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**Stakeholder Council 2021  
Membership**

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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, Ulster County 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 NOTES**

Webinar Meeting

**April 14, 2021 from 1:30pm-4:00pm**

**In Attendance via Webinar:** Brian Burns, Sierra Smith, Andrew Emrich, Aaron Bennett, Scott George, Mark Loete, Kathy Nolan, Tim Koch, Dave Burns, Jim Sofranko, Allison Lent, Adam Doan, Brent Gotsch, Leslie Zucker; **Executive Council members present:** Chester Karwatowski, Burt Samuelson, Mike Flaherty, Barry Baldigo, Amanda LaValle

**Next scheduled meeting:** November 10, 2021

**Community and Working Group Updates**

The Town of Olive worked with its contractor Kingston Equipment Rental/Baker Brothers to make minor repairs this spring to several culvert enlargements at Upper Boiceville Road and DeSilva Road near Boiceville. The newly enlarged stream crossings handled the December 25, 2020 flood flows well. The projects were recommended in a Local Flood Analysis and funded by AWSMP.

Olive is starting design and engineering on enlargement of two road-stream crossings on Red Maple and Bostock roads. The town hired engineering consultant MMI/SLR with SMIP funding from

AWSMP. In addition, Olive was awarded \$535,825 from the Catskill Watershed Corporation to construct the Burgher Road culvert upsizing to address flood hazards identified in a Local Flood Analysis. Construction is planned for 2021. The town intends to apply to AWSMP for funding to support construction phase engineering services. The Town of Olive is pleased to see these long-term flood hazards being addressed.

Olive asked MMI/SLR to fly a drone over the Bushkill in West Shokan to examine the effects of the December flood on a recently completed NY Community Rising-funded stream project in West Shokan. The storm caused erosion on one bank. SLR will analyze why the stream shifted and what can be done to mitigate. SLR is also looking at a downstream debris deposit. This is a problematic area due to lack of elevation/slope change and the amount of sediment supply delivered from the watershed.

The Town of Olive reported the NYC Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) has awarded a construction bid for replacement of the Route 28A (Five Arch) bridge over Esopus Creek. The town recently met with DEP. Grubbing and tree removal will begin this year. Construction may begin in 2022 from State Route 28 to Route 28A. The new bridge will include a shared-use path and construction of a trailhead access to the Ashokan Rail Trail. An upgraded caution/push button flasher light will be installed on Route 28.

Olive reported new demolitions were completed in Boiceville on properties that participated in flood buyout. Two of the properties will be owned by NYC and two owned by the Town of Olive. Olive just approved a planner to help the community envision Boiceville's future. The planning process will involve collaboration with Onteora students to conduct community outreach. Olive is also conducting a five-year evaluation of acquisition by DEP and whether to make changes to land acquisition in hamlets. The town is looking at Boiceville and Shokan in particular. The town is considering allowing/disallowing acquisition, setting acreage limits for acquisition, and looking watershed-wide at acquisition in the 100-year floodplain where parcels can't be developed for anything else.

The Ulster County Department of Public Works is about to begin construction of the Maltby Hollow Bridge enlargement over the Bushkill. The project was recommended in a Local Flood Analysis. Design and construction inspection services are partially funded by the AWSMP.

The Ulster County Department of Environment reported the county Water Quality Coordinating Committee met recently and meets every several months. The committee includes people across the county interested in watershed work. The Dept. of Environment is looking to build on last year's project to assess culverts in towns abutting the NYC Watershed. The project was done in collaboration with Cornell Cooperative Extension of Ulster County (CCE) and used the MOSCAP method for assessing road-stream crossings first developed and implemented in the Ashokan watershed. Dept. of Environment is also reviewing the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (<https://www.dec.ny.gov/lands/79771.html>) governing releases from the Ashokan Reservoir to the lower Esopus Creek. The County has observed a long-term turbidity event on the lower Esopus as part of NYC's overall turbidity control plan.

The AWSMP Stream Access & Recreation Working Group reported it met once in 2020. In 2021, the working group will focus on stream access opportunities related to flood buyouts in the watershed. This includes coordination with the Town of Shandaken on community access plans for the newly acquired lands in Mt. Tremper. Shandaken has asked for partners to provide input. DEC and DEP are discussing possible fishing access on the former Rock Cut Cottages property. The involved partners generally agree about improving stream access at this site. The Council discussed the disposition of land NYSDOT has taken by eminent domain in Mt. Tremper and whether Ulster County would be a possible future landholder. Another consideration is a standard cooperative agreement that NYS DEC and DOT have developed to manage property owned by DOT for fishing access. The agreement can include other parties as well, such as the local municipality. The agreement identifies who is involved and what their roles are in managing the property. Typically DOT has minimal involvement once agreements are in place. Other properties in Mt. Tremper entered the flood buyout program and are now owned by the Town of Shandaken. All agree advancing a planning effort now could improve outcomes for potential users. The Council discussed a desire to continue discussions with user groups at future Stream Access & Recreation Working Group meetings and assist the town through a time when political leadership is in transition.

The AWSMP Stream Ecosystem Working Group reported a recent meeting where DEP, USGS, and AWSMP staff reported updates on ongoing research, assessment, and monitoring projects. USGS will be surveying fish community at several sites this year to evaluate stream restoration projects in collaboration with the Ulster County Soil and Water Conservation District with SMIP funding. USGS also reported it lost data from a handful of gages during the December flood. Replacement of some gear has been delayed due to pandemic-related supply issues. USGS went through many hoops, but was able to get teams in the field last year and will again this year. DEC reported it will not be stocking fish on the Esopus Creek this year as part of a regulation change on Esopus Creek and other trout streams announced in 2020.

The working group reported the effect of regulation changes on the wild trout fishery will need to be monitored. Biologists expect to know more in 3-4 years, the length of time it takes for young fish to mature, if there will be a change in recruitment. The effects of recent storms and possibly turbidity on spawning numbers are a new factor and may intersect with regulation changes. USGS and DEC are sharing data and information gathered during past monitoring to inform future monitoring plans. With AWSMP funding, the Esopus Creek has a 10-year record of fish community monitoring; a dataset remarkable in NYS. DEC may be interested in building on the dataset and discussions are ongoing.

Anecdotal observations are that small tributaries have abundant spawning Rainbow Trout this year, but not the mainstem Esopus Creek. Additional monitoring may be a consideration for future SMIP funding rounds. When it met, the working group also discussed the recent proposal for an Ashokan pumped storage facility.

The Flood Hazard Mitigation Working Group reported that the Town of Shandaken has expressed interest in conducting a Local Flood Analysis for Pine Hill in 2021 and for Big Indian and Chichester in 2022. Shandaken recently entered the NFIP Community Rating System (CRS) at a Level 8, which results in a 10% reduction in local flood insurance rates for policy holders. Shandaken is the first town in Ulster County to enter CRS, an achievement to be congratulated.

#### CCE/SWCD Updates

CCE is scheduling courses in flood map and floodplain management basics with Planning Board and Zoning Boards of Appeals over the next few months. AWSMP is also offering scholarships for local officials to attend flood mitigation trainings in 2021, including the ASFPM Virtual Conference from May 10-14, 2021

(<https://www.floods.org/conference/2021-asfpm-conference/>). There will be no NYSFSMA conference this year.

However, NYSFSMA is organizing 1-2 hour trainings in conjunction with Syracuse University throughout the year that will provide Certified Floodplain Manager continuing education credits. Interested officials should contact Brent Gotsch at [bwg37@cornell.edu](mailto:bwg37@cornell.edu) for more information.

The AWSMP is moving forward with plans for outdoor education and field work this year following Covid safety protocols. The AWSMP office may reopen to the public during limited hours this spring if local infection rates continue to decline. Staff are currently using the office following NYS guidelines and available to meet by appointment or remotely with stakeholders.

AWSMP is planning to hold ‘Ashokan Watershed Weekend’ in 2021, probably in the month of September. Staff are planning events now and invite input from stakeholders about community education needs and event ideas. Staff are exploring with NYS DEC whether the ‘Family, Fun, and Fish Day’ event can be held in 2021 on a DEC Free Fishing Day.

The Ulster County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) is planning a Stream Feature Inventory of the Panther Kill on Woodland Creek. The Woodland Creek mainstem was assessed in 2015, but the Panther Kill wasn’t included at that time. SWCD is wrapping up the Little Beaver Kill Stream Management Plan. This will be a first assessment and report on the Little Beaver Kill. SWCD is continuing vegetation monitoring at past stream buffer planting (Catskill Streams Buffer Initiative or CSBI) sites. CSBI is prepping for a big fall planting season. SWCD will continue monitoring streambank erosion throughout the watershed as part of the BANCS study. Because the December 2020 flood was geomorphically significant, sites will need to be resurveyed to establish a new baseline against which to measure future erosion rates.

The AWSMP is currently bidding for construction of two stream restoration projects on Warner Creek in 2021. The sites are producing significant turbidity and are identified as FAD-deliverable projects to improve water quality. Construction may begin in June. The design process is wrapping up for a third stream restoration project expected to be bid and constructed in 2021. The project is located on the Stony Clove Creek in Greene County. Construction is expected in August-September.

The SWCD is collaborating with Trout Unlimited on an Earth Day stream buffer planting in the Bushkill watershed. TU is seeking volunteers for the planting on Saturday, April 24 from 10:00AM-2:00PM. For more information and to volunteer, visit: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/catskill-mountains-trout-unlimited-earth-day-tree-planting-2021-tickets-148502030571>

AWSMP has been assessing past stream project sites following the December 2020 flood. The program has been responding to a significant uptick in landowner requests for technical assistance to deal with property erosion and flooding following the December 2020 flood.

**AWSMP Action Plan Update:**

The AWSMP Stakeholder Council reviewed draft updates to the 2021-2023 AWSMP Action Plan. Ulster CCE and SWCD will submit the updated action plan to DEP by May 1. The AWSMP Action Plan is a FAD-deliverable. The Council was asked to review draft revisions before the meeting and provide comment before holding a vote on whether to approve the updated plan.

Discussion focused on how the 2021-2023 Action Plan linked to recommendations made by the National Academy of Sciences as part of a comprehensive review of the NYC Watershed Protection Program (WPP). The Stakeholder Council noted the NAS identified the stream management program as a particular success story in the WPP. CCE reported on recent efforts to integrate stream management information into town Natural Resource Inventories as an example of using data to connect across programs. The Stakeholder Council discussed how geospatial maps and information on stream management benefit the towns. The data are particularly valuable if made available across a common platform that can be accessed easily by local officials. The Ulster County Parcel Viewer was mentioned as an example. Another idea discussed was making a portable platform, that is editable, available for towns to collect data in the field. The WQCC is discussing this idea for collection of stormwater data. Olive officials confirmed that any data the towns can capture is helpful when developing funding applications to prove to funders that money is needed to complete a project.

The Council requested a recommendation be added to the Action Plan to make stream management information more available for integration with local Natural Resource Inventories, Open Space Plans, Climate Smart Communities planning and other local efforts. The recommendation might be to make the information more consumable and useable by the towns and county.

The Executive Council voted to approve the 2021-2023 AWSMP Action Plan with a recommendation added as discussed above:

Mark Loete moved to approve the 2021-2023 AWSMP Action Plan as proposed. Barry Baldigo seconded the motion. The motion carried with all Executive Council members present in favor (Chet Karwatowski, Mike Flaherty, Barry Baldigo, Burt Samuelson, Mark Loete, Amanda LaValle). None opposed.

**Stream Management Implementation Program (SMIP) Update:**

AWSMP completed the first SMIP funding round in 2021 and receive three applications for funding. The SMIP Grant Review Committee met on March 26 and April 8 to review the applications and recommended partial funding of all projects. Funding recommendations totaled \$270,150 in the regular SMIP category and \$150,000 in the Local Flood Analysis category.

The Stakeholder Council reviewed the status of previously awarded projects and evaluated the grant review committee's recommendations. The Council concluded that all three projects were important and met the goals of the stream management program with the stipulations identified by the grant review committee.

A quorum of the voting Executive Council was present. The Executive Council voted to approve each award separately as follows:

*Plank Road Culvert Replacement*, Ulster County Dept. of Public Works, \$95,350

Burt Samuelson moved to fund as recommended by the grant review committee and AWSMP staff.

Mark Loete seconded the motion. There was no further discussion. No abstentions.

The motion passed with all Executive Council members present in favor (Chet Karwatowski, Mike Flaherty, Barry Baldigo, Burt Samuelson, Mark Loete, Amanda LaValle). None opposed.

*Mink Hollow Bridge Upsizing Construction and Inspection Services*, Town of Woodstock, \$174,800

Chet Karwatowski moved to fund as recommended by the grant review committee.

Mark Loete seconded the motion. There was no further discussion. No abstentions.

The motion passed with all Executive Council members present in favor (Chet Karwatowski, Mike Flaherty, Barry Baldigo, Burt Samuelson, Mark Loete, Amanda LaValle). None opposed.

In the Local Flood Analysis funding category:

*Bridge Street Bridge Design and Analysis*, Ulster County Dept. of Public Works, \$150,000

Mark Loete moved to fund as recommended by the grant review committee.

Barry Baldigo seconded the motion.

Discussion: It was noted the Town of Shandaken is not in favor of eliminating the bridge. The AWSMP suggested the hired consultant be asked to perform minimal analysis to identify alternative bridge sites serving Phoenicia that are geomorphically compatible with the stream. This would not take the place of a full feasibility study, but would identify potential bridge relocation sites to be included in follow-up studies.

There were no abstentions.

The motion passed with all Executive Council members present in favor (Chet Karwatowski, Mike Flaherty, Barry Baldigo, Burt Samuelson, Mark Loete). None opposed.

#### SMIP Fund Update

The current five-year SMIP fund spans the period 2019-2024. Following the vote to approve Round 1 funding above, the SMIP fund balance left to award is:

Regular Expense:	\$515,143
Regular Capital:	\$497,217
LFA Expense:	\$500,000
LFA Capital:	\$324,838 (estimated)

#### Discussion of Stream Process and Pumped Storage Plan

As a town highly affected by the proposal, the Town of Olive thanked the larger watershed community for their input. The town was informed by material circulated by Trout Unlimited, AWSMP, and other groups. Discussion covered whether a drinking water supply should be utilized as a pumped storage project in NYS. The proposal created anxiety for residents in the process of making life decisions like housing. The town expressed that many livelihoods were lost 100 years ago when the Ashokan Reservoir was built. But for that sacrifice, the town gained a pristine environment that lets people sustain their livelihoods. And that now these livelihoods need to be protected. In response to the proposal, the town found cohesion around its extraordinary watershed, waters, and forest resources. The Stakeholder Council complimented the AWSMP staff for documentation of stream process that could be used to understand any stream.

The meeting was adjourned.