

AWSMP Stream Access and Recreation Working Group
Meeting Minutes for June 16, 2014

In attendance:

Brent Gotsch, CCEUC
Tony Coccozza, Trout Unlimited
Marc Hollander, KCCNY/ACA
Mark Loete, Trout Unlimited
Martie Gales, Shandaken Parks and Rec
Mike Flaherty, NYSDEC

Whitewater Releases

On the weekend of June 7 and 8 there was a water release from the Shandaken Tunnel which resulted in a successful whitewater event in the Shandaken area. About 50 whitewater enthusiasts attended the event. Marc H. (who helped organize the event) brought up that years ago there used to be street festivals and other events in the town organized around whitewater and other activities. This brought business into the town and helped boost the local economy. He suggested that there may be an opportunity for the working group to get involved in this type of activity to help all the recreational users of the river and to boost the economy. There was the suggestion that they could get the Phoenicia Business Association (PBA), Rotary Club, local food banks, etc. involved to help with organizing events/activities around whitewater recreational release weekends. Hosting events such as a street fair would bolster business, local charitable donations and encourage recreation on the river.

There are three more upcoming recreational releases for this year: July 19-20, August 30-September 1, and October 4-5. They will be dependent on the availability of cold water for the fisheries.

Tony C. voiced his concern that the releases and the associated law were created for preserving the health of the fisheries and any economic benefit was supposed to be a side benefit. It was the position of many in the angling community that releases, particularly those in July, would impact the availability of cold water for the fish and seriously affect fish populations and their spawning. The July release has often been canceled because of the low availability of cold water needed to get through the summer. There was also concern that if area businesses got together to create an event around the release then there would be political pressure to have the release go forward even if the environmental conditions were not completely satisfied.

Mike F. reported that NYC DEP (who operate the reservoirs) take water temperature readings in mid-June and have to send a report to NYSDEC by the end of the month which forecasts the availability of cold water reserves in the reservoirs. This report helps to determine if and when releases are canceled or allowed to proceed.

Mark L., who is a member of the PBA and Trout Unlimited, **volunteered to attend the next meeting of the group and float the idea of an event in town to coincide with the August 30-**

September 1 release date. This weekend was less objectionable than the July date and it would be over the Labor Day weekend. If the PBA was on board with having an event then Mark L. would report this fact back to the working group and planning for a potential event would begin. It would also be reported to the PBA that it would be possible that the release could be canceled because of lack of cold water and that this should be taken into consideration during the planning stages for the event.

AWSMP reported that funding for the event would only be available through the regular Stream Management Implementation Program (SMIP) grant program. SMIP may not be offering another grant until after the August release date but the possibility for having a grant for an activity/event for next year exists. AWSMP involvement would also be conditional on having some sort of educational opportunity at the event. AWSMP can offer assistance within the confines of the Stream Access and Rec Working Group with regards to planning but actual implementation of certain activities would need to be done either by working group members or by outside agents. There may be the possibility of involvement from the main office of Cornell Cooperative Extension of Ulster County (located in Kingston) depending on what activities are planned.

Note: Phoenicia Business Association contacts include Robin (proprietor of the Nest Egg) and Tom (proprietor of the Phoenicia Belle).

Pine Hill Community Trail

Martie G. gave a presentation regarding the Pine Hill Community Trail project that the Town of Shandaken Parks and Rec Committee is working on. The Pine Hill Park is located along a portion of Birch Creek in the hamlet of Pine Hill. Currently the park is used by children and others who access and stream to fish, play or otherwise recreate in it. There is no formal access point to the stream. The Shandaken Parks and Rec Committee, in cooperation with the Town of Shandaken and the proprietor of the Pine Hill Arms came up with the idea of creating a trail network including a stream crossing over Birch Creek which would link the park with the Pine Hill Arms and the Pine Hill Community center directly across the street from the Pine Hill Arms.

The Parks and Rec Committee applied to AWSMP for a SMIP Grant and received funds to hire an engineering/consulting firm to do a feasibility study to determine if it would be possible to create a footbridge or similar crossing that would not act as a hydraulic constriction on the stream and to also better develop where a trail may be created.

Martie G. reported that the Parks and Rec Committee has commissioned the engineering firm Milone & MacBroom, who provide the Town of Shandaken with professional engineering services, to complete a feasibility report which will be shared with AWSMP and others. If the feasibility report finds that a stream crossing can be created that would not create a hydraulic constriction then they could apply again to AWSMP for funds to implement the project.

It was suggested that following the engineering report that the Parks and Rec Committee speak with the Town attorney regarding permanent easements on any property that a trail might cross. Current landowners might be fine with the idea of a trail in their backyard but if a property is sold a few years down the road then the current landowner may not be as accepting and could

potentially close the trail. Martie G. also stated that the Parks and Rec Committee was looking into the status of current right-of-ways that the Town of Shandaken has in that area.

The Stream Access and Rec Working Group was very supportive of the project and thankful that the Shandaken Parks and Rec Committee was doing due diligence in hiring an engineering firm to study the stream crossing scenario. They requested to be kept informed of the committee's progress as well as any assistance that they could offer.

AWSMP Family Fun and Fish Day

AWSMP has scheduled its Third Annual Family Fun and Fish Day event for Sunday, July 27 at Kenneth Wilson State Park. This popular event is great for families and people of all ages and skill levels to come to learn how to fish. AWSMP has coordinated with park officials to get all registered attendees and volunteers into the park for free. They have also coordinated to get DEC there so that participants do not need to have a NYS fishing license to fish. DEC will also bring poles and bait. AWSMP, along with its coordination duties, is also sponsoring a barbeque and a youth arts and craft activity under the pavilion. A number of volunteers from Trout Unlimited have RSVP'd to assist with the event, however, we could also utilize more volunteers for any activity, particularly the fishing demos and helping prepare the food. If anyone from TU or any other organization is interested in volunteering or participating in the event please have them contact Brent Gotsch at bwg37@cornell.edu or 845-688-3047 Ext. 3. More information about the event as well as a link to online registration is available on the AWSMP website at www.ashokanstreams.org.

Kiosks/Signage

Mark L. reported that the Kenneth Wilson State Park sign in Mount Tremper says that the park is approximately .4 mile from the sign when in reality it is more like 4 miles. Mike F. said that he would report this to the DEC department that deals with signs and see about it being corrected.

There was also some question about when the kiosks that the Town of Shandaken commissioned would be put up. No one was sure of their status. They have been completed since at least last year but have not been installed. Martie G. stated that the Town keeps telling them that it will be soon but it hasn't happened as of yet. She would try to find out what the status of the kiosks is.

Miscellaneous

Mike F. reported that brown trout are being stocked in the Pine Hill/Belleayre Lake. This may be an opportunity for a community/youth program this summer if an entity such as the Town of Shandaken Parks and Rec Committee want to pursue it.

Next Meeting

TBA. Likely will be held in September/October. Potential for special meeting sooner if there are plans to have an event during the August 30-September 1 recreational release event.