

Habitat and Recreation Subcommittee Meeting

July 15, 2010, Schoharie Watershed Program Office

Present: Walt Keller, Judd Weisberg, Anne Earnst, Joel DuBois, Jeff Flack, Josh Gorman, Robyn Worcester, Dave Burns, Michelle Yost

Update on approved habitat and rec grants

1. *Thermal Refuge Study* – working through contract terms with RIT risk management unit, tentatively scheduled for fall flyover, needs to do be done before ice forms on water, avoid snow cover, shooting for sometime around late October/early November. If GCSWCD cannot work through the contract glitches, USGS can contract with RIT, but that will add ~ \$10,000 to cost for administrative costs. USGS needs 6 weeks lead time to install loggers. The flyover can occur anytime within the year of placement of the loggers. Loggers would remain in for 1 – 1.25 years.
 - Dan Z. emphasized not doing the flyover when the stream temperature and spring water temps. are the same. RIT and USGS will use temperature data from stations to determine when the best time to do the flyover is.
2. *Prattsburg Stream Access* – Jeff reported access limitations with the DEP property across from the barrier on State Rte. 23 are more costly and involved than originally thought. DOT specifications for ingress/egress would require much grading and moving a utility pole. Kory O., Supervisor, is supposed to contact an adjacent landowner to the DEP land to see if there's interest in a shared agreement. The DEP has a right of way on the landowner's driveway and could legally use that right to access the new parking lot but that would likely result in animosity from the landowner.
3. *Windham Path* – trail committee walked property with District staff, laid out the trail, Army Corp Of Engineers (ACOE) permits have been submitted, scheduled to begin work in the fall. There will be ~ 1,200 – 1,500 feet of stream access, which will be assessed for stocking potential.
 - Dan Z. shared there will be a statewide creel census underway starting in 2011 through Cornell University. There will be one to two for Region 4 and Dan will push for the Schoharie Creek to be one.

Possible proposals and recommendations from stream management plans

1. Organize repository/reference study similar to what Walt did for the Esopus basin. RFP or intern project to gather reports and conduct interviews?
 - The group endorsed this project using an Americorp Student Conservation Association (SCA) intern to do the legwork gathering and organizing information which will then be assessed and analyzed by Walt. The more clarity and accessibility of research and data conducted the better. The February 2011 SCA round will be targeted to get the project started with gathering information, the SCA intern would be based out of the Tannersville program office. A SMIP proposal will be submitted during the August 2011 round on behalf of the committee for the analysis and assessment part.
2. Lexington Pocket Park – it is anticipated an application for recreation/public use of streams will be submitted by the Town of Lexington for the pocket park on CR 13A. Once the parcel is improved to look like a park follow up projects can entail educational programming on water quality and macro-invertebrate testing to use with kids. Judd W. commented the park could be an ideal focal point for Lexington and he would like to see youth and adult programming involving science and the arts evolve over the years (at one time Lexington had a successful youth program in early 90's). Whatever park structures are

put in they would have to withstand flooding.

3. Dam removal on Batavia Kill behind Thompson House – Joel D. reviewed this reach of the Batavia Kill (BK) is recommended in the Stream Management Plan for full restoration. The dam, which dates back many years and was constructed by the owner's father, is 6 – 8 feet high and if removed would eliminate this fish passage obstacle. A feasibility study would be needed to determine other effects, such as sediment transport. Other options other than the full dam removal exist as well and would need to be researched, such as removing a portion of the dam, or installing a hardened cascade, though habitat benefits diminish. Dam removals require a number of agencies and permits and are very costly, however, this project has potential to bring in other organizations and funding partners to accomplish multiple objectives. The SMIP funds could be used as a cost share toward the feasibility study while applying for a US National Fish and Wildlife Service grant. Before an application is submitted a scope of work was suggested outlining what would be involved with the full project including agency and potential partners and approximate costs. Joel agreed to work on the scope over the winter and the group can then decide whether applying for a February 2011 grant is worthwhile. The scope would be presented to other organizations to see if they're interested in participating.
4. Culvert design workshop – Josh G. shared he's working on a preliminary education proposal that would involve working with highway departments on fish passage and appropriately sized and placed culverts. Organizing a workshop, printed material and possibly creating a retainer fund for towns to hire an engineer to assist with a few culvert designs are some of the ideas being looked at.
5. Developing a stream crossing brochure under SWAC to use with highway departments was discussed at the last meeting. This would not require funding, it can be done in-house using available resources like the pamphlet Pete Nichols send last year.
 - Walt shared concerns with wild parsnip growing in many places including ditches and that more information should be conveyed to highway departments on the threat of invasives.

Future project focus for subcommittee

Walt suggested looking at water quality opportunities from a groundwater perspective, mapping known and probable groundwater inputs on a basin scale using a soils and topographic index tool (DEM). Developing such a tool could be used in many ways to educate the public and private sectors on the importance of groundwater to fisheries, and recharging streams and aquifers. Many data are available for interpretation (DEM, soils, Lidar) so compiling and interpreting would not require starting from scratch. This could be graduate level work or an RFP. The objective would be to predict likely groundwater sources by mapping conditions that create groundwater inputs, coupling that with the flyer data from RIT/USGS that could be ground truthed. A well laid out model/tool that can be verified would be recognized at the local and state level.

The information could benefit fisheries policies, siting infrastructure (roads, culverts) and potential water quality threats from activities such as hydro-fracking. Dave shared the DEP may be conducting thermal mapping across the entire basin which would be a significant contribution toward the mapping tool.

Reminder – SWAC deadline for grants is August 2, 2010. Depending on what habitat and recreation grants come in will determine if this group meets or conducts reviews through email.