

Highway Managers Meeting
Thursday, August 23, 2012
11:00am-1:00pm
AWSMP Office, 6375 State Route 28 Phoenicia NY, 12464

In attendance:

Brent Gotsch, CCE Ulster County
Mandy Wolfson, UC Department of the Environment
Bobby Taylor, UCSWCD
Cory Ritz, UCSWCD
Adam Doan, UCSWCD
Phil Timbrouck, NYS DOT
Tom Story, NYS DOT
Andrew Emrich, UC DPW
Kirk Peters, UC DPW
Ed Pine, UC DPW
Deron Davis, USDA-NRCS
Gretchen Rae, CCE Ulster County
Mike Reynalds, Town of Woodstock Highway Superintendent
Allison Lent, UCSWCD
Eric Hofmesiter, Town of Shandaken Highway Superintendent

I. Stream Assessments

As part of its mission AWSMP assesses Ashokan Watershed streams and collects data on them. This data is then used to create Stream Management Plans (SMPs) which break the stream down into reaches of 100 feet called management units (MUs) and provides recommendations on how to best manage them. This includes locations where the stream interacts with public and private infrastructure.

The last creek assessed by the program was the Bushkill located in the Town of Olive. Ulster County Soil & Water Conservation District staff is currently preparing a draft SMP for this stream as well as Birch Creek in the Town of Shandaken (which was also assessed). Major recommendation categories relevant to this group includes: municipal infrastructure, landowner infrastructure, and general recommendations.

AWSMP would like to know: what is the best way for us to convey the information that we collect to you?

Suggested that a database or a table would be useful that includes a field that shows jurisdiction (i.e. town road, county bridge, etc.). Our current GPS units allow us to include these fields.

Also suggested that we breakup large SMPs into smaller pieces. For instance, have a mini document on a single management unit that can be given to a highway superintendent. These documents can be of great assistance when trying to justify replacement of bridges, culverts, etc.

Also suggested that we include our info on Ulster County data share.

By October 18, 2012 (our next meeting date) we will try to determine a better way to share data between our respective agencies.

II. CSBI (Catskill Streams Buffer Initiative)

This program is similar to New York State's "Trees for Tribes" program, though, it is more robust and offers more selection. CSBI offers native plants (herbaceous plants, shrubs, trees, and willows) to help stabilize streambanks. For instance, after a Town comes in and uses riprap to stabilize a streambank, CSBI would come in and plant willow stakes in-between rip rap rocks. These stakes grow to become plants and their roots interlock with the soil and rock helping to increase the structure's strength.

There are currently plans to develop 2 willow cutting beds in Ulster County: one to be located in the NYC Watershed on DEP land and the other to be located near the Ulster County Fairgrounds in New Paltz. Although the program was originally created for landowners it has expanded its mission to also include municipalities and has worked well with them in the past. CSBI can have a streamlined application process for municipalities and local governments. The sooner you let the program know the easier/quicker the program can get you plants.

Hopefully by the next Highway Manager's Meeting we will be able to show you exactly where the sites for the willow cuttings will be.

III. Projects and Grant Program

Emergency Watershed Protection (EWP): are projects that are overseen by USDA-NRCS. They are used to only put the stream back to its original position (if it was moved following a flood or similar event). It will not pay for things such as repaving. They will pay to armor the project if it calls for that. To gain access to EWP a municipality must sign an agreement and will only get reimbursed for work after the work is completed (be sure to sign agreement prior to doing any work). They do have authority to work on private property which makes the program versatile, but only if a public agency sponsors it. They can pay for up to 75% of the cost of the project and can occasionally pay for engineering work associated with the project. NRCS provides financial and technical assistance with regards to EWP projects.

You have 220 days to finish a project after the agreement is signed. It is possible and in fact likely that if you request an extension you will get it if you can prove that you are making progress on it. Also be aware that NYS law has it that no stream work can be done after September 30 to allow for fish spawning. However, DEC has stated that they are open to giving extensions on a case-by-case basis.

Normally a NY State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA) form is needed before work can be done. For smaller projects SEQRA requirements will be waived. Article 15 permits have to go to DEC and to the Army Corps of Engineers. Sending a permit to DEC only will not work. You must send it to both.

For EWP projects that are happening as a result of Irene, NRCS will provide a 75% match with DEP providing a 25% match (for projects inside the watershed). It will cost most municipalities nothing.

If the project exceeds 2+ acres of disturbance a permit from the Army Corps of Engineers is also required.

NRCS engineers have determined that the cost of lost soil due to erosion is approximately \$88/ton. This figure is used to estimate the budget for projects and in particular Emergency Watershed Protection Projects.

Our office also has aerial images of the streams in the watershed from 2009 (which is pre-Irene) which can be used for comparison with current conditions.

IV. Funding

AWSMP is wholly sponsored by NYC DEP. Funding is currently broken down as follows:

Ulster County Soil & Water Conservation District: \$2 million
Cornell Cooperative Extension of Ulster County: \$2 million

DEP is currently negotiating with both CCE as well as UCSWCD because their contracts expire in 2013 and 2014, respectively. Final figures are not known but the money allocated over a five year period for each agency will probably be larger than the previous figures \$2million per agency.

AWSMP has been trying to convince DEP to spend more money on acquiring land in floodplains and on flood hazard mitigation projects as opposed to buying properties on mountaintops as the former areas are a greater water quality concern for city drinking water supplies. DEP currently has to purchase a certain amount of mountaintop land per EPA rules but is willing to devote more money to flood hazard mitigation projects.

DEP is also providing the match for local flood buy-outs.

Note:

FEMA Flood Hazard Mitigation Project on Brown Road will probably be done next year. Gabion baskets will have to be replaced.

V. US Forest Service AOP Class

A number of AWSMP staff and other partner agency staff attended a US Forest Service Aquatic Organism Passage (AOP) training this past May. It taught how to appropriately design and locate

culverts to allow for the passage of aquatic organisms while at the same time performing their function of transporting water.

Some items teachers explained should be considered prior to building structures include:

Crossing Design:

- Water Transport
- Sediment Transport
- Wood Transport
- Organism Transport

Channel Characteristics:

- Channel Slope
- Channel Cross Section
- Channel Planform and Bank Patterns
- Channel Bedform
- Channel Bed Material
- Hydraulics and Hydrology

With larger storms becoming more and more frequent it is now imperative that infrastructure managers ensure that their structures be properly sized. The AOP training provides good tools to allow that.

Next Meeting: October 18, 8:30-10:30 AWSMP office.