
IV-N: Watershed Protection Programs

In any comprehensive watershed management plan, a wide range of non-point sources of pollutants would typically be addressed in the management plan's inventory and assessment activities and in the final recommendations. In the NYC watersheds, most of these concerns are being addressed with the implementation of a wide range of programs focused on water quality protection.



Programs focused on municipal waste water management, on-site septic systems, stormwater, agriculture runoff, and road abrasives (sand/salt) are actively working to protect water quality. These programs enjoy the benefit of having the critical professional staff and funding required to make the programs a success. The following is a brief summary of these programs and their current status in the Batavia Kill watershed.

1. WATERSHED AGRICULTURAL PROGRAM

The Watershed Agricultural Council's Watershed Agricultural Program (WAP) was the first water quality protection effort initiated in the NYC watershed specifically for farms. Originally funded by the NYCDEP at \$35 million, the program has been in place for over 10 years. When the NYCDEP proposed the first draft of the revised watershed rules and regulations in 1990, it was recognized by local agricultural resource agencies that the new regulations could take as much as 75% of the active farmland out of production. The New York State Soil & Water Conservation Committee took the lead and coordinated a task force of local, state and federal agricultur-based agencies that educated the City on the benefits of preserving farming, and set the framework for the Watershed Agricultural Program (WAP).

As a result of the task force efforts, it was recognized that with comprehensive farm planning, farm producers could implement a combination of Best Management Practices (BMPs) and improved management activities that would achieve better water quality protection than if these lands were forced from production and later sub-divided for development. Initially, the program focused on larger farms

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meeting the income requirements under NYS Agricultural Districts Law. In recent years however, the WAP has expanded to include a significant forestry program smaller farms that meet participation requirements.

Another extension of the WAP that has excellent potential to benefit the Batavia Kill stream corridor is the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP). This program is jointly funded by the US Dept. of Agriculture and NYCDEP, and it is focused on implementation of improved riparian buffers along stream corridors. The program is open to watershed agricultural land owners, and it provides rental payments for buffer lands that are taken out of production, as well as 100% funding for tree/shrub planting, stream fencing, livestock watering facilities, and other BMPs that protect the buffer system along streams.

In the Batavia Kill Watershed, the GCSWCD has been working with a number of agricultural producers since 1992. The District has implemented BMPs on several farms within the Batavia Kill Watershed since the beginning of the program. To date, these activities have primarily focused on potential pollutant sources related to pathogens and nutrients and a number of BMPs have been installed on watershed farms. Some additional recommendations for BMPs on these farms is discussed later in this document.

2. WATERSHED FORESTRY PROGRAM

In 1994, an ad-hoc task force to evaluate the status of forest lands and management in the NYC watershed area was established based on the success of the WAP. Forest lands are the largest land cover type present in the watershed. In 1996, the task force released the results of their work in the “Green Book”, which set forth a number of recommendations for management of watershed forest lands, and created the framework for the Watershed Forestry Program (WFP) under the Watershed Agricultural Council.

Since 1997, the WFP has built strong partnerships with the US Forest Service, Catskill Forest Association, SUNY-ESF and others. The WFP has also secured a significant amount of city, state and federal funds to implement programs to reduce negative water quality impacts of forestry operations. The WFP currently administers programs focused on logger training and certification, and cost sharing for the development of forest management plans. Other programs of the WFP include a cost sharing program for the purchase of 16' to 20' portable skidder bridges, a loan program to borrow a longer, 30' span portable bridge and samples of geotextiles for developing access roads under wet conditions. Other programs include

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model forests where forest management practices can be observed and studied, as well as a host of economic development efforts focused on expanding regional forestry products. The WFP also maintains a technical staff which can advise loggers on all aspects of their operations.

The GCSWCD has assisted the WFP in a number of ways. In 2000, the GCSWCD added to the portable bridge cost share program by purchasing a 20' bridge that is available on a loan basis to watershed logging operations. The District does not charge for this service.

3. WATERSHED PARTNERSHIP & PROTECTION PROGRAMS

In January 1997, the execution of the NYC Watershed Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) between city, state, federal, and non-profit organizations and local entities marked the beginning of a historic effort to implement a comprehensive watershed protection program. The MOA contained three primary focuses. The first was to include updated watershed rules and regulations. The second was the initiation of an extensive land acquisition program. The third was on developing a host of programs designed to help local communities and landowners meet water quality protection objectives.

The MOA also included significant resources to help strengthen the economic status of watershed communities and to create an administrative structure. This led to the formation of the Catskill Watershed Corporation (CWC). The CWC is the non-profit entity charged with carrying out these programs. The programs and their impact on the Batavia Kill watershed are summarized below:

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Stormwater Retrofit Program - This program provides competitive, matching grant funds to local municipalities and landowners for the implementation of stormwater management strategies that are designed to protect water quality. A wide variety of projects are eligible for funding under the program and several have been approved for the Batavia Kill watershed. In 2000, the GCSWCD secured funding under this program to initiate a Critical Area Seeding Program for roadside ditches and streambanks, and in 2001 the GCSWCD secured a grant for the Town of Windham to address a stormwater runoff problem associated with the old Mill Race in town.

Future Stormwater Program - Under this program, the CWC can provide funding for projects related to development of stormwater management practices when these practices are required as the result of stricter regulatory controls under the Watershed Rules & Regulations. The fund can provide assistance with the development of Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plans, as well as cost sharing for

BMPs that may be required to address stormwater in accordance with the watershed rules and regulations.

Sand & Salt Storage Program - This is a very successful program administered by the CWC, focused on the development of covered facilities to contain road abrasives with deicing materials (salt). In the Batavia Kill watershed, sand and salt storage facilities were constructed in the towns of Windham, Ashland and Prattsville, and at the Greene County Highway Department facility located in Ashland. While these four structures effectively addressed the storage of road abrasives, in this document the GCSWCD proposes recommendations on the quality and application of these materials.

Waste Water Treatment Programs - In the Batavia Kill Watershed, private landowners and local communities have been targeted for upgrades to their waste water treatment systems under various programs run by the Catskill Watershed Corporation or the NYS Environmental Facility Corporation (EFC). In the hamlets of Windham and Ashland, construction began in 2002 on a municipal waste water treatment plant and collection lines within a designated sewer district. With a projected capacity of over 350,000 gallons per day, this new system will eliminate the individual on-site systems in the densely developed hamlet areas which are adjacent to the Batavia Kill or its tributaries.

In the MOA, the Ashland hamlet area was also identified as a community within the NYC watershed that needed a small waste water plant or a community septic system to replace the existing on-site systems. A draft conceptual plan for a community septic system was developed by the EFC, but funding is not available in the present round of watershed financing. In addition, the CWC also administers the Septic Rehabilitation and Replacement Program which provides funds to address failing on-site septic systems on residential properties. Numerous landowners in the watershed have benefitted from this program.