
**Stakeholder Council 2016
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 29, 2016 1:30pm-4:30pm

In Attendance: Aaron Bennett, Brent Gotsch, Leslie Zucker, Chris Tran, David Burns, Adam Doan, Andrew Emrich, Jason Siemion, Mary McNamara, Brian Burns, Sylvia Rozzelle, Tim Cox, John Mathiesen; **Executive Council members present:** Burt Samuelson, Amanda LaValle, Mike Flaherty, Barry Baldigo, Rob Stanley, Eric Hofmeister, Mike Reynolds, Marc Hollander

Next scheduled meeting: May 2017

Introductions and Stakeholders Announcements:

Attendees introduced themselves and Leslie Z. summarized the agenda.

Mike F. announced that NYS Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) issued emergency fishing regulations for the Esopus Creek between the Shandaken Tunnel Portal and a downstream boundary in the Ashokan Reservoir (a map of the affected area is [posted](#)). The emergency regulation is in effect until January 31, 2017, and was issued due to concerns about fishing pressure and predation during a period of extremely low stream

flow in the Esopus Creek. Mike announced that New York City Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) will begin making releases again from the Schoharie Reservoir, now at 25% capacity, provided turbidity levels do not exceed guidelines. The drought and resulting low stream flow is probably affecting trout spawning. Higher flows are important through the winter to prevent an anchor ice event that would damage eggs and insects on the stream bottom. DEC is considering an earlier than usual Ashokan Reservoir stocking date in response to water quantity issues.

Burt S. announced that Ulster County will be holding a public meeting at the Onteora High School in Boiceville on December 1 at 7pm to discuss the “Ashokan Rail Trail” planned for construction in 2017-2018.

Amanda L. encouraged everyone to view the December issue of National Geographic Magazine, which features a map of Ulster County environmental initiatives under the Hein administration. The upper Esopus Creek watershed is identified on the map.

AWSMP Updates:

Adam D. of the Ulster County Soil & Water Conservation District reported that AWSMP completed the Wright Road Hillslope Stabilization Project in the Stony Clove Creek watershed between spring and fall 2016. About 1.5 acres of previously failing hillslope was stabilized for a cost of about \$1.2 million. The project was designed by Milone &

MacBroom, Inc. (MMI) and constructed by Baker Brothers Excavating. The toe of the hillslope was previously stabilized during a stream restoration project in 2015.

The SWCD through the Catskill Streams Buffer Initiative (CSBI) also completed a streambank stabilization project on the Bushkill in the Town of Olive. The project used fascines, live stakes and posts, and vertical bundles to revegetate streambanks and reshape the floodplain. No stream channel work was included. The project was designed by One Nature LLC and constructed by Fastracs Excavating, Inc.

Both AWSMP projects were funded by the NYC DEP through a contract with the SWCD.

SWCD and DEP are in the process of designing three stream restoration projects for next year. Two hillslope stabilization projects are planned for the Mink Hollow section of the Beaver Kill in the Town of Woodstock. A third project is planned in the upper reaches of Woodland Creek in the Town of Shandaken involving several hundred linear feet of stream. Base survey is complete for the Woodland Valley project and we await the conceptual design.

SWCD is also working on a Woodland Creek Stream Management Plan to be released in 2017. Stream assessment data is being analyzed to develop management recommendations for inclusion in the plan.

SWCD carried out monitoring of past projects and their performance, and surveyed channels to document bankfull flow indicators during 2016.

The CSBI program worked with landowners to complete several large invasive species pulls in preparation for stream buffer plantings with Catskill native species.

Leslie Z. and Brent G. of Cornell Cooperative Extension of Ulster County (CCE) reported on outreach projects delivered over the summer and fall. A Beaver Kill Stream Tour of Mink Hollow and Willow Flats in the Town of Woodstock attracted 18 participants on a very hot day. The Catskill Environmental Research & Monitoring (CERM) conference at Belleayre in October was attended by 165 researchers, managers, students, and members of the public. A successful, one-day Elevation Certificate training organized by AWSMP and taught by a national expert from Tetra Tech, Inc. was attended by 22 licensed surveyors, code enforcement officers, and certified floodplain managers.

Brent G. delivered 2-hour courses on the basics of flood insurance rate maps, how to read flood maps, and their implications for planning and community development in every Ulster County watershed town.

During the summer, CCE educators participated in numerous field days and community events. These included Bennett and Phoenicia elementary school Earth Days, Rondout Valley Scout Camporee, Ulster County Fair, Shandaken Day, and Olive Day. CCE educators working with the CSBI program carried out several volunteer invasive species pulls at the Catskill Interpretive Center and Menla Mountain House.

Finally, the AWSMP hosted Family, Fun & Fish Day!, an annual favorite that attracted new anglers of all ages to the Beaver Kill at Kenneth Wilson State Campground. Once again, volunteers from Trout Unlimited played a critical role in helping to deliver the program, along with staff from project partner DEC Region 3 Fisheries.

The AWSMP Youth Education program led by CCE Educator Matt Savatgy had the most productive year yet. CCE Educators organized the Onteora Summer School Stream Watch and an Olive Recreation Program Stream Visit. The programs trained 65 youth in macroinvertebrate and water quality studies, nature observations, and stream assessment. Watershed educators also assisted the 4-H Tech Wizards After-School Program with bringing elementary and middle-school students to the Ashokan watershed where they engaged in hands-on stream science activities.

Planning for the 2017 Ashokan Watershed Conference started in November. Please hold the date of April 29, 2017 to attend the conference! It will be held again at the Ashokan Center.

USGS Report:

Jason Siemion of the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) announced release of the report *Suspended-Sediment and Turbidity Responses to Sediment and Turbidity Reduction Projects in the Beaver Kill, Stony Clove Creek and Warner Creek Watersheds, New York, 2010-14*. The study was partially funded by the AWSMP. Study results show a significant decrease in daily mean suspended sediment concentrations for a given streamflow after four sediment and turbidity reduction stream restoration projects were completed by AWSMP on the Stony Clove Creek. To access the report, go to: <https://pubs.er.usgs.gov/publication/sir20165157>

Climate Change and Drought:

Leslie Z. gave a short presentation on climate change and drought. The presentation overviewed NASA information on atmospheric warming due to greenhouse gas emissions, emerging climate research on the effects of human-made aerosols and ocean mixing, a university generated online tool for viewing predicted impacts of climate change (see <http://cci-reanalyzer.org>), changing precipitation and streamflow patterns in the northeast U.S. and Catskills region (see Dr. Allan Frei's presentation at the recent CERM conference: http://ashokanstreams.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/2CERM_2016_Frei.pdf), climate model predictions for both heavier and more frequent precipitation and increased frequency of drought in the Northeast and NYS, and the current drought and Esopus Creek flow conditions.

Stakeholder Council members suggested further discussion, perhaps at the upcoming Ashokan Watershed Conference on ideas for managing the watershed to lower greenhouse gas emissions (what would be the trade-offs and effectiveness?). The Towns of Woodstock, Olive, and Shandaken have taken the DEC Climate Smart Communities Pledge. Amanda L. commented the pledge asks communities to address a wide span and scope of operations and qualifies them for funding, such as a 50/50 match with state funds to implement measures. The Town of Shandaken has also joined the "I Am Pro Snow" campaign of the Climate Reality Project. The Town is looking to become carbon neutral by 2030, such as by switching to renewable sources of electricity, and to take steps like offer electric vehicle charging stations.

The Council commented on recent advances in technology for river generation of electricity, enough to supply a single home on-site. And the Council requested more information on how current floodplain regulations, and potential new regulations, incorporate the effects of climate change.

DEC representatives commented there are no numerical climate change predictions currently used in regulatory review, but unofficially the guidance is to consider climate change predictions during project review.

States and counties are continuing to push for federal funding to up-size stream crossings and culverts.

Stream Management Implementation Program (SMIP) Update:

Leslie Z. gave a report on the status of the SMIP. By fall 2016, a total of \$450,425 or 45% of the regular SMIP expense project funds were awarded.

A total \$191,631 or 77% of SMIP expense funds for Local Flood Analysis (LFA) planning were awarded.

Fall 2016 funding requests for SMIP expense projects total \$15,000.

By fall 2016, a total of \$599,519 or 60% of regular SMIP capital funds were awarded. None of the SMIP capital funds dedicated to LFA implementation have been awarded.

Fall 2016 funding requests for SMIP capital projects total \$13,500.

The current five-year funding cycle is 60% complete. The AWSMP anticipates advancing regular SMIP expense spending to make up ground and match the funding cycle completion rate in 2017, by releasing a second request for applications in the research and monitoring category.

The next SMIP funding round will be held March-April 2017 with funding recommendations to be reviewed and voted on at the May 2017 Stakeholder Council meeting.

Burt S., representing the AWSMP Grant Review Committee, presented an overview of the two projects submitted for SMIP funding during the fall 2016 funding round. They are:

\$15,000, Town of Shandaken, *Community Rating System*

\$13,500, Town of Olive, *Engineering for the Upper Boiceville Road Culvert Replacement*

Both projects were numerically scored and ranked “high,” and were recommended for funding by the Grant Review Committee.

Executive Council member Amanda LaValle moved that both projects recommended by the Grant Review Committee be approved by the Stakeholder Council for funding. Executive Council member Burt Samuelson seconded the motion. A quorum of Executive Council members present voted on the motion, with all members voting “yes” in favor of the motion, and no members voting “no.” The motion was passed.

Working Group Reports:

Stream Ecosystem Working Group: Barry B. reported that the working group advanced an update of the 10-year old research, assessment and monitoring strategy for the Ashokan Watershed. The working group identified 24 recommended priority actions or studies within six categories. These priorities were used to inform AWSMP’s summer 2016 request for SMIP applications in the research and monitoring category.

Jason S. of the USGS gave an update on SMIP-funded study of the effects of white perch and alewife introduction into the Ashokan Reservoir on rainbow trout populations. Preliminary results were surprising and will be reported in full as the study progresses.

Flood Hazard Mitigation Working Group: Rob S. reported on flood hazard mitigation activities in the Town of Shandaken. Shandaken plans to submit an application to the FEMA Community Rating System and will use the SMIP award (approved above) to take final steps to prepare the Town for a successful application.

The Town has requested survey information from NYSDOT engineers for the completed Route 28 and Route 42 bridges in order to have Milone & MacBroom (the town engineering firm) review how the new structures will affect floodplain elevations.

The Town is hopeful the Shandaken-Allaben LFA kick-off meeting can be held on December 20 at the Town Hall. The Town anticipates having new FEMA Flood Map data by the kick-off meeting, so that the revised special flood hazard area in the LFA study area can be displayed.

At the recent FHM Working Group meeting, participants discussed the need for closer coordination between the NYS Department of Transportation and local floodplain administrators to keep Towns informed of changes in flood elevations that may result from state bridge projects.

Shandaken is working to start a feasibility study for Phoenicia business relocations to allow a LFA-recommended flood mitigation project on the Stony Clove and Esopus Creeks to move forward. The Town was recently awarded funding for

the study by the Catskill Watershed Corporation. Rob S. will be working with Aaron B. of Ulster County Dept. of Environment to scope the study request for proposals.

Sylvia R. reported that the Olive Flood Advisory Committee is working to finalize the Boiceville-West Shokan LFA, but has remaining questions about the flood mitigation options suggested for Boiceville that are being worked through with the hired consulting firm Woit Engineering and Consulting. Additional public discussion of the options is planned.

Both the Towns of Shandaken, Olive, and Woodstock have adopted the new FEMA Flood Maps and are in compliance with the National Flood Insurance Program.

Stream Access & Recreation Working Group: Marc H. reported that over the summer and fall, the working group had in-depth conversations about large wood management in the recreational sections of the upper Esopus Creek. Concerns in the group recognized that large wood in the stream channel is good for the environment, but can be detrimental for infrastructure and public safety depending on the situation. The committee heard a presentation in October by Dr. Ellen Wohl of Colorado State University about large wood management and assessment protocols that attempt to address both the benefits and detriments of large wood. The working group has determined it's important to be pro-active about large wood management where safety and infrastructure threats are high. The question remains how to organize that management and who will assume potential risk and liability for management actions. However, the working group would like to implement the protocol and assemble a multi-disciplinary team to assess future threats. The recreational community continues to have an underlying concern about how to manage and remove possible "strainers."

Marc H. reported that out of four recreational release requests in 2016 only one was granted due to extremely low flow conditions in the Esopus Creek. Also, he is reaching out to NYC Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) to have Esopus Creek fishing and boating access points added to their recreational access map. Marc will pass this map to the group for input.

Highway Managers Working Group: Highway Superintendents Eric H. (Shandaken), Mike R. (Woodstock), and Brian B. (Olive) gave brief updates on their respective Town projects. Shandaken built five bridges in 2016 (four FEMA-funded projects) to pass the 100-year flow with scour protections. Shandaken would like to undertake an assessment of Shandaken bridges and large culverts to determine how close their sizing is to passing the 100-year flows and what it would take to bring them to that standard. This project could be expanded to include watershed portions of Olive and Woodstock to create cost-efficiency, particularly if AWSMP funds the project.

Woodstock worked to replace and upsize bridges in 2016 as well, however none of the projects were within the watershed.

Olive is working to upsize a crossing over Dry Brook on Hillside Drive. The Town hired Peak Engineering to finalize design plans and bid documents, and plans to bid and construct the project in early 2017.

Ulster County is assessing all culverts on County roads to assess their connectivity and capacity and develop priorities for a range of projects, from aquatic passage to flood mitigation and safety, and be ready for applications to various funding streams. The Ulster Dept. of Environment is conducting the project in-house with technicians and a youth worker. The County's project methods could be applied to town assessment of stream crossings.

The County maintains a GIS of all culverts and supplies that database to the towns.

Other Business and Discussion:

Mike F. said that DEC is discussing the Esopus Creek coldwater release plan in light of conditions in the Schoharie Reservoir and Esopus Creek this year. In the past, around 2001, the Schoharie Reservoir was this low, but was not this turbid. It's clear that fine sediment has accumulated during the last decade in the Schoharie Reservoir. There appears to be

about 5 feet of additional sediment accumulation. This means there was less water to access for releases than in the past. Charts indicating the amount of available water used during planning will need to be redone.

Marc H. reported the lack of water for recreational releases had a financial impact. The October slalom race was cancelled both of the last two years costing thousands of dollars in revenues. The bottom line is that the entire recreational release plan must be reexamined. This should be discussed at the next SPDES Permit Meeting in February at the Shandaken Town Hall. Another topic of discussion will likely be the smaller diameter outflow at a higher elevation being installed for Schoharie River releases. It's hoped that more details on the City's plans will be presented.

Another announcement was of a new public access site on the Esopus Creek managed by DEC on state property across from the Catskill Interpretive Center in Mt. Tremper. A ramp was paved between Route 28 and a parking area due to steep slopes.

Mike F. discussed plans for a DEC brook trout presence-absence survey in the Ashokan Watershed next year. The study will capture the presence-absence of other species and habitat conditions as well. It will focus on areas of the watershed where information is lacking.

The meeting was adjourned. The AWSMP Stakeholder Council will meet again in May. Next year's meeting dates will be announced in early 2017.