

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

AWSMP Program Office, Shokan, NY 12481

December 10, 2015 1pm-4:30pm

Stakeholder Council 2015

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.

In Attendance: Scott George, Beth Reichheld, Martin Bernstein, John Mathiesen, Tim Cox, Aaron Bennett, Jamie Joy, Amanda LaValle, Brent Gotsch, Andrew Emrich, Kirk Peters, Mike Flaherty, Sylvia Rozzelle, Burt Samuelson, Rob Stanley, Mark Loete, Jason Siemion, Chris Tran, Tiffany Runge, Allison Lent, Bobby Taylor, Adam Doan, Leslie Zucker, Barry Baldigo, Mike Reynolds, Eric Hofmeister; attending on the phone: Marc Hollander.

Next scheduled meeting: April 2016

Introductions and Announcements:

Attendees introduced themselves and Leslie Z. overviewed the agenda.

The Catskill Environmental Research & Monitoring (CERM) Conference will be held October 27-28, 2016 at the Belleayre Mountain Ski Center.

The Catskill Watershed Corporation will soon be announcing its Flood Hazard Mitigation Implementation Program funding schedule for 2016.

AWSMP Staff Updates:

On behalf of the AWSMP partners, Adam Doan recognized Danyelle Davis' accomplishments as the AWSMP Project Manager for the NYS Dept. of Environmental Protection (DEP). Danyelle was recently given the position of Stream Studies Coordinator for DEP's Stream Management Program. Danyelle started with the AWSMP in 2000 and was instrumental in developing the program we have today.

The new DEP Project Manager for the AWSMP is Chris Tran. Chris was most recently the Catskill Streams Buffer Initiative (CSBI) Coordinator for the DEP Stream Management Program.

Cornell Cooperative Extension of Ulster County (CCEUC) announced changes to its staffing plan for the AWSMP. Emerging needs have led to the elimination of the Resource Educator position previously staffed by Jennifer Bowman. The program thanked Jen for her work over the last 12 months. CCEUC will pursue additional administrative support for the AWSMP in 2016.

AWSMP Project Updates: (Adam D. of the Ulster County Soil & Water Conservation District and Leslie Z. of Cornell Cooperative Extension Ulster County reported)

Stream Stabilization and Water Quality Projects

The stream restoration project on the Stony Clove Creek at Wright Rd. has wrapped. About 2,500 linear feet of stream was treated at a cost of \$1.5 million. Additional work on a large, failing hillslope at the site is planned for 2016. Issues with the hillslope include groundwater seeps and fine sediments leading to instability. Data is being collected at the site.

Survey work and mapping is underway in preparation for a 2016 stream restoration project on the Beaver Kill near Van Hoagland Rd. in the Town of Woodstock.

Stream projects are identified through processing of data collected during stream feature inventories (field assessments) to identify sites that have severe erosion problems. It also helps for stakeholders to bring erosion sites to the attention of AWSMP staff.

Stream Assessments, Plans, and Monitoring:

A stream feature inventory of the Woodland Creek was completed in summer 2015. The data will now be analyzed to develop stream management recommendations published in a report for the stream.

The Beaver Kill Stream Management Plan is complete. AWSMP met with officials from the Town of Woodstock to discuss plan recommendations. The plan is posted on the AWSMP website at: <http://ashokanstreams.org/publications-resources/resources-for-streamside-living/>

Stream Management Plans (SMP) for the Bushnellsville Creek and Bush Kill are going through final formatting and will be available online in early 2016. Look for an announcement from the AWSMP.

AWSMP staff recently met with staff of the NYS Dept. of Transportation and reviewed stream management recommendations in the Bushnellsville Creek SMP.

The 2016 stream assessment focus will be on monitoring stream sites and tracking change over time. This will help to identify future stream restoration priorities for the watershed.

Catskill Streams Buffer Initiative:

In the Ashokan Watershed, CSBI completed six projects in 2015 with over 4/10 mile (2,070 ft.) of stream buffer restored. The CSBI crew planted 1,100 trees and 1,500 willow stakes. One of the biggest projects was to replant the lower hillslope of a large 2014 stream restoration site in Chichester behind the Post Office. CSBI also replaced willow stakes in a willow bed that will be used to source future stock. The program completed 26 Riparian Corridor Management Plans for landowners.

Education and Outreach:

In 2015, AWSMP held the Ashokan Watershed Conference with 92 attendees in April. Community events included:

- Phoenicia, Woodstock, and Bennett School Earth Days
- Little Beaver Kill and Rochester Hollow Stream Walks
- Family Fun & Fish Day
- Ulster County Fair
- Shandaken Day
- Olive Day
- Riparian Pollinators Program

Through community events, the AWSMP provided education on water quality topics to 670 school-aged children, and reached an additional 1,452 youth and adults with information about stream management.

The program indirectly reached 12,445 people through web postings and mailings, and another 16,000 through social media.

The major technical training AWSMP offered was a one-day workshop on FEMA's Community Rating System taught by Rob Flaner of Tetra Tech.

In 2015, with a small grant from the Catskill Watershed Corporation, AWSMP expanded our youth education program at Onteora's Bennett intermediate school and into the Woodstock and Phoenicia elementary schools. Approx. 2,830 students were educated about watershed-related topics in 2015.

AWSMP met with municipalities to review stream projects and stream management plan recommendations. The program assisted Towns with scheduling and organizing flood meetings, researched and presented on various topics, and reviewed technical products developed during Local Flood Analysis throughout the year.

AWSMP Logo

AWSMP staff asked the Stakeholder Council to help choose a new (updated) logo for the program. The Council ranked four options on a poll. The Stakeholder Council advised not to shorten the program name, an option presented, and retain the word "management" in the name.

Report outs from Working Groups to the Stakeholder Council

Education & Outreach Working Group

The working group met in October and selected Martin Bernstein of the Ashokan Center, to work with Kerissa Battle as Co-Leads. The group is looking at having a coordinated network of volunteers and volunteer projects; and is gathering information from watershed organizations about their volunteer programs. Kerissa contacted the Ulster Corps website, and learned we may add a section on watershed volunteer opportunities.

A future agenda item is climate change education with a focus on water management issues specific to the Catskills. A focus might be how climate change affects hydrology and streams. The group hopes to engage and involve residents on this topic.

Kerissa B. recently gave birth to a baby girl (congratulations!). The group plans to meet next over the winter or early spring even if by conference call.

Flood Hazard Mitigation Working Group

Rob S. updated on Town of Shandaken flood hazard mitigation projects. The Local Flood Analysis (LFA) for Phoenicia and Mt. Tremper is nearly complete; the flood committee is reviewing a final draft before presentation to the Town Board in January. The NY Rising Community Reconstruction program realized the Town Hall and Garage are located in or next to the floodway and is now interested in relocating the Town Hall complex. They will no longer fund generators for the Town Hall.

Shandaken is waiting for adoption of the new FEMA flood maps. NY Rising will not accept use of the new maps until officially adopted. Landowners are confused, since they must plan actions using the old maps for NYS funds.

Sylvia R. reported for the Town of Olive. The LFA results have confirmed that Boiceville is an inundation hazard area and West Shokan an erosion hazard area. The LFA engineer is working with NYC engineers modeling the Rt. 28A Five Arch Bridge replacement. There are two designs; one a 3-span bridge and the other 130' longer, a 4-span bridge. The cost difference is \$6-7 million. But the bridge is not the only difference in whether Boiceville floods. The LFA engineer is looking at the bridge designs combined with floodplain bench and berms and will advise the Town Flood Advisory Committee. They are also looking at relocation of Boiceville businesses.

In West Shokan, RFPs are going out to use NY Rising funds. The Town Hall is getting a new roof, insulation, and energy efficiency (solar, etc.), plus a generator for the entire complex. In early 2016, NY Rising will release RFPs for project design to solve erosion problems on the Bush Kill in the stretch from Maltby Hollow to the City bridges.

In December, AWSMP held a Flood Hazard Mitigation Working Group meeting, with Town updates and discussion of timeline for adoption of preliminary FEMA flood maps. Towns are waiting for their letters of final determination from FEMA, and then will begin the final countdown to adoption.

Brent G. reviewed LFA next steps from final report completion to initial implementation steps for Town- adopted recommendations. Towns are looking at what is financially and socially acceptable. Brent G. reviewed different funding mechanisms, including the AWSMP, Catskill Watershed Corporation, FEMA and long-term, DPW and DOT for bridge replacements. Acquisitions, relocations and flood-proofing might be funded by FEMA and NYC DEP. Preliminary planning and feasibility studies may be necessary before relocations.

For FEMA, unified Hazard Mitigation Assistance funding programs are usually announced in late spring or early summer. Current Town LFAs should be done by then and might access this money. The AWSMP will be available to Towns going forward to provide assistance, including researching topics and coordinating with consultants, if needed by the Towns.

Beth R. asked that when Towns decide what projects they want to pursue for funding, they present those projects to the Stakeholder Council at future meetings.

Stream Access & Recreation Working Group:

Mark L. gave some background and an update on recent working group discussion regarding river safety. The working group has discussed developing a protocol for making the Esopus Creek recreational reaches and sites safer for users. This might involve the removal of woody debris and “strainers” (large piles of woody debris) and public education.

The working group is asking if it has the expertise needed to develop the protocol and whether an outside consultant might help. The working group is considering a wide range of views about how “wild” to keep the river and its attractiveness, but also wants to improve safety.

Mark L. recapped circumstances at the DEC Fishing Access Site near the Allaben Cemetery and the tragedy that occurred there in summer 2015 and subsequent woody debris removal. Now that the woody debris pile has been removed from the bank, the working group has focused on education and prevention. DEC has installed a permanent sign warning of safety hazards at the Allaben site.

Marc H. has contacted landowners of key access sites about putting up kiosks in the area, and presented to the Girl Scouts and Boy Scouts and the Rotary. With more work the kiosk project could lead to a SMIP grant request. DEC agreed to put up their own kiosks at public access points. Marc H. is also talking with user groups (e.g., American Association of River Stewardship) about education strategies.

As previously reported to the Stakeholder Council, the working group initiated discussions with NYC DEP about a low-level outlet in the Schoharie Reservoir and DEP has responded with a change order to study and propose options. The working group is pleased with this outcome and awaits study results in mid-2016. The working group would like an

option for taking water from the surface of the Schoharie Reservoir to conserve cold water at the bottom for release to the Esopus Creek. A lot is at risk – the coldwater fishery downstream of the Portal.

Mark L. reported on fishing in 2015. The Catskills are trending with more tourists fishing the Esopus Creek. These include many new anglers, many focused on fly fishing. Tourists are coming from all over the world, and from the City. All recreational activities are trending. Trail user groups are reporting that there are infrastructure difficulties with this tourist influx. Need lodging, service, and transportation infrastructure expansion. Safety is also an issue for the angling community.

The working group plans to further discuss safety protocols and will bring results back to the Stakeholder Council.

Highway Managers Working Group:

The working group met in October. Mike R. reported the group purchased a hay bale mulcher and trailer for shared Town use through AWSMP funding. The set-up will be housed at the Shandaken Highway Garage and used to mulch seeded ditches. The mulcher does better at not clogging up culverts than other methods. Highway managers reported on the amount of ditch seeded.

This working group meets about three times a year and shares information about what stream projects are moving forward or require funding.

Stream Ecosystem Working Group:

The working group met in December. Co-Lead Barry B. discussed progress to update the aquatic ecosystem assessment first written eight years ago. The review covers which action items were addressed and what research needs remain, or have emerged. The review is due at end of 2015 and will be reviewed by the working group in early 2016.

Scott G. of USGS reported results of summer fish community surveys, conducted annually since 2009-10 with AWSMP support. Results show 3-year highs in density and biomass of Rainbow Trout. They saw a large resurgence of young-of-year Rainbows in this spring class. Possible will see these fish in the Ashokan Reservoir in a few years. They are not observing many large fish and still down 30-40% in metrics compared to 2010. No doubt there are larger fish in the reservoir and in habitat not being surveyed. Brown Trout observations were typical and overall biomass and density are at moderate levels.

Mark L. said angler feedback is of larger Rainbows this year. Anecdotal evidence is that Rainbows that came in for spring spawning may have stayed in the system longer. More anecdotal feedback is that above the Portal, the Big Indian stretch fished lousy.

Next Meeting

TBA – Anticipated for April 2016.