

Highway Managers Working Group Meeting Notes

April 16, 2019

8:30 – 10:30 am, AWSMP Office, Shokan, NY

Attendees: Andrew Emrich and Kirk Peters (Ulster DPW), Chris Tran (DEP), Brian Burns and Sierra Smith (T/Olive), Mike Reynolds (T/Woodstock), Adam Doan (UCSWCD), Leslie Zucker and Tim Koch (CCE Ulster)

Dates & Rules for Tree Clearing to Avoid Disturbance

Chris T. and Adam D. reviewed state and federal regulations for tree clearing and avoiding bat disturbance. Tree clearing is restricted from April 1 to October 31 to avoid disturbance to bat nesting sites and habitat. Regulations are more restrictive if project site is within ¼ mile of a confirmed winter roost site or within 1.5 miles of a confirmed summer occurrence location. There are currently no known summer occurrences in the Ashokan watershed. Bat acoustic surveys can be conducted if tree clearing needs to occur during a restricted period, but survey must confirm the area is not being used by Northern Long Eared or Indiana bats.

Adam D. recommended that early planning will help make the project easier to implement. Tree clearing can be done in the winter before starting any work on the ground. Adam D. urged that the process is not insurmountable and mentioned that the UCSWCD can assist with clearing surveys and paperwork submission, if staff are available.

Review 2019-2021 AWSMP Action Plan

The group reviewed the 11 items in Section C of the 2019-2021 AWSMP Action Plan that deals with “Highway and Infrastructure Management in Conjunction with Streams.”

The group discussed the shared mulcher that was purchased by AWSMP in 2016 to help prioritize vegetation management on critical areas such as roadside ditches (Action Item #2). The Towns of Woodstock and Shandaken have both used the machine over the last few years, including to seed 5.8 miles of roadside ditches in 2018. It was mentioned that if the opportunity arises to purchase another piece of shared equipment, that a hydro-seeder would be the logical choice. Discussion also included the possibility of a vac-truck, but purchase and maintenance costs are likely prohibitive.

Members showed some interest in attending a Cornell Local Roads Program Snow & Ice Management Workshop, if it were held locally, to address fine sediment loading that results from the use of road abrasives in winter road management (Action Item #3). The group discussed the importance of clearing vegetation in road right of ways due to its impact on snow and ice management. Direct sunlight on road surfaces helps to melt snow and ice, dry the pavement surface, and prevent water and ice damage to roads.

Adam D. emphasized that in the push to upsize road-stream crossings that concepts of natural channel design be taken into consideration (Action Item #4). Improper stream dimensions can

adversely affect sediment transport, which should ultimately have equal consideration to flow capacity when designing bridges and culverts. Considerations might include evaluating upstream and downstream channel dimensions and the spacing of grade control, and whether enlarged crossings can maintain sediment conveyance.

Tim K. discussed the road-stream crossing database built following the 2018 assessment project (Action Item #5). Since the integrated dataset does not yet have a data sharing strategy, Tim will compile the 10 highest priority culverts for each town and provide highway staff with the full dataset for priority crossings (Action Item #6).

Adam D. told the group that municipalities can apply to the CSBI program for cover plantings at project sites (Action Item #8). The District can provide materials, and possibly labor, for the planning and installation of planting projects. They are currently working with the Town of Woodstock to revegetate after the Mink Hollow bridge project is completed.

Leslie Z. and Adam D. went over past trainings that AWSMP has provided to municipalities regarding stream process and post-flood emergency intervention (Action Item #9). Mike R. and Kirk P. emphasized the benefit of having new staff trained so that they can better understand direction and the reasons behind performing certain tasks. Adam D. said that following Tropical Storm Irene, town staff that were tasked with clearing debris and sediment from stream channels were appreciative of direction given to them regarding constructing appropriate channel dimensions and floodplain benches rather than wide and flat channels.

Leslie Z. updated members on remaining SMIP funds that are available for projects that can be completed by August 31, 2019. Andrew E. said the County will not be able to complete any new projects in that timeframe, but may request additional cost-share for ongoing projects. Other members discussed the possibility of applying for funds to replace small culverts that coincide with their existing paving schedules, and possibly using the road-stream crossing hydraulic model to provide sizing guidance.

Project Updates

Ulster DPW – The LFA-recommended Maltby Hollow bridge project is underway. This is the first time the selected contractor is working through the DEP design milestones. The County recently received approval from SHPO to remove portions of the Mt. Tremper bridge, including the log cribs that sit atop the abutments.

Woodstock – Soil borings are being completed for the Mink Hollow bridge project. Trees have already been cleared at the project site and the footings are marked. Mike R. hopes the bridge will be in place by the end of April, or something shortly thereafter.

Olive – Upper Boiceville Road, DeSilva Road, and Burgher Road culverts are all in the design phase. The Old Route 28 culvert near DeSilva road will be removed and the stream daylighted

before it enters the Rt 28 culvert. The proposed crossings will be 4-sided box culverts, embedded 2 ft with native streambed material.

NYSDOT – Adam D. updated the group on the NSYDOT Rt. 28 bridge project in Mt. Tremper. The bridge will be widened significantly and the flood control project (levee) on the left bank will be removed to increase floodplain access and flood conveyance. Construction is expected to begin in either 2020 or 2021.

AWSMP – The SWCD has no big restoration projects in 2019, but will be working on the designs for 2 sediment reduction projects in Warner Creek. The District will also be busy conducting geomorphic assessments in the Esopus Creek headwaters and tributaries in 2019. The Esopus headwaters have been assessed before, but nearly 10 years ago. The headwater tributaries such as Lost Clove, McKinley Hollow, and Hatchery Hollow have never been assessed.

Action Items:

- Tim K. will contact members to gauge local interest in hosting a Cornell Local Roads Program Snow & Ice Management Training in the watershed.
- Tim K. will compile and send a list to each Highway department of the 10 highest priority road-stream crossings for each municipality based on the 2018 multi-objective road-stream crossing assessment.