

Watershed Forestry Program

General overview:

The Watershed Forestry Program is a partnership that supports well-managed working forests as a beneficial land use for water quality protection and rural economic viability. Forests cover more than 75% of the watershed land area, and a majority of this forest land is privately managed by thousands of individual landowners. As implemented by the Watershed Agricultural Council (WAC) using core funds provided by New York City DEP and matching grants from the USDA Forest Service, the Watershed Forestry Program promotes good forest stewardship practices among watershed landowners and the wood products industry through a combination of cost-sharing incentives, professional training, technical assistance, and education programs targeting upstate and downstate audiences. The underlying premise is that a healthy watershed forest provides multiple benefits – safe, clean drinking water for downstate consumers, a viable rural economy for upstate communities, and protected open space which benefits everyone.

For foresters:

WAC partners with DEP and the USDA Forest Service to conduct training workshops for consulting foresters to assist them with writing long-term forest management plans that meet Watershed Forestry Program standards. Topics typically include riparian protection, sediment control, best management practices, invasive species, and new technology.

For loggers:

WAC partners with Cornell Cooperative Extension and New York Logger Training to promote and support voluntary logger participation in the state-wide Trained Logger Certification (TLC) Program. To become fully certified, loggers must complete training in the following core topics: Chainsaw Safety (Game of Logging), Forest Ecology & Silviculture, and First Aid & CPR. A range of continuing education courses are also offered throughout the year covering logger rescue, log bucking techniques, invasive species, portable skidder bridges, and other topics.

In addition to providing voluntary training opportunities, the Watershed Forestry Program also provides incentives to loggers to encourage their implementation of forestry best management practices (BMPs) to protect water quality during watershed timber harvest operations. In particular, WAC supports the installation of forestry stream crossings, the construction of new timber harvest roads, and the remediation of existing forest roads having erosion problems. WAC owns seven short-span (20') bridges, one long-span (30') bridge, eight arch culverts, and twelve sets of rubber tire land mats that are all available for loan. WAC also provides free samples of the following BMPs: geotextile road fabric, silt fencing, traditional pipe culverts, open-topped culverts, hay bales, grass seed, rubber belt water deflectors, and biodegradable (non-petroleum) chainsaw oil.

Cornell Cooperative Extension's Agroforestry Resource Center

The Agroforestry Resource Center provides a range of resources for forestry related professionals. Through its partnership with the Watershed Agricultural Council's forestry program we coordinate the Trained Logger Certification (TLC) program. The (TLC) program was developed to provide loggers a comprehensive training that covers three areas of importance to loggers, including appropriate chainsaw use and safe tree felling techniques, forest ecology and silviculture and First Aid/CPR skills. We also offer continuing education classes that range from skill building such as log bucking and safe skidder bridge use to defoliation issues and invasive pests in the forest. Workshops are offered to introduce basic forest management concepts and utilize both independent, WAC and DEC foresters to help us to encourage landowners to access foresters in the region as they look to manage their forested property in sustainable ways.

The Siuslaw Watershed Model Forest

One of the goals of the 142 acre Siuslaw Watershed Model Forest is to raise the knowledge level of landowners, foresters and loggers regarding long-term forest management, including the importance of using Best Management Practices when harvesting timber. While still in its early phase the Siuslaw Watershed Model Forest will host many of the education activities using locally based research on the impacts of various forest management practices on water quality. It will offer an opportunity to demonstrate how the balance between a working landscape and water quality can be maintained while providing a practical means of studying and monitoring the effects of forest management on ecosystem functions and water quality. In addition the Siuslaw Watershed Model Forest currently provides the opportunity to learn about Agroforestry practices, or forest farming. Agroforestry is inclusive of sustainable woodlot management as well as the use of forest land for the production of crops such as ginseng, mushrooms, and other high-value products. Finally the Siuslaw Watershed Model Forest offers the chance to simply explore and enjoy beautiful mixed deciduous woodlands, pine plantations, meadows, ponds and streams with a panoramic view of the majestic northern Catskills in the background.