

Stream Access and Recreation Committee Meeting Minutes

January 4, 2012

1:00-3:00PM

AWSMP Office, Phoenicia, NY

In Attendance:

Brent Gotsch, CCE Ulster County

Elizabeth Higgins, CCE Ulster County

Bob McCormack, CCE Ulster County

Melinda Herzog, CCE Ulster County (Making Healthy Places Project in Phoenicia)

Alma Rodriguez, CCE Ulster County & Phoenicia Resident

Mark Loete, Trout Unlimited

Myles Gordon, KCCNY

Harry Jameson, Town Tinker

Mike Flaherty, NYS DEC

Aaron Bennett, Ulster County Department of the Environment

Peter Manning, Catskill Center for Conservation and Development

Mary McNamara, Woodstock Resident & Lower Esopus Watershed Partnership

David Gilmour, Gilmour Planning (by phone)

Meeting began with discussion of status of DEC fishing access sites following the floods of last year. An initial informal survey was conducted in late October of last year. It was reported that the DEC has done some work on these sites but the full extent of what has been done or what could be done with current DEC resources is unknown. It was discussed where we can have more partnerships with each of the stakeholder agencies.

There was extensive discussion about the current status of the CWC grant for debris removal. Currently there is approximately \$2 million available to municipalities and landowners for debris removal. Money cannot be used for streambank restoration. It can only be used for removing debris (ex: woody material, gravel, trash, etc.) from either in the stream channel or on the shores.

It was suggested that the Catskill Mountain Railroad utilize these funds to remove the train tracks that have fallen into the Esopus from the hurricane and other previous storms. This would remove a known potential hazard as well as retrieve material that can be used again when the tracks are rebuilt. It was suggested that AWSMP write a letter to suggest that this would be a high priority project for CWC to consider.

There was discussion about recreational releases from the Shandaken Tunnel and the effects that it has had on both fishing as well as recreational boating. Perhaps there should be an annual process to figure out appropriate water releases from the tunnel.

It was suggested that perhaps part of the Esopus could be reclassified as a "high-use" area which would allow additional management to occur. If this were to occur a draft recommendation on

how a “high-use” area differs from “regular-use” stream. It should be small enough to be manageable but large enough to achieve the goals of the group. It was suggested that maybe a better term to use would be “multiple-use” area. It was also suggested that these actions be combined with efforts to create a scenic byway on Route 28.

It was suggested that more kiosks or signage be designed and constructed on multiple access points. This would allow users of the sites to gain more information about the area as well as sources of potential hazard in the stream and reminders to use personal protective gear (i.e. helmets, life jackets, etc.). It could also double as a “you are here” map for tubers or other recreationalists. The problem with kiosks, it was found, is that it is relatively easy to put them up but much harder to maintain them and to keep the information on them relevant. Using the least amount of useful information only on the best sites would be prudent as opposed to many kiosks on multiple sites. It was suggested that volunteers such as 4-H or school groups be recruited to maintain and potentially update the kiosks.

There was discussion on what the economic impact of tourism (i.e. fishing, tubing, etc.) was to the area. Although there was no one comprehensive study, multiple agencies have data that can be accessed. Brian Zweig performed a very similar study called the Shawangunk Economic Impact Study for the areas around the Shawangunk Mountain.

It was suggested that DEP should open up more lands that are currently “fishing only.” It should also be better advertised what can and cannot be done on city property. Perhaps use the kiosk (with the special code for smart phones) to advertise this and other information.

Volunteer Projects Proposed:

1. Stream Cleanups (potentially partner with Trout Unlimited)
2. Put blazes on new trails for DEP hiking property.
3. Plant and maintain butterfly gardens or similar gardens using school group volunteers

Future Actions:

Group will reconvene sometime in April (exact date TBA). By this time exact AWSMP funds available for projects will be known and a better handle on which DEC sites require work will also be known.