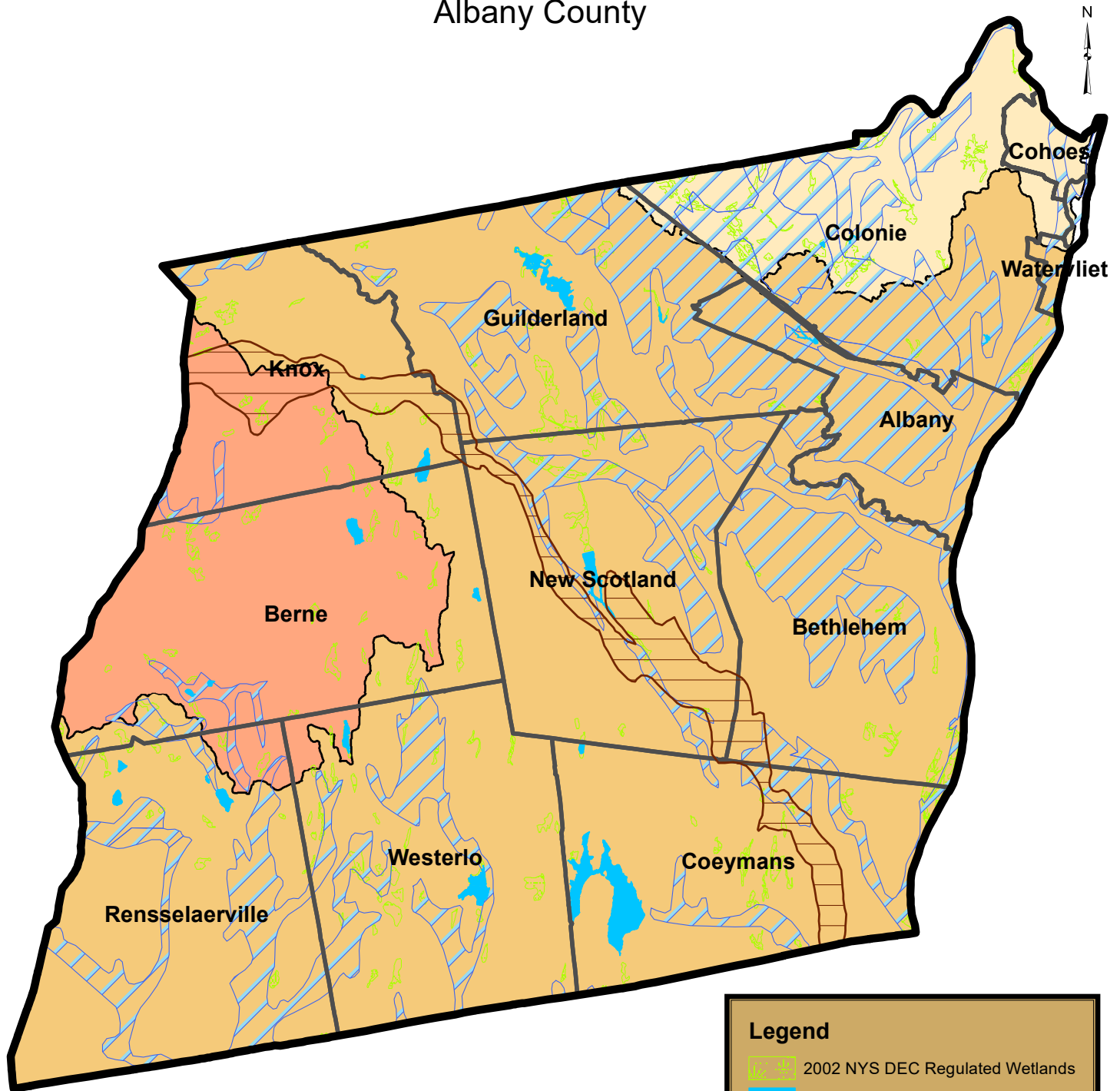
Streambank Erosion

Streambank erosion has been found to be one of the highest concerns in the farming and non-farming community in Albany County. Through the AEM Strategic Plan survey, farmers have expressed concerns about a loss of pasture and cropland, and Tier 2 assessments correspond with the farmers' concerns. While natural stream processes are understood, there still seems to be an increase in frequency and severity of damage to streambanks. This issue can not only be corrected through work on an individual farm location but must be looked upon in a broad range of issues throughout the community.

Petroleum and Oil Storage

Lack of appropriate petroleum and oil storage has been found during the AEM tiered process. Even minor leaks and spills can have a major impact on the environment. Using Tier 2 summaries, the District can determine those farms in need of storage advice and assistance. A focus will be made on secondary containment, spill response materials, and action plans during planning for all farms.

Hydrological and Geological Sensitive Areas Albany County



Legend

- 2002 NYS DEC Regulated Wetlands
- Priority Waterbody List - Lakes
- NY Aquifers
- Karst Geology

Watershed

- Middle Hudson
- Mohawk
- Schoharie

0 2 4 8 Miles

1 inch = 4 miles



Albany County
Soil and Water
Conservation District

AEM Base Funding Strategy

We will continue to actively engage all members of the farming community that display an interest in participation in the program. Preference will be towards watersheds that have a direct impact on the drinking water supplies of citizens in this County.

In the Middle Hudson Watershed, staff will continue the AEM process by conducting Tier 1 inventories on farms that start up with, and are referred to us from our partner agencies. From these new Tier 1's the District will determine which farms need to proceed on to a Tier 2 assessment. Those farms exhibiting resource concerns will proceed through Tier 3a and, where possible, we will seek funding to implement practices highlighted during the planning process. The District will continue to work with returning farms seeking assistance and/or updates to their Tier 2 summary or Tier 3 plan by completing a Tier 5 review. The staff will be accessible to any farmer seeking conservation technical assistance on various concerns in Albany County.

Likewise, in the Mohawk and Schoharie Watersheds, the District will continue the AEM process by conducting Tier 1 inventories on farms that have been added to our farm list. These new farms and existing farms will proceed through the tiered process where appropriate and needed. Rotational grazing is growing in these watersheds, and staff hope to encourage new farmers to adopt these grazing practices, as a means to maximize home grown-forage potential, produce a quality grass-fed product and improve soil health.

Communications and Outreach Strategy

The successful outcome of any strategic plan is an effective communications strategy which actively engages participants in the program and serves to enlighten those who simply seek to satisfy their interest. Our communications and outreach will be geared to all residents of Albany County. The SWCD publishes a bi-annual newsletter which will continue to promote the AEM program. By doing so, we seek to provide informative articles on farming practices to educate those less familiar with farming, as well as reiterate environmentally sound production methods such as reduced tillage, rotational grazing, riparian buffers and composting to the farming community.

In addition to newsletter articles and press releases, we will make an effort to strengthen our "Farmers Partnering to Protect Our Environment" AEM signage program. This will provide farms the opportunity to publicize their stewardship.

Partnering with our conservation partners, we plan to offer educational workshops on topics such as grazing, soil health, field crops and green energy production on farms.

Evaluation Strategy

Each year we will review our strategy and reassess our goals for the upcoming year. We will continue to meet with our working group partners to allow us to get as much input as possible to be used for the yearly update of the Strategic Plan.

The Albany County Soil and Water Conservation District hereby adopts this 2026-2030 Agricultural Environmental Management Strategic Plan.

By  Date: 12/16/2025
Edward Kleinke, *Chair of the District Board*

This action was authorized at an official meeting of the Albany County Soil and Water Conservation District on December 16, 2025.