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*Stakeholder Council 2014*

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**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, Phoenicia, NY 12464

**January 22, 2014 1pm-4:40pm**

**In Attendance:** Tim C., Nate H., Sylvia R., Jim F., Rob S., Eric H., Andrew E., Kirk P., Aaron B., Barry B., Scott G., Kerissa F.  
**Staff:** Leslie Z., Brent G., Heather E., Danyelle D.; Beth R.; Adam D.

**Next scheduled meeting: TBD April 2014**

**Community Updates and Event Announcements**

Attendees introduced themselves and Leslie Z. overviewed the agenda.

**Community Updates and Event Announcements**

A Stream Access and Recreation Working Group meeting will be held January 27.

**Announcements/Upcoming Events at Stakeholder Organizations:**

Barry B. announced that a USGS ecosystem study conducted over the last 5 years is yielding interesting results. The study was conducted in nine different locations, with dramatic population changes in certain species. Brown trout are recovering post-Irene, whereas rainbow trout are not. The paper will be published in a journal soon.

The Catskill Environmental Research and Monitoring (CERM) biannual conference will be held at the end of October or early November 2014. It will be held at Belleayre Mountain Ski Center.

Kerissa F. announced that the Catskill Interpretive Center Gala will

be April 12<sup>th</sup> at the Ashokan Center. Kerissa F. also informed the group that she will be leaving the Ashokan Center to form her own non-profit organization focused on greenways and green infrastructure.

Rob S. announced that a NY Rising Community Reconstruction public outreach meeting will be held at Shandaken Town Hall on February 18<sup>th</sup> at 7pm. A snow date is scheduled for the following Wednesday. Priority projects for Shandaken and Hardenburgh will be discussed.

The NYSDEC and FEMA will be holding an Ulster County Flood Mapping Open House on February 5<sup>th</sup> from 4:00-8:00pm at Woodstock Town Hall. This is an opportunity for property owners to review the maps and to ask questions about floodplain management, flood mapping, NFIP and whether new mapping will affect their insurance requirements. Residents are welcome to stop by anytime during the event.

**UCSWCD Project Updates**

Adam D. delivered the following updates for Ulster County SWCD:

The Ashokan Catskill Stream Buffer Initiative (CSBI) completed 10 projects in 2013 in Olive, Shandaken, Woodstock, and Hunter. Over 3,000 square feet of stream bank was planted. There will be a CSBI meeting Monday evening at DEP in Kingston to share approaches across the NYC Watershed.

Stream assessment data for the Bushnellsville Creek and Stony Clove Creek, surveyed last summer, is being analyzed. Reports for the Beaver Kill and Bushkill are nearing completion.

The summer 2013 Chichester stream restoration project is complete, except for buffer plantings to further enhance stabilized streambanks and eroding hillslopes scheduled for early 2014. The stream restoration project that began late fall 2013 at the Warner Creek-Stony Clove Creek confluence made significant progress, but has been halted until the spring due to inclement weather. Specific figures on closeout costs are available from Adam D. All projects completed in 2013 had significant federal cost-share through the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Emergency Watershed Protection (EWP) program.

EWP-funded projects must have a sponsor and 25% local cost-share; in 2013 the Town of Shandaken sponsored the Stony Clove projects and the AWSMP provided the local cost-share. The federal budget for EWP is not set each year. Funding is only available when approved by Congress after a Presidential Disaster Declaration. There is an EWP project wait-list that is accessed when funding becomes available. NRCS funding (up to 75%) could be lost if projects are not completed within a limited time.

Stream restoration projects planned for 2014 include two projects on Stony Clove Creek, one at Stony Clove Lane (in Ulster County) and a second at Wright Road (in Greene County). A third project was planned for the Beaver Kill at Van Hoagland Road in the Town of Woodstock, but the Town Board did not approve sponsorship of the project. AWSMP is now looking for an alternative third project.

While viewing the list of potential future stream restoration projects from the AWSMP Action Plan, Adam D. was asked if the Hollow Tree Brook project would move forward. The answer was the project was removed by NRCS because of work done subsequent to wait listing.

### **CCEUC Project Updates**

The 5<sup>th</sup> Annual Ashokan Watershed Conference will be held at the Ashokan Center on Saturday, April 5<sup>th</sup>. The conference theme is “Flowing Through Time: Catskill Mountain Streams and Communities.” Bill Birns will be a featured speaker on cultural history of the watershed. Roy Schiff will speak about stream management. We are still confirming speakers for a climate change and hydrology presentation. Registration will open in early March. The conference program will be confirmed within two weeks.

A new AWSMP Flood Hazard Mitigation Program will be launched in 2014. It will offer educational programs on flood mitigation and cover topics that benefit municipal officers and flood commissions. A new Flood Hazard Mitigation Working Group for the Ashokan watershed is under development and aims to meet in February. AWSMP will continue to assist the Town of Shandaken flood commission that began with the SAFARI effort.

### **DEP Project Updates**

Beth R. provided the Stakeholder Council with the following update on the new DEP-funded Flood Hazard Mitigation Program (FHMP) under development with program partners throughout the NYC Watershed:

Local Flood Analysis (LFA) is an engineering analysis and feasibility study that will be funded through the basin Stream Management Programs, including the AWSMP. Funding for both LFA and stream/floodplain implementation projects will be administered through the existing Stream Management Implementation (grant) Program (SMIP). Funding for other FHM projects will be available through the CWC’s Local Flood Hazard Mitigation Implementation program. These funds

will be available in either late 2014 or early 2015. The CWC program will fund projects that are prioritized within an LFA, and include the relocations of critical community facilities and anchor businesses, residences, and emergency stream debris removal. The NYCDEP's Land Acquisition Program is developing a new Flood Buyout Program that will fund the buyout of residences and businesses. Together these three programs constitute the City's new Flood Hazard Mitigation Program.

Funding for stream and floodplain related FHMP projects, including the LFA, is provided in new partner contracts between DEP and UCSWCD and CCEUC. The contracts will span 5 years. The first round of FHMP funding will be enough to complete LFAs for all population centers in the Ashokan Watershed. Qualifying population centers are those hamlets designated in the original Memorandum of Agreement and updated in the 2010 Water Supply Permit. Any remaining funds will be applied to implementation. Towns must complete an LFA to become eligible for implementation funding through the AWSMP, CWC, and DEP-funded flood buyout programs. Tim C. said that CWC will lend some of its stormwater funds to allow earlier access to CWC's FHM program.

Rob S. expressed concern about hydraulic modeling being done for the NY Rising Community Reconstruction (CR) effort and whether LFA would duplicate work. Leslie Z. replied that LFA would build on work completed by CR and that AWSMP would provide funding for any additional analysis needed to make communities eligible for implementation funding. Beth R. said that models built to produce FEMA floodplain maps will help to determine what will give the best FHM benefit. The consultants will help to identify projects with the Town, and benefits will be determined through cost-benefit analysis completed by the consultants.

Rob S. stated that he was told DEP funding was primarily for turbidity control. What about projects that are not affected by turbidity? Beth R. reiterated that water quality issues are very important, but are broad reaching. The water quality benefits of FHM was acknowledged by regulators of the NYC water supply and instrumental in their reasoning to request the new program.

Rob S. expressed disappointment with the need for additional funding for Phoenicia projects. He is engaging the NEA (National Endowment of the Arts) for funding opportunities related to an annual voice (music) festival located on an Esopus Creek floodplain that he hopes to restore for FHM benefit. New York State (CR) is adamant that all funded projects are completed within two years. It is a financial quandary. Eric H. said CR is trying to push projects through.

Danyelle D. said the distinction between LFA and CR needs to be clarified. In the case of Phoenicia, every possible action should be considered, and then the options should be compared to see the cost/ benefit.

### **Two-Year Action Plan Review**

The Stakeholder Council was asked for any remaining recommendations and questions before the 2014-2015 Action Plan is finalized. Committee members asked questions about recommendations for promoting stream access and tourism working with the County Chamber of Commerces, specifically if this type of outreach can be targeted to the Ashokan watershed to benefit the local economy. Stream Access & Recreation working group members in attendance responded that their strong intent is to promote local stream access and hamlet/town access. Recommendations regarding the need for flood hazard program coordination were reviewed; no changes to existing language were requested.

The Stakeholder Council agreed that it would like to formally vote and adopt the Action Plan at April meeting.

### **Working Group Report Out**

#### **Flood Hazard Mitigation:**

Discussion continued about the NY Rising CR process and intersection with NYC Watershed FHMP:

Leslie Z. said AWSMP recognizes the Towns' quandary, and wants to help sort through the issues. The LFA will provide communities with information on most beneficial course to take, and do analyses as quickly as possible.

Rob S. explained that the current Phoenicia project plan is piecemeal, to be done in phases: bridge replacement, elevation of floodplain, and gravel maintenance. He fears that the complete project will be de-prioritized because it is broken down too much. The hamlet's livability and safety are at stake, in addition to the floodplain. The cost/benefit analysis is more complex than simplified approaches.

Sylvia R. said there is no direction or guidance from CR for the Town of Olive. She doesn't know what to do in Boiceville. She made the point that if you decide on a project (if it meets the criteria), you will get funding, but there is no direction on what projects to choose. She said the best info came from AWSMP. Longer-term projects are better, but they are not what will be funded through CR.

Shandaken submitted a SMIP grant application for LFA in Phoenicia and Mt. Tremper during last grant round. If approved, Leslie Z. said AWSMP staff would commit to administering the grant as quickly as possible.

The Town has two options for hiring a consultant to complete LFA if grant is awarded – hire your own consultants, or pass resolution to have CCEUC/SWCD hire consultants for you.

Leslie Z. said AWSMP recognizes that people are affected by flooding and erosion issues in non-population centers. LFA scope of services could be model for analysis in these areas. If the project were outside of a population center, it would be funded through regular SMIP grants.

AWSMP will need on-going Town input on local priorities. Towns may appoint flood commissions; they are town specific. Shandaken's flood commission is composed of local officials and board members, agencies involved and other interested parties.

### **Stream Access and Recreation:**

Aaron B. discussed 2014 goals for the Stream Access and Recreation Working Group. The group will focus on implementation of signage and better stream access. Will start with planning for increased stream access and a field review of potential access points throughout watershed. There is a need to be proactive about acquired lands and public land improvements and encouraging public use and access. If land is adjacent to state highways, it is difficult to gain access through DOT.

Brent G. added that the group would like to implement tangible projects in all towns within reason. The group would like to leverage AWSMP funds to maximize access opportunities. The group would like to hold a workshop in 2014 focused on debris management, similar to the Shandaken Tunnel workshop held in 2013.

### **Other Working Groups:**

Adam D. reported that the Highway Manager's Working Group continues to meet, although some recent meetings were delayed due to project deadlines and weather. The group recently reviewed 2014-2015 Action Plan recommendations and discussed project ideas for SMIP grant applications.

Leslie Z. reported that she and Brent were developing ideas for a meeting of the Education & Outreach Working Group later this year. Also, the AWSMP plans to follow-up on last May's research meeting with a 2014 meeting of the Aquatic Ecosystem Working Group. The working group would be charged with updating the 2007 research agenda for the upper Esopus Creek to cover a wider range of activities, and generate information that is of high interest to the community and needed by stream managers.

### **SMIP Grant Review and Recommendations**

Burt Samuelson, Co-Lead of the AWSMP Grant Review Committee, presented the committee's findings for each category of grants: Education & Outreach, Planning, Research & Monitoring, and Infrastructure (no Stream Restoration grants were received). The Grant Review Committee met the previous week.

Projects were discussed. It was asked if funds that are awarded could be split between projects. Leslie Z. responded that the Grant Review Committee discussed this matter and recommended that small-amount adjustments be allowed. The committee would like to approve any larger dollar changes to grant awards.

There was little issue with the funding recommendations. Eric H. advised the Council that the recommended award of \$10K for engineering analysis at the Panther Mountain bridge site (AWSMP-2013-78) would not cover the surveying needed for the project.

The Grant Review Committee recommended changes to future grant procedures. As there is limited funding and high demand, future applications will have to contain more information for the committee to make decisions. The pre-application, which was meant to be a pre-screening tool, will likely be eliminated in future rounds. Leslie Z. suggested the AWSMP might hold an informational meeting to answer applicant questions about procedures before next grant round. Information on multiple funding programs could be offered at the session. The grant adoption process will be brought to the Stakeholder Council for further consideration.

Due to two conflicts of interest on grants #71 and #75, the Stakeholder Council decided to vote on these grants separately via email or online survey (via Survey Monkey). All other grants were approved as recommended by the Grant Review Committee by a majority vote of the attending Executive Council members.

### **Next Meeting**

TBA — April 2014