



# The Watershed Agricultural Council

Sally Fairbairn, March 2018

Watershed Agricultural Council  
nycwatershed.org



# History of the Watershed Agricultural Council

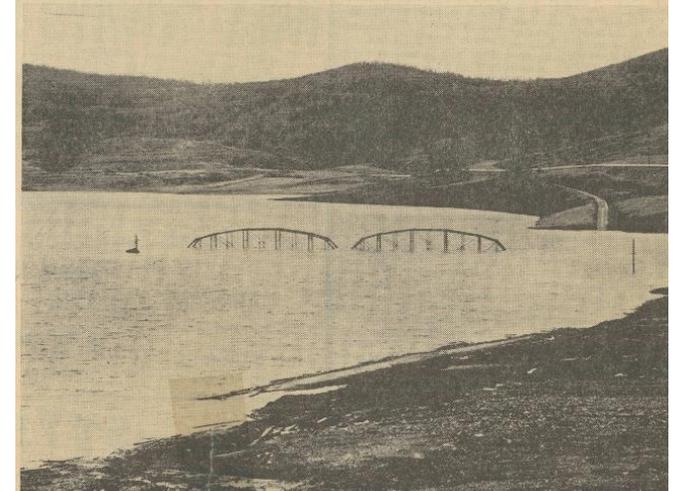
**Incorporation – 1993** Partners decide to create the non-profit Watershed Agricultural Council (WAC) to administer the voluntary, incentive-based Watershed Agricultural Program, fully funded by New York City's Department of Environmental Protection. A Council of Directors oversees the Council programs, which are administered by Office and Field Staff. An Advisory Committee guides the Council.

**Implementation – 1994** Phase II of the Watershed Agricultural Program begins with the development of whole farm plans for watershed farms based primarily on nation-wide USDA standards. A goal of 85% participation by farmers becomes a milestone in the EPA's Filtration Avoidance Determination (F.A.D.) waiver for New York City Department of Environmental Protection. Participation today is 93%.

**Sound Science – 1996** Research efforts test and validate best management practices and study the source, fate and transport of pathogens and phosphorus.



# Distrust of New York City



—PRESS PHOTO BY PETE DOSINSKY.  
**OH, WELL, IT'S WATER OVER THE BRIDGE**—Gradually being submerged by waters which are filling the New York City Board of Water Supply's Cannonsville Reservoir in Delaware County is this old twin-span iron bridge, which formerly crossed the West Branch of the Delaware River. The abandoned bridge, which soon will disappear from view, catches the eye of motorists as they travel the new Route 10, between Rock Rift and Cannonsville.



# Why Our Program Works

Since inception WAC has strived to remain:

- Voluntary
- Fully Funded
- Farmer Led
- Promote Farmer Economic Viability



# Voluntary Participation- Why it works

## **Giving Farmers a Voice on the Council:**

- Give them the power to make a difference
- Pay them a stipend
- Value their opinions



# Programs

- Agriculture
- Forestry
- Conservation Easements
- Economic Viability



# Farmer Education

In 2017, The Watershed Agricultural Program Farmer Education efforts reached **841 farmers** and farm advisors with **37 education events** through our contract with Cornell Cooperative Extension of Delaware County. These events include large conferences, like the Catskill Regional Agriculture Conference, small hands-on on-farm training, farm tours and traditional classroom workshops.

The program uses the strength of our experienced staff to leverage local and statewide resources to address the critical needs of the region's farmers and their advisors.

**Example Topics:** Pesticide Application, Meat Goat Workshop, Winter Crop School, Beef Cattle Feeding Options, Farm Succession Planning, Cow/Calf Workshops, Pasture Walks, Meat Plant Tours, Managing Sheep Pastures, Corn Dry Down Days, Cheese Making Demos, Field Demonstrations, Organic Dairy, Ruminant Parasite Control



# Future Challenges & Opportunities

- Dairy Farmers are struggling
- Our regional beef production is increasing with a premium grass finished market
- WAC will continue to support agriculture in the region as it changes to fulfill market demands
- Easements ensure farmland is protected forever
- Land is still relatively inexpensive, but there is a large influx of NYC residents buying land as vacation properties
- Markets are in abundance, but competition to be included can be high, the product quality from the region is superb
- Sustainability is a constant challenge for farmers and for WAC

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# Thank you!



## Questions?

Sally Fairbairn, Council Chair

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