

**Schoharie Watershed Advisory Committee Meeting
Wednesday October 22, 2009, 6-8 p.m., Tannersville**

Attendance: Dennis Lucas(Hunter), Mike McCrary (Jewett), Rebecca Wilburn (Gilboa), Lynn Byrne and Dixie Baldrey (Town of Lexington), Kory O'Hara (Town of Prattsville), Steve Walker (Town of Windham), Mike Tancredi (Village of Hunter), Joe Farleigh (Roxbury), Stephanie Orlando (environmental studies student), Jeff Flack, Laura Weyeneth, Josh Gorman, and Abbe Martin (GCSWCD), Michelle Yost (GCSWCD WAP), Jennifer Greiser and David Burns (NYCDEP)

1. Future Meetings and updates

- **Next Meeting: February 24, 2010**
- Watershed Summit, January 23, 2010, Village of Hunter
- February 1, 2010 – SWAC application deadline

2. Catskill Streams Buffer Initiative (CSBI)

- Laura Weyeneth, the Greene County CSBI coordinator presented the Catskill Streams Buffer Initiative, a program available through SWCDs. The program is intended to inform and assist landowners in better stewardship of their riparian area through protection, enhancement, management, or restoration. For additional details about the CSBI, please see the handout, **The Catskill Streams Buffer Initiative for West of Hudson Watershed**, provided by Laura during the meeting. The handout provides information regarding program goals, eligibility, procedures and participation requirements, and eligible practices.
- The CSBI was initiated to provide technical and financial assistance for landowners that do not qualify for other vegetation programs (i.e. CREP).
- CSBI Application Rating Criteria (100 points)
 - Riparian Functions
 - Landowner Contribution
 - Location
 - Watershed Program Eligibility
 - Invasive Species Presence
 - Sustainability
 - Neighborhood (adjacent landowners submitting applications during same funding round)
 - Habitat Enhancement/Public Access
- The program is more appropriate for stable banks without significant active erosion.
- Interested landowners should first contact CSBI coordinators for a site visit. Following the site visit a riparian management plan may be written and an application may be submitted.
- **Questions:**
 - Can the landowner contribution be in-kind? Yes
 - What width does the buffer need to be? Buffer width will be determined by landowners. Wider buffers will receive higher application scores.
 - Do the easements run with the land? The 10-year easement is filed with the deed. The 5-year easement is not. The 10-year easement will score higher than 5-year easements.

3. Review results of SWAC meeting held 9/23/09

- There were several suggestions for improving the application review and voting process (italicized seemed to be ideas that were going to be implemented):
 - *Provide pictures/visuals of projects during the review process and during voting procedures. Have appropriate GCSWCD staff present the category they are lead on.*
 - *Provide tours of the project application sites prior to voting.*
 - *Provide site-maps and project addresses to allow for self-guided tour of the potential project sites.*
 - Concerns about partial funding:
 - Cutting back may prevent some projects from happening, if SWAC reduces the funding, applicant will need to secure funding from other sources.
 - It would be useful to determine if the budget submitted with the application is more than necessary to complete the project (this type of analysis was done for the first round of proposals in Greene County).
 - More detail in application budgets should be provided.
 - Concerns about voting:
 - SWAC members and meeting attendees were not all aware of who was going to be a voting member.
 - *All voting members should be seated at the front of the meeting place.*
 - *Name cards should be placed in front of the voting members indicating who they are and what municipality they are representing.*
 - When voting ask for nays first.
 - Voting members should meet an hour before the meeting to discuss applications and identify their concerns.
 - *Applicant should be strongly encouraged to attend the voting meeting, which would allow them to answer questions and address concerns.*
 - *Vote after each category.*
 - Does the public meeting law apply to the SWAC meetings? A public notice is provided prior to the meetings, which is in compliance with the public meetings law already.
 - *General consensus that budget changes would be made prior to voting and through communication with the applicant rather than voting for partial funding at the meeting.*
 - Meeting locations- Windham and Hunter are most central.
 - *Municipalities will be notified when an application is submitted to the SWAC for a potential project within their municipality.*
 - Using SWAC funds on DEP land:
 - Some SWAC members were not in support of using SWAC money for restoration on DEP lands.
 - This initial concern arose due to the Holden project (which was approved). The SWAC funds will be used to address the Holden property – any additional work in the project reach will be funded through DEP. The parcel of land initially thought to be owned by DEP

is in fact owned by the Town of Ashland, therefore the majority of the project is not owned by DEP, only a small downstream portion is.

- DEP will not submit applications to the SWAC for projects on their property. However, that doesn't preclude others from submitting for funding a project that may cross DEP land (e.g. a recreational trail that may cross several landowners).
- Comment from SWAC member: DEP ownership shouldn't be an issue if there is a benefit to water quality and DEP property is part of a solution to stabilization that involves other landowners' property.
- General consensus that DEP ownership will be considered individually for each situation.

4. Next Steps for Project Implementation

- Staff will administer contracts – applicants have been notified and staff are following up with the applicants that did not receive funding. GCSWCD is working on a contract that can be used with the various applicants.
- Funding will be allocated through a reimbursement program or a 2-party check will be issued for larger projects.
- If there is a cost-over run on a project, applicant will have to go back to the committee to obtain additional funding.

5. Application Rounds (October 1 and February 1)

- May consider one round of funding. Committee will see how these first two rounds go before further discussion on the topic. The fear being that project implementation may become backlogged with 2 funding rounds/year.

The **Catskill Streams Buffer Initiative** of the West of Hudson Watershed
Program Overview, Eligibility, Prioritization
SWAC Meeting 10/22/09

History / Background

- The **benefits** of a CSBI have been identified and recommended in various **Stream Management Plans**, subsequent Action Plans and by the regional **Riparian Buffer Working Group**.
- While 75% of the West of Hudson Watershed is forested, it is apparent from detailed veg. mapping that some riparian areas lack this protective cover.
- The Stream Mgmt. Plans and RBWG identified a **gap in technical and financial assistance** for landowners that are not eligible for existing partnership programs.
- For example, landowners with large, forested parcels qualify for the Watershed Agricultural Council's (WAC) **Watershed Forestry Planning Program** and most agricultural lands qualify for WAC's **Whole Farm Planning Program** and (CREP) **Conservation Reserve Enhancement Programs**.
- To date, there has been no comprehensive, programmatic effort to assist the many streamside landowners who are not eligible for one of these existing programs.
- **Now**, with the CSBI, funding is available to implement some of these recommendations to improve streambank stability, ecosystem integrity and water quality by providing technical and financial assistance for streamside landowners.

Catskill Streams Buffer Initiative Goal

- To inform and assist landowners in better stewardship of their **riparian area** through protection, enhancement, management or restoration, by providing:
 - Riparian Corridor Management Plans to create awareness about riparian mgmt issues specific to individual properties
 - Best Management Practice design and installation to encourage positive riparian stewardship
 - Educational materials and activities as needed by landowners to understand the critical role of their buffer and how to maintain it in optimal functioning condition

Benefits of Riparian Buffers

- **Provide food, cover, and travel corridors for a variety of wildlife**
- **Shade streams for cold water fish and invertebrates**
- **Reduce bank erosion**
- **Slow high water during flood stages**
- **Protect water quality by reducing the amount of sediment, excess nutrients, pesticides and pollutants entering the stream**

Eligibility

- Any watershed landowner with property within the mapped buffer area can receive technical assistance and a RCMP.
- Each Town must adopt completed Stream Management Plans where applicable. **All Greene county towns within the Schoharie Basin and the Batavia Kill, East Kill, and West Kill watersheds have adopted the relevant SMPs.**
- Some portion of the landowner's property must fall within the riparian area.

Process

1. Landowner checks **eligibility**
2. If property is eligible, Coordinator conducts **site visit** & develops RCMP with landowner (Laura Weyeneth is the Coordinator for Greene Co. Pete Nichols is the coordinator for Schoharie Co.)
3. Landowner completes **application** for funding of recommendation(s)
4. If application is successful, Coordinator will work with landowner to **implement** approved practice
5. Practice **inspection** for design conformity
6. Practice **monitoring** and maintenance
7. **Once the practice is installed, GCSWCD will inspect, monitor, and maintain as needed.**

Eligible Practices

Planting and maintaining a healthy buffer of trees and shrubs along the streambanks and floodplains is one of the most cost effective and self-sustaining methods for landowners to protect streamside property.

- **Tree and/or shrub planting**
- **Herbaceous plug planting**
- **Native seed establishment**
- **Rip-rap joint planting**
- **Stream bank grading**
- **Root wad placement**
- **Live fascine placement**
- **Live stakes/post placement**
- **Brush layering**
- **Invasive species removal**

Example: Fascines are a group of live, dormant willow or shrub dogwood branches bound together to create a log-like structure that will root, grow and provide plant cover quickly. Used to revegetate, stabilize slopes and break-up slope length, Fascine Bundles create small terraces that encourage native plant seed collection and growth.

Application Rating Criteria - were developed to assist in prioritizing the funding of projects to be implemented under the Catskill Streams Buffer Initiative. The maximum score is 100 points.

1. **Riparian functions to be addressed** - Projects will earn (a maximum of 20 points) if they address bank stability and (at least three of following) Improve water quality, Create shade, Provide detritus & large woody debris source,

- Reduce excess nutrients & pesticides, Increase carbon storage, Provide aquatic & terrestrial habitat, shelter & food, and/or restore riparian plant communities.
2. **Applicant contribution** – (A maximum of 20 points) For an applicant willing to sign a 10-year temporary easement or greater, Contribute at least 10% of total project budget, Assist with practice installation, monitoring or maintenance, Attend training relevant to CSBI
 3. **Location** - (A maximum of 20 points) For a Parcel adjacent to existing wetland or forested riparian or upland areas or another CSBI project and adjacent to a stream.
 4. **Watershed program eligibility** - (A maximum of 15 points) for applicants that are Not eligible for any other watershed programs & new to SAP, Eligible for other watershed program, but need a practice NOT addressed elsewhere
 5. **Presence of invasive species** - A maximum of 15 Points will be awarded if up to 50% of the project area is covered by invasive species and eradication is likely within 5 years.
 6. **Project sustainability** - Projects will score (5) points if they can be sustained after the granting period or include long-term maintenance, operation and/or stewardship provisions.
 7. **“Neighborhood” application** - Any application that is submitted with 2 or more proposals from adjacent parcels will score (10) bonus points!
 8. **Other considerations** – 5 points for any other possible considerations such as habitat enhancements or public access

What makes a project ineligible?

- No town adoption of SMPs
- No RCMP or practices not included in Plan
- Will not sign 5-yr license agreement or has previously violated terms
- Parcel is outside eligible area
- Applicant delinquent in other watershed programs
- Parcels impacted by infrastructure
- Practice could be installed in timelier manner through another program
- Practice unsustainable ex: invasives cover >50% of parcel and unlikely to be eradicated within 5 years
- Applicant has reached lifetime assistance cap (\$150,000)
- Application received 50 points or less

In Summary, the CSBI is a long-term watershed protection program acknowledging that :

- **Watershed residents play a critical role as stewards of wildlife habitat & water quality**
- **With technical assistance and training, landowners will be able to take effective stream protection actions for their own property**

Funding is now available to implement BMPs, control IS, and plant appropriate species when necessary to stabilize stream banks!