Welcome to the Esopus Creek News Trib; a shorter version of the full-length Esopus Creek News. A “trib” (short for “tributary”) is a smaller creek that flows into the main river. Look for the full-length Esopus Creek News to return this fall and winter. We hope you enjoy this edition of the Trib!

Community Grants Support Stream Improvements

The Ashokan Watershed Stream Management Program (AWSMP) recently awarded community grants to support the participation of Town and County officials in stream and floodplain management trainings, and to reimburse Ulster County for a portion of the costs to build the Steven F. Fischer Memorial Bridge in Oliveerea. Construction of the bridge was completed in 2012. The $77,300 grant to the County supplements a recent FEMA payout. The new 60-foot bridge opening is substantially larger than the previous culvert that was blocked with sediment, and then blown-out by flood waters during Tropical Storm Irene (see photo at left below). The new opening is large enough to pass more than the 100-year flood flow and substantially reduces the risk of future failure. The County also restored the natural channel bed during bridge construction, which aids fish and wildlife passage.

Through the community grants program, AWSMP has awarded funding for 76 projects since 2009 to towns, Ulster County, education and research institutions, and not-for-profit organizations. Of these awards, 26 supported education projects; 9 supported development of environmental plans; 17 funded stream research, assessment and monitoring; 9 supported stream restoration projects; and 15 funded stream-related infrastructure improvements. Many of the projects were matched with federal funds or in-kind services from Highway Departments.

Interns Join Survey Crew to Monitor Streams

New technology has drastically changed how we monitor streams, however, as with all projects the most important component is the surveyors. Every year a group of Watershed Conservation Corps (WCC) interns, a partnership between SUNY-Ulster and NYC Dept.of Environmental Protection, work alongside an Ulster County Soil and Water District (UCSWD) survey crew to learn about stream geomorphology, assessment, and management. The hardworking interns spend the summer...
months in the field mastering the scientific techniques of stream monitoring. “It’s cool to be near the water every day. There’s so much to learn about streams; I had no idea. Even so, the crew is so knowledgeable and patient and really make sure you learn,” said Cassidy Ryan, a WCC intern. As the summer comes to an end we hope the interns will have gained a knowledge base that will not only inform their future interactions with the watershed, but also fuel their careers in science, technology, engineering and math.

Who Needs an Elevation Certificate?

An elevation certificate is an official document required for all new and substantially improved buildings in the regulated FEMA floodplain. The information in the certificate is used to show compliance with a community’s floodplain management ordinance. Owners of existing building stock can also obtain an elevation certificate to demonstrate that a structure is above flood stage, which can lower flood insurance premiums. Only a licensed professional engineer, land surveyor, or architect can fill out an elevation certificate. A completed elevation certificate must be kept on file with a community’s local building department and submitted to FEMA.

Stony Clove Creek Projects Shown to Reduce Sediment Loading

From 2011 to 2015, the Ashokan Watershed Stream Management Program completed 7 projects in the Stony Clove Creek watershed to restore stream corridor stability and improve water quality. The projects treated 8,355 feet (about 1.6 miles) of stream channel at a cost over $7 million. The Stony Clove Creek drains into the Esopus Creek at Phoenicia, NY. The projects had multiple goals - to stabilize the channel bed and adjacent hillslopes and substantially reduce erosion of coarse and fine sediments, to reduce bank erosion threatening nearby properties, and to slow and store water on undeveloped floodplains (thus protecting infrastructure downstream). The U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) has monitored the Stony Clove Creek since October 2010. Their findings show that on a daily basis the amount of suspended sediment in stream water decreased significantly from 2010 to 2014. The greatest reductions were measured at the highest stream flows. The full USGS report will be released later this summer and posted on the AWSMP website, see: www.ashokanstreams.org.

Local surveyor Don Brewer uses a total station to shoot an elevation.