

Ashokan Watershed Stream Management Program
Education and Outreach Working Group Meeting Notes
October 13, 2015, 4:30pm to 6:00pm
AWSMP Office, Shokan, NY

In attendance:

Kerissa Battle (E&O WG Lead): President, Community Greenways Collaborative
Jennifer Bowman: Watershed Educator, CCEUC/AWSMP
Brent Gotsch: Watershed Youth Educator, CCEUC/AWSMP
Mark Vian, New York City, Department of Environmental Protection
Leslie Zucker, CCEUC/AWSMP
Martin Bernstein: Program Director, The Ashokan Center
Mary McNamara: Esopus Creek Conservancy
Erik Johanson: Catskill Center for Conservation & Development
Matt Savatgy: Youth Educator, CCEUC/Onteora School District Elementary

Welcome & Announcements:

Jen B. welcomed everyone to the meeting and reviewed the agenda. She shared AWSMP announcements:

AWSMP is hosting the following events and meetings:

- Stream Riffle Hunt: 10/24 at 10am in Phoenicia
- AWSMP Open House: 10/28 from 4pm-6pm in Shokan
- Deep Water Film & Lecture at Olive Free Library: 11/21 at 10:30am

Mary M. shared that the Hudson Valley Watershed Alliance will have its annual conference at the FDR Library on October 29th from 9 to 4pm. The DEP will do a presentation at the event on drinking water protection. Mark Vian shared that the group may find it beneficial to consider participating in, or hosting similar future events such as a “River Rally” to talk about joint watershed and water resource efforts and collaborations between the Catskills and Hudson River Valley groups.

Erik J. shared that the Catskill Center will be showing Naomi Klein’s documentary: “This Changes Everything” on October 23rd at 6pm. They are also hosting informal mixers called “Meet the Catskill Center” the last Monday of every month at different locations throughout the Catskill region to network and create stronger connections with local communities. Erik also highlighted that February 9th, 2016 is Catskill Park Awareness Day. Check their website for details about these events and locations: <http://catskillcenter.org/events/>

Martin B. shared that the Ashokan Center is hosting a Fall Family Festival on Sunday, October 18th that will include a guided hike along the lower Esopus Creek and family-friendly activities. The Ashokan Center received a grant to start a Trout in the Classroom program and fish tank. Once they have the trout tank set up, they plan to have a live video feed of the tank online. He gave a brief update that the Riparian Rangers Program is ready to begin, but the first session will be spring 2016 to give more time to advertise and improve connections with local school science classes and community to increase participation.

Mark V. shared that the Catskill Environmental Research and Monitoring (CERM) conference planning committee will hold its first meeting on November 4th from 1:30 to 4:30pm in Kingston, to begin planning for the fall 2016 conference. AWSMP staff will be attending.

In reference to conferences, Leslie Z. explained that the Ashokan Watershed Conference will not be held again until 2017 so that AWSMP can help to facilitate CERM.

Working Group Lead and Co-Lead

The Education and Outreach Working Group (E&O WG) is looking for a Co-Lead to work with Kerissa and AWSMP on the committee. After a brief explanation and discussion of what the position involves, Martin Bernstein, Program Director at the Ashokan Center, volunteered for the post. Following discussion, and expression of appreciation, there was unanimous approval of Martin's nomination to the appointment of E&O WG Co-Lead.

AWSMP Stream Management Implementation Program (SMIP) Fund:

Leslie walked the group through details of the SMIP funding program in connection to education and outreach. The SMIP program is a two million dollar fund that is part of CCEUC's five-year contract with the NYC DEP. AWSMP runs a competitive application process twice a year to distribute funds for a variety of projects related to stream management. Education and outreach is one funding category.

Other funding categories include stream-related infrastructure improvements, stream and floodplain management planning, research and monitoring, and stream restoration.

A SMIP project should have a strong stream management focus. The SMIP funds implementation of recommendations in the AWSMP's two-year action plan and stream management plans. Stream management plans (SMPs) and details of their recommendations are available on the AWSMP website:

<http://ashokanstreams.org/publications-resources/resources-for-streamside-living/>. The plans may help to provide clarifying information about priorities that may give potential grant projects stronger focus and promotion.

The next request for applications (RFA) will go out in early November, and applications will be due after December 2, 2015. Examples of funded projects and more information on SMIP can be found on the AWSMP website: <http://ashokanstreams.org/projects-funding/>

May E&O WG Meeting Recap:

Jen recapped discussion of projects at the E&O Working Group meeting in May:

- **Website:** AWSMP is working on a new education and outreach page to add to the AWSMP website and looking into the idea of including an online calendar to post regional watershed related events.
- **Volunteer Network:** The group discussed the need for a volunteer network – several organizations identified volunteer needs. The group agreed, with Kerissa's help, to create a needs and skills inventory assessment for participating programs, potential projects, and interested volunteers.

Watershed Volunteer Network:

Members of the working group are looking for ways to improve how they find volunteers who are looking for opportunities, and match their skills with our needs as organizations who need their help. The group discussed trying to organize a website for this purpose, but learned a website currently exists in Ulster County and that we that may meet our needs.

Ulster Corps Website: Kerissa and Jen investigated details about the website, which is an online portal and platform for groups in Ulster County to list their community and volunteer events and for volunteers to find and connect with opportunities. Kerissa was able to connect with the website organizers to get more

information about how we can utilize the website as a platform for organizing and advertising local watershed volunteer opportunities and events.

She gave a website orientation, and said that the site organizers are happy to work with us to accommodate our needs and create more environmentally focused volunteer categories, since the site currently has more of an urban theme. We would have to provide category titles and descriptions about our volunteer needs and events that they could advertise for us through newsletters and bulletins. She explained that the website does not manage or take responsibility for any background checks or volunteer vetting. Those responsibilities are entirely up to the sponsoring organization using the website. This site could help the Working Group create a more solid volunteer network to build and grow from.

The working group needs to determine what information we want to post on the site:

- The mission and focus of participating organizations to give potential volunteers basic background information about their work;
- Target audiences;
- What our needs are;
- What skill sets we are seeking;
- Volunteer position descriptions
- What opportunity categories we wish to add to their lists on the site.

Categories that have been mentioned include, but are not limited to environmental science, watershed science, water quality research, stream science, citizen science opportunities, phenology, environmental education, and a variety of community events.

In connection to this site, AWSMP could partner with organizations with similar volunteer activities and goals to create a stronger network of citizen science initiatives. We can work on building and enriching volunteer opportunity lists and important highlights for the website individually and as a group, and utilize this site as a helpful platform to bolster our volunteer engagement and outreach efforts.

Kerissa volunteered to create an outline of information she will need from each group or organization looking to participate in utilizing the Ulster Corps online platform.

Kerissa will email the working group with a document outlining important details they must include about their organization, and a list of events and meetings they want posted online in the collective calendar.

Erik shared that the Catskill Conservation Corps group may also be useful for the Working Group to connect with. They work on volunteer networking with Ulster Corps as they do similar work. Kerissa will look into this.

Kerissa also reviewed the survey feedback she collected from the online Survey Monkey poll sent out before the meeting, and explained that biggest area of difficulty mentioned in the survey is the need for a volunteer coordinator to help manage and maintain volunteer networks and activities, which is typically a large work load. Most organizations need help with coordination, but have funding challenges.

We will discuss more at the next few working group meetings as we make progress on collecting information to post online.

Climate Change Education Discussion:

Kerissa explained that in our group discussions, climate change education is a major topic of importance that has come up repeatedly. We would like to meet our specific climate change education needs in a coordinated

way. In preparation for the meeting, we sent out questions about what climate change education priorities, challenges and constructive feedback may have been helpful to share. Do we have collective climate change education goals for the group, or can we work on this?

As the meeting was running over-time, the climate change education discussion was started, but abbreviated and will be the topic of discussion at the next E&O WG meeting.

This is a brief summary of the group discussion:

In connection to climate change, what is each organizations priority?

Cornell Cooperative Extension of Delaware County hosted a Climate Change Exchange full-day event for educators and students this past spring. It was well attended, and AWSMP and the Ashokan Center were both present. The event will be repeated this year with more of a focus for students. The group recommends learning more about this event to help with climate change education in this watershed.

Leslie shared that the Stream Management Programs have a unique angle on water quality, flooding, and stream corridor management and might provide specific outreach messages in connection to how watersheds of the Catskills are impacted by changing climate. This information could be framed in a way that directly ties local communities and ecology to specific climate science points that are not watered down, but straightforward facts that people can understand. Ideally, a climate scientist who can communicate well with a lay audience would present this information. We need an influx of more general climate science education in the region so that people can discuss facts, common observations, and challenges at a local level instead of empty controversy.

How do we help Catskill communities understand the reality of climate change and its impacts on their community and home?

We need to look into connecting with scientists and educators in the field of climate science who are known for their ability to connect an audience with the reality of climate issues in their home towns and communities. We could invite such individuals to be guest speakers for local events and research education opportunities for adults and stakeholders.

Matt and Martin both spoke about using local weather patterns and ecosystem activities to help students understand the impacts of climate change in our home communities and the importance of research on a regional and global scale.

Different communities approach climate change from the angle of their local challenges to help make the point that it's a very real problem that we must work with. Some general questions asked included: What can I do as an individual do to help reduce climate problems? The working group needs to make a list of actionable tasks and items we could propose for individuals to learn how to get more involved with climate change awareness, science and activities.

The meeting adjourned at 6:20pm and will follow-up with the climate change discussion and the volunteer network at the winter E&O WG meeting. Emails about the date and time will be sent out to the group.