

Schoharie Watershed Advisory Committee
June 25, 2008, 6:00 p.m. Meeting
Jewett Town Hall



SWAC members:

Walt Keller (Retired Fisheries Biologist)
Linda Kline (Tannersville representative)
Janet Orlando (Gilboa representative)
Rebecca Wilburn (Gilboa representative)
Steve Walker (Windham representative)
Paul Dibbell (Town/Hunter representative)
Larry Gardner (Greene County Legislator)

John Valenti (Retired Teacher)
Kory O'Hara (Prattsville representative)
Erik Allan (Highway Superintendent Rep.)
Dixie Baldrey (Lexington representative)
Eric Dahlberg (Conesville representative)
Mike McCrary (Jewett representative)

Agency Advisors & project facilitators*:

Dan Zielinski (Aquatic Biologist, NYSDEC)
David Burns (NYCDEP)*
Abbe Martin (GCSWCD)*
Jeff Flack (GCSWCD)*
Kristen Janke (Delaware County Planning Department)

Steven Matheke & Vince DuBois (Columbia-Greene Chapter of Trout Unlimited)
Michelle Yost (GCSWCD-Watershed Assistance Program)*

1. A brief overview of the Stream Management Program (SMP) and creation of the SWAC was provided by Dave Burns for those who could not make the first meeting in May. The SWAC was formed to assist with the SMP Implementation Program by providing input and making decisions on funding projects consistent with stream management plan recommendations. The make-up of the Committee is designed to represent the diversity of potential projects, as well as promote local officials' involvement in the decision-making process.
2. **How to make funding decisions.** The group discussed ways of ranking potential projects and what should be considered in the application process.
 - **Ranking:** Suggestions & recommendations for establishing a ranking or scoring system for proposed projects:
 - Use a pre-existing scoring system (project facilitators to research)
 - Weigh by categories and impacts
 - Allocate higher rating if project benefits more than one category
 - **Application Process:**
 - Deadlines: Rolling or annual cycle?
 - One drawback to rolling cycle is that commitments are made to previous projects that may have a lower score/rank than newly introduced applications. If a pattern emerges over time that certain projects shouldn't be approved, the committee could adjust the criteria at that time.
 - Easier to make decisions on an annual cycle.
 - Most seemed to agree that an annual or twice yearly cycle was preferable to a rolling cycle.
 - Annual/Bi-annual Application Cycle:
 - Establish two application deadlines/year with a 3 month (or more) review period. Tentative deadlines – April 1 and November 1.
 - Allows for clarification of questions & for reviewers to seek additional information from applicants to fully understand the project proposal.
 - Allows for voting members to consult with technical advisory members, as needed.
 - As needed, application deadlines should be made around categories, such as construction-related projects though these should be planned at least one year in advance (April 1st)

- Education and Outreach applications may be submitted for the second deadline (Nov. 1st) or if summer activity by April 1.
- Annual action plans should incorporate projects/program elements – always planning a year or two in advance.
- o In situations where projects are identified for private property owners, such as by subcommittee members, consider having municipality submit applications as a “sponsor” or partner (municipalities can also provide letters of support for landowner applications).
- o Application procedures: It is estimated there will be an approx. 3 month review period starting with Application → Review & Analysis → Decision
 - Project applications submitted to Watershed Assistance Program office → GCSWCD and DEP staff do initial review to ensure within scope of SMP Implementation Program → packet goes to relevant subcommittee for review and rating (e.g., highway superintendents for infrastructure needs, Education & Outreach for workshops, material, school programming) or if originated with subcommittee goes to SWAC for review → goes to technical and agency advisors with questionable projects → SWAC votes on proposal at meeting
 - On the application - add shared funding or in-kind contributions options. These should provide extra points to applications.
- o Application Project Categories:
 - Applicant can check more than one category if project has multiple benefits or rank the relevance or impact to each category
 - Initial staff review can assist with identifying primary categorization of project when project covers more than one area.
 - Need to define Community & Landowner Assistance further and/or consider separating.
 - Certain assistance is already provided by agencies (DEP, GCSWCD)
 - This category should be more prevention-based, i.e., approaching property owners with ideas, and funding, for habitat improvements, erosion controls, etc.
 - A cap should be considered on erosion projects such as streambank stabilization

3. Subcommittees – three subcommittees are proposed to help with project identification and application reviews and scoring specific to the following areas.

a. Recreation and Habitat

- o Combine for subcommittee reviews and project identification, but keep separate on application as some projects may be distinct.
- o Sample project ideas for consideration – creating micro-habitats along streams (specific type of plantings), enhanced stream access points, broad-scale tree plantings to create needed shade for priority spots (e.g., Schoharie Creek).
- o A project currently in the works on the Schoharie touches on multiple categories (access, plantings, habitat) and will be highlighted at the next meeting as an example.
- o Encouraging landowner involvement will be important as some locations will be on private property.
- o Trout Unlimited is primarily a conservation group – primary goal is protecting, improving and maintaining habitat, such as maintaining healthy riparian buffers. Fishing access is a secondary issue.
- o Question whether DEC will be funding access points through this group and how this program fits with state and other land use plans
 - i. Funding new DEC-access points will not be handled through this fund, however, integrating practices & ideas identified through this program with state and other agency plans is one objective of the program, therefore communicating with DEC and DEP will be important as project ideas are identified.

- Initial members for the Recreation and Habitat Committee: Walt Keller, Dan Zielinski, Columbia-Greene TU Representatives (Vince D., Steve M.), Peter Nichols (Schoharie County SWCD), Lynn Byrne (Lexington Councilwoman)
- b. Education and Outreach
 - Retired and active educators will be targeted to serve on this committee to provide ideas for watershed protection projects/workshops that are education-based.
 - Interested SWAC members (Janet Orlando, Rebecca Wilburn, John Valenti) and agencies involved in outreach and education will be invited to serve (Diane Galusha, CWC, the Catskill Center for Conservation & Development, Greene Co. CCE)
 - Sample project ideas – workshops using the River Model table (have been well received), fishing derbies, more stream celebrations (West Kill, Schoharie).
 - Investigate possibility to supplement funding or team up with other existing programs, e.g., CWC's education grants
- c. Highway Superintendents (infrastructure-related projects)
 - This group met a number of times and has begun to identify recommendations dealing with road maintenance and water quality projects, such as dedicated funding for using hydroseeder and better road abrasive material (less harmful to water quality), modernizing departments infrastructure tracking and inventory (computer software and training), and funding for larger culverts when local budget cannot support them.
 - Technical assistance and working through permit requirements is also a need for this group.
- Voting on proposed projects
 - The question was raised whether subcommittee members also serving on the SWAC should be able to vote on projects that originate with them and the overall sense was these members were asked to serve because of their knowledge in a particular area. Moreover, given the technical expertise and resources others will bring to the decision-making process, this does not appear to be a concern, however, the SWAC can always reassess this in the future if they deem that necessary.

Next meeting will be Wednesday, **October 22, 2008, 6 pm** (location to be determined). Note: there will be no meeting in August due to end of summer and back to school activities. We will need an RSVP again for the October meeting to plan for dinner.