
**Stakeholder Council 2017
Membership**

The Ashokan Stakeholder Council is comprised of:

The Executive Council:

2 representatives from each of the active AWSMP working groups.

Both representatives of a working group should not come from the same organization or agency.

Representatives should be chosen annually by the working group.

No person can represent more than one working group on the Stakeholder Council.

Staff: (CCE Ulster County, UC SWCD, DEP SMP Contract Manager for Ashokan Watershed)

Regular Members: Membership in the Stakeholder Council is open to any interested and knowledgeable stakeholder.

**ASHOKAN WATERSHED STREAM MANAGEMENT PROGRAM
STAKEHOLDER COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES**

AWSMP Program Office, Shokan, NY 12481

November 28, 2017 1:30pm-4:30pm

In Attendance: Aaron Bennett, Leslie Zucker, Chris Tran, Adam Doan, Kirk Peters, Scott George, Sylvia Rozzelle, John Mathiesen; Bobby Taylor; Allison Lent; Matt Savatgy; Tiffany Runge
Executive Council members present: Amanda LaValle, Burt Samuelson, Mike Flaherty, Barry Baldigo

Next scheduled meeting: April 2018

Introductions and Stakeholders Announcements

The next Catskill Environmental Research & Monitoring (CERM) Conference will be held October 24-26, 2018 at Belleayre Ski Center. The 2018 conference will feature two days of platform presentations, a poster session, and one day of workshops.

AWSMP Updates

The Ulster County Soil & Water Conservation District (SWCD) completed two stream restoration projects in 2017 with primary goals of stream and hillslope stabilization and turbidity reduction. The projects are located in the Mink Hollow section of the Beaver Kill in the Town of Woodstock. Project construction is nearly

complete with some vegetation left to install. The project site received bankfull stream flows immediately after construction. Bankfull flow is the point at which water leaves the channel and spills onto the floodplain. During bankfull flows, sediment on the channel bed is moving. A stable stream can move bedload sediment and maintain a stable channel dimension and slope. New stream projects are particularly vulnerable to high flows immediately after construction because vegetation has not re-established to hold the stream banks. This bankfull flow caused some channel bed adjustment in one section of the project. The good news is the stream banks and a large hillslope that was stabilized, although un-vegetated, did not significantly erode. The bankfull event occurred from Sunday, October 29 into Monday October 30th. The site received at least 4 inches of rain. The AWSMP is meeting with project engineers to determine what repairs and design adjustments are needed for the channel bed.

A new stream restoration project is planned for 2018 on the Woodland Creek. Fine sediments are found throughout the project reach and bed and bank erosion is causing turbidity. Monitoring data show suspended sediment concentrations worsened after October bankfull flows exposed some clay deposits in the channel. Currently, the project is at 60-90% design completion. The project will feature restoration of stable channel dimensions and re-use of willow vegetation already on site to stabilize the soils.

This Woodland Creek project will complete NYC's Filtration Avoidance Determination (FAD) requirements for turbidity reduction projects in the Ashokan basin during the 2007-2017 period. New turbidity reduction goals have been established for the Ashokan watershed in the 2017-2027 FAD nearing completion.

The Catskill Streams Buffer Initiative (CSBI) at SWCD monitored 29 sites this year; with 19 of those completing their post-installation monitoring requirements. Monitoring is revealing the level of ongoing maintenance needed for buffer plantings. Four new CSBI plantings are under development for 2018. Sites are being prepared now with invasive plant removal. Landowners interested in CSBI plantings should contact CSBI Coordinator Bobby Taylor (bobby.taylor@ashokanstreams.org).

This summer, SWCD completed a stream assessment on the Little Beaver Kill (LBK). The LBK is the last major upper Esopus tributary to be assessed at least once. The crew walked 14.9 miles of LBK mainstem and three major tributaries to the LBK. Fewer management issues were observed in this watershed compared to other Esopus tributaries. Overall good conditions are likely related to the large floodplain-wetland complexes that border the stream. There are also few roads along stream channels in this watershed.

The LBK is wide and gently sloping through much of its course, unlike other Esopus tributaries. However some of the LBK's tributaries are steep with 2-8% slopes. Even in the steeper sections there are few erosion issues. Wood in these channels was observed to capture sediment and provide grade control, which may be a factor in determining stability. Where valleys steepened and narrowed, some minor channel erosion into alluvial banks were observed. Erosion was also observed in downstream sections, but no erosion was severe.

Stream management recommendations for the LBK will focus on maintaining existing streamside vegetation and large floodplains, including wetlands and native forests. Another management concern is preventing invasive plants from impacting native plant communities in the watershed. Barberry and multi-flora rose dominate old fields bordering the stream. Japanese knotweed is present, but limited to one large colony and a few scattered plants at downstream locations.

A stream management plan is near completion for the Woodland Creek in the Town of Shandaken. This stream was assessed in 2007-2008 and again in 2016. SWCD hopes to publish the plan in early 2018. Outreach to Woodland Creek landowners is planned for 2018.

Since spring of this year, Cornell Cooperative Extension of Ulster County (CCE) staff with the AWSMP engaged over 1100 watershed residents of all ages in learning about streams and stream stewardship at public events, classes, and trainings. Events included Earth Days, Town Days, County Fair and summer stream watch activities. AWSMP helped to organize six Stakeholder Council working group meetings, some with educational speakers, and assisted with over 10 Town Flood Advisory Committee meetings.

AWSMP is launching a new program, the "Ashokan WAVE" in 2018. This program engages citizen scientists in monitoring aquatic insects to determine water quality. The WAVE program was developed by the NYS Dept. of Environmental Conservation (DEC) and the data collected is used by DEC for waterbody monitoring. CCE Watershed Educator Samantha Kahl will coordinate the program for the Ashokan watershed. AWSMP plans 2-3 citizen-science monitoring events per month from July-September located throughout the watershed. The events will feature education on a range of stream management topics.

AWSMP's Watershed Youth Program managed by CCE is planning a one-day 'Stream Explorers Youth Conference' to be held spring 2018. Registration information will be released in March.

Currently the Watershed Youth Program is engaging over 200 Onteora School District youth from grades 1-6 in stream and watershed science coursework in three schools. In addition, this year's Watershed Detectives Club is meeting weekly after-school and will be developing a new educational video about stream science and ecology, to be released next year.

AWSMP staff are excited to be piloting a new 'Freshwater Snorkeling Program' in 2018. The program idea is from the U.S. Forest Service and involves children and adults fully immersing themselves in about 18 inches of water. Activities in and out of the water involve participants in learning about watersheds, stream conditions, water quality and stream life. This family event will be offered to watershed residents probably in August at a stream location to be determined. Stakeholders are invited to suggest locations that meet several key requirements: a location that is easily accessible, upstream of the Shandaken Portal (with safe flow conditions), with interesting channel features. Contact CCE Youth Educator Matt Savatgy (msavatgy@hvc.rr.com) with suggestions.

CCE Watershed Educator Brent Gotsch held two Ulster County 'Floodplain Management for Real Estate Professionals' trainings in May and September. The classes were offered for credit and filled to capacity at 29 people each. The educational goal was for buyers and sellers of floodplain properties to understand the risks associated with residing and building in a floodplain, to make informed choices and learn to lower risks.

AWSMP Two-Year Action Plan Review

The Stakeholder Council was invited to review proposed changes to the 2018-2020 AWSMP Action Plan. The Action Plan will be delivered to DEP by May 1, 2018.

The Action Plan is:

- A series of recommended program actions in six topic areas;
- A framework that reflects SWCD and CCE contractual obligations to DEP;
- A way for watershed communities' to reflect their priorities for the program through input from this Stakeholder Council and its working groups; and
- An evolving program document that is updated annually.

The FAD regulators read the Action Plan in detail.

AWSMP program staff received input on priority recommendations from Highway Managers, Stream Ecosystem, and Flood Hazard Mitigation working groups at their recent meetings. The Stream Access & Recreation Working Group will have a chance to provide input at their next meeting.

After stepping through a review of proposed updates in each Action Plan section, the Stakeholder Council had the following comments:

- Monitor the progress of a new "Leave no Trace" education program running at the Blue Hole (in Sullivan County). Review the program's dialogue and education methods for applicability to outreach & education at key Esopus Creek access sites. Reaching audiences from NYC and down-state may be key to preventing over-use of the stream resource. Consider a "Steward" program, such as those used at boat launches and in Adirondack high peaks (funding is available for Adirondack university students to serve as local stewards during the summer).

No other comments or objections were made to the proposed changes. Next steps are for AWSMP staff to update Action Plan tables showing projected activities and completed activities and incorporate final input from working groups. The difficult timeline for Stakeholder Council review was discussed. The Council proposed meeting again in April to review

and vote on final changes before the May 1 submission deadline. This requires holding the spring SMIP funding round one month earlier with applications due in March instead of April (to allow for a spring Stakeholder Council vote on SMIP funding recommendations). AWSMP will try out this revised schedule in 2018.

Stream Management Implementation Program (SMIP) Update:

Leslie Z. and Grant Review Committee co-lead Sam B. updated the Council on outcomes of the fall 2017 Request for SMIP Applications.

AWSMP received three applications requesting \$82,225 in funding. The Grant Review Committee scored the applications and met on November 21, 2017 to discuss the projects.

The Committee recommended the following two applications for funding:

- Town of Hunter, \$8,650 (SMIP 135) to conduct administration of the Wright Road Stream Restoration & Hillslope Stabilization Project. The stream restoration project was completed in 2016 with AWSMP funding of the 25% town match to 75% federal Emergency Watershed Protection funds. The federal government required the Town of complete a program audit to receive the funds. These costs were not initially covered by AWSMP due to late notice by the federal agency.
- Ulster County Dept. of Environment and CCE Ulster County, \$31,575 (SMIP 136) to conduct a watershed-wide assessment of culverts at public road-stream crossings. The project assesses condition and ranks crossings. The results can be used by Towns and the County to determine the overall need to upgrade structures in ways that improve stability, reduce flood risks, and improve fish passage.

A third application from the Town of Hurley (SMIP 134) was carefully reviewed but not recommended for funding because it did not overlap with funding program objectives. The project is to remove several collapsed concrete wing walls from a Town culvert located near the Ashokan Reservoir. The wing walls are causing no imminent erosion, fish passage or flood hazard threat. AWSMP will offer to coordinate with DEP Operations to assist the town with removal of the concrete from the channel.

Four AWSMP Executive Council (EC) voting members were present in-person with one additional member, Chet Karwatowski voting by proxy.

Discussion for SMIP application 135 involved the need to obtain additional documentation from the Town of Hunter explaining the funding need and successful completion of the audit. Burt S. moved to adopt the Grant Review Committee's funding recommendations for SMIP applications 134/135 contingent on AWSMP review and acceptance of Town of Hunter documents. Mike F. seconded the motion. The motion carried with all in favor.

Mike F. moved to adopt the Grant Review Committee's funding recommendations for SMIP application 136. Amanda LaValle abstained from voting. Burt S. seconded the motion. The motion carried with all non-abstaining members in favor.

Leslie Z. thanked the Grant Review Committee and the Stakeholder Council for the diligence and service in reviewing SMIP funding proposals.

Working Group Reports:

Stream Ecosystem Working Group:

Scott G. of USGS summarized results from ongoing fish studies. After last fall's drought, concerns were high for the success of fall-spawning Brook and Brown Trout. Would fish surveys reveal a poor young-of-year class in 2017?

Preliminary results indicate that Brown Trout had the 3rd best spawning year in the 9-year period of record. The results indicate these are complex systems and we don't fully understand what affects spawning success.

A positive trend held for Rainbow Trout spawning with 2017 being the largest year-class observed during the 9-year period of observation. The recovery follows very poor spawning from 2011-2014.

The results shared are for all six fish survey sites lumped and have not yet been standardized. USGS will also be evaluating the results for each site individually. Annual fish survey is planned in 2018 with AWSMP funding, which will provide 10 years of continuous data and allow researchers to begin using regression analysis to explore factors driving class size.

Barry B. reported the status of a stream temperature monitoring study underway at SUNY New Paltz with AWSMP funding. A total 120 probes were placed by Principal Investigators Huicheng Chien and Lawrence McGlinn, during summer 2017. The first data download occurred in November after the bankfull flow event. Out of 120 loggers, data was recovered from 110 with only 10 missing over four months – a good result. A number of loggers were found suspended on the shoreline and put back in the water. The researchers will flag and filter out data for out of water periods.

The USGS and DEP are carrying out sediment studies in the watershed with AWSMP funding support. An update from Jason Siemion at USGS was shared with the Council on the:

- Sediment Fingerprinting Study (sediment samples were collected in Stony Clove Creek and Woodland Creek during the summer and during the recent bankfull event from 5 locations in Stony Clove and at a downstream Woodland Cr location);
- Bedload Sampling Pilot Study (an attempt was made to collect physical bedload samples during the recent bankfull event and smart rock locations and hydrophone data gathered); and
- Woodland Creek Suspended Sediment Concentration (SSC) Study (SSC sampling and turbidity monitoring continues at upper Woodland Creek).

Flood Hazard Mitigation Working Group:

In the Town of Shandaken, Local Flood Analysis (LFA) is completed for Phoenicia and Mt. Tremper hamlets and implementation is underway. A CWC-funded feasibility study is underway to relocate one business and structure on Main Street to a location with the hamlet. The Town has contracted with MMI for the study. Several relocation properties are being investigated and will be explored with the business owner.

An LFA for the hamlets of Shandaken and Allaben is nearing completion. The final public presentation of results is scheduled for December 18, 6:30pm at Town Hall.

A buyout of County owned property along Station Road is proceeding. The Town is interested in taking ownership of the property to facilitate a recommended floodplain enhancement project that benefits Phoenicia.

The Town of Olive is advancing implementation of the completed LFA for Boiceville and West Shokan hamlets. Four landowner-requested flood buyouts in the hamlet of Boiceville were just approved by the Town Board. The Town received a CWC planning grant to study expanding the sewer and commercial zoning to facilitate relocation of Boiceville structures to a nearby location outside the floodplain. The Town is exploring possible future uses of buyout properties, including a park and amenities related to the nearby school and terminus of the Ashokan Rail Trail.

Also in Boiceville, the Town has received AWSMP funding to complete design and engineering of a road-stream crossing upgrade on Upper Boiceville Road to reduce flood hazards. West Shokan (Bushkill) erosion and sedimentation issues are being addressed through the NY Rising Community Reconstruction Program. As are upgrades to the Town Hall.

The Town of Olive is expected to finish a town-wide flood mitigation plan early next year, with partial funding from the AWSMP.

Stream Access & Recreation Working Group: No report this meeting.

Highway Managers Working Group: No report this meeting.

The meeting was adjourned. The AWSMP Stakeholder Council will meet again in spring 2018.