

# Schoharie Watershed Month 2014 - Final Report

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Completing its fifth year, Schoharie Watershed Month was again a great success, attracting more than 305 mountaintop residents and students and visitors from the tri-county region. Schoharie Watershed Month (SWM) offers a variety of free public activities and events focused on watershed protection and appreciation throughout the month of May. The SWM Steering Committee met in early March and outlined a series of events that included a mix of history and culture, education, outdoor recreation, as well as a focus on the Schoharie Reservoir.

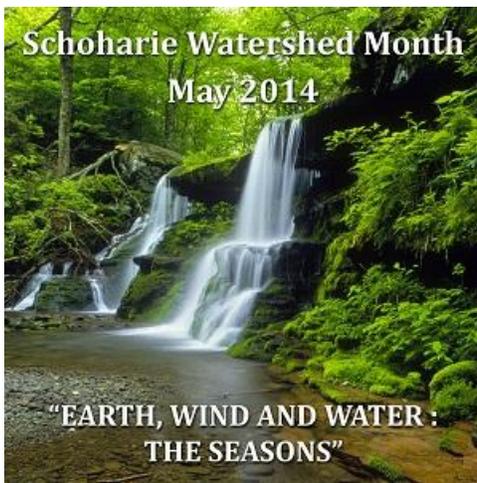
The Greene County Soil & Water Conservation District again spearheaded the month's activities, facilitated through its Watershed Assistance Program and working closely with several area partners and organizations. These included the three watershed school districts, Catskill Watershed Corporation, the NYC Department of Environmental Protection, Cornell Cooperative Extension of Columbia-Greene Counties, Catskill Center for Conservation and Development, Mrs. Puddle Duck's Day Care, Arm-of-the-Sea Theater, Prattsville Community Church, Prattsville Fire Department, NYS Department of Environmental Conservation, Catskill Streams Buffer Initiative, Catskill Mountain Foundation, Community of Windham Foundation, Hunter Foundation, Windham Area Recreation Foundation, Gilboa Museum and the Gilboa Historical Society, First Student Bus Rentals, Catskill Outback, Bob Janiszewski, and Gerry Stoner. Collectively, the partners created nine events (executed eight) that celebrated the region's beauty and natural resources, while raising awareness of the NYC Watershed and its protection.

## Individual Activities, Events, and Highlights

### **Opening Reception, "Earth, Wind, and Water: The Seasons" - Saturday, May 3, Kaaterskill Fine Arts Gallery, Hunter**

This month-long Student-Amateur Art Exhibition, in its third consecutive year of SWM, featured over 70 pieces of art from the three school districts in the Schoharie Basin – Hunter-Tannersville, Windham-Ashland-Jewett, and Gilboa-Conesville. Organized by photographer Bob Janiszewski of Tannersville and sponsored by the Kaaterskill Fine Arts Gallery (Catskill Mtn. Foundation), this partnership project with the local school districts, reflects the watershed's beauty as captured through the eyes and art of the region's youth. More than 50 people attended the opening, including ten student exhibitors. Refreshments, presentations and individual student photographs by famed photographer, Francis X. Driscoll rounded out the reception. The Catskill Mountain Foundation donated approximately 12 gifts for a raffle drawing including books about the region (history, hiking trails, kayak touring, art, photography), puzzle sets and a selection of postcards from the bookstore. These were in addition to the "Grand Prize" of the donated work of Francis X. Driscoll. Every student exhibitor present at the reception who entered the drawing "won" a prize and everybody in attendance was treated to a postcard or two.

*Student artwork at the Kaatskill Fine Arts Gallery*



**"Japanese Knotweed Not in my Backyard!" Invasive Species Workshop for Large and Small Landowners - Saturday, May 10 Devasago Park, Prattsville**

Led by Dan Snider, Biological Controls Assistant with the Catskill Region Invasive Species Partnership (CRISP) (and the Catskill Center for Conservation & Development) this workshop focused on terrestrial invasives, particularly those impacting private land owners. Snider reviewed practical applications to control Japanese Knotweed and methods of early detection of the Emerald Ash Borer for the dozen or so in attendance. Along the banks of the Schoharie Creek, ash and knotweed specimens were used to illustrate a series of lessons. Snider passed out a number of graphics and ash-trunk samples to further assist attendees. Attendees asked numerous questions, were appreciative of the answers, and were given resources for CRISP and other publicly funded control programs.

*Dan Snider and workshop attendees in Devasago Park*



***The City that Drinks the Mountain Sky - May 10, Prattsville***

This play performance by Arm-of-the-Sea Theater brings the story of the New York City Watershed to life, beginning in prehistoric times and running through to the present. It includes playful and artful dialogue on the interaction between the partners who protect this sprawling and unique resource. Set on the Prattsville Town Green, about 25 people of all ages gathered for the creative performance which includes music, dance, brightly colored stage sets, and innovative props. Several other passersby watched the performance from the sidewalk on Main Street and across the street at local businesses. The event was supported by the Catskill Watershed Corporation.

***One of many captivating moments of the performance in Prattsville***





### **Rain Gardens for Clean Water! - May 10, Mountain Top Library, Tannersville**

This educational workshop on rain gardens for the homeowner was to be followed by a tour of the Mountain Top Library and Learning Center to examine innovative green infrastructure techniques including porous pavement, rooftop rain harvesting, rain gardens, and stormwater landscaping. Unfortunately, registration was not strong enough to warrant conducting the event. The partners who organized and were to speak at this workshop (Greene Co. SWCD and Greene Co. Cornell Cooperative Ext.) believe the content and field component of this event are an excellent match for SWM, and they will continue to explore ways to get this information to the public. It was reported that a few people showed up at the Library, although they did not register beforehand.

### **Guided Tour of the Gilboa Dam - May 16**

Registration for this special opportunity to have a guided tour of the Gilboa Dam and learn about the full-scale dam rehabilitation project quickly filled to its capacity of 22. Hosted by the NYC Department of Environmental Protection, participants got an up-close look at the works and were treated to detailed presentations on the particulars of the current construction project. This was the first of four events this month that focused on the Schoharie Reservoir.



**Water Workshop with Mrs. Puddle Duck’s Child Care - May 21, Tannersville**

Attended by more than 50 schoolchildren, parents, and teachers, this workshop was designed by Catskill Center staff and featured four learning stations for the children. Using numerous props, including fly nymphs gathered from Sawmill Creek, the pre-schoolers learned the characteristics of healthy (and unhealthy) streams and had great fun. Table themes included sight, sound, and feel, enabling the children to connect with stream resources through participatory exercises. The youngsters wore cards and were awarded stars upon visiting each station and listening to the lessons. A grab bag of water-themed prizes were given out to each child. Snacks were donated by the Hunter Foundation and Mrs. Puddle Duck’s Child Care. In addition to the Catskill Center, staff from Greene Co. SWCD and Genius Loci Planning conducted activities at the tables and assisted with the overall event.

*Preschoolers at Mrs. Puddle Duck's along Sawmill Creek*



### **Windham Day on the Batavia Kill - May 24, Windham**

A central event of this day was the T. Patrick Meehan Memorial Walk, Run, Ride, which is a fundraiser sponsored by the Community of Windham Foundation to benefit the Windham-Ashland-Jewett Central School's Scholarship Fund. The fund distributes awards to students in honor of the late T. Patrick Meehan, who was instrumental in the negotiations for and implementation of the NYC-Upstate Watershed Memorandum of Agreement. Windham Day also included the one-year celebration of the opening of the Windham Path, site of the memorial walk, run, ride. Designs for the path have it ultimately connecting the hamlets of Hensonville and Maplecrest. The day's partners also included Laura Weyeneth (Catskill Streams Buffer Initiative), who led a plant identification walk; Erin Brady (NYSDEC) who shared information on aquatic invasives; and Dan Snider (Catskill Center) who shared information on programs of the CCCD. Despite the rainy weather, participation was respectable, and ways to boost the event for next year are already being explored.

#### ***Windham Day Partners***



### **Guided Bus Tour of the Schoharie Reservoir - May 31**

Beginning and ending in Prattsville, this well-attended tour circumnavigated the reservoir and was narrated by area historians Gerry Stoner and Diane Galusha. Forty-five people enjoyed the informative journey, which made stops at the Gilboa Museum and Snyder's Cove. Facilitating the enjoyment was the highly illustrated tour booklet produced by Stoner (a former publisher), who managed to cover countless facets of local history. Galusha, author of *Liquid Assets: The History of New York City's Water System*, spoke about several watershed-wide topics, including the success of the reservoir recreational boating program, a program her employer, the Catskill Watershed Corporation, has been directly involved with. Feedback on the event was extremely positive, with comments calling for more frequency of tours, perhaps in April or early May when the leaves obscure many views of the reservoir.

*Bus tour participant welcome and at Snyder's Cove*



**The Gilboa Ancient Forest - May 31, Gilboa Museum and Historical Society**

This lively event, which was combined with the bus tour's stop at the museum, featured Kristen Wyckoff giving a presentation and tour about the oldest known fossilized trees in the world. More than 50 fossilized tree stumps were un-earthed during the construction of the Gilboa Dam, and many of these are preserved at the museum. Recent discoveries have shed more light on the origins and composition of this forest. The museum also includes a gift with books and videos on local history, as well as several locally made products. The fossil tour was very well received by the guests, and there remains ample opportunity to include the museum in this and other watershed related events.

*Tour goes gather around fossils*



### **Paddle the Schoharie Reservoir - May 31, Snyder's Cove**

The month's final event was focused on the reservoir and designed to increase participation in the early SWM events. At each of the previous events, excepting the two on May 31, participants had the opportunity to enter a drawing to win two limited spots for this paddle trip. With 16 winners set to paddle, Catskill Outback Adventures ready to lead, and Gerry Stoner to give an interpretive introduction, the uncharacteristic and stiff easterly winds convinced us that the event needed to be postponed. A new date is being researched and the winners will be notified. If the date is in June, paddlers are eligible to receive a new patch that is being offered by the Catskill Watershed Corporation and the Watershed Post to promote the reservoir boating program. Diane Galusha was on hand to distribute the patches before the trip was canceled, shoreside.

### ***Paddlers at Snyder's Cove***



## **Promotional and Organizational Assistance**

This year, Greene Co. Soil & Water contracted for assistance in organizing and promoting SWM. (In past years, the district benefitted from staff assistance in the Tannersville office.) Peter Manning (Genius Loci Planning) assisted Michelle Yost (GCSWCD) in the many tasks to make SWM successful. These included the development of fliers for each event, which were posted on catskillstreams.org; design of a rack card; advertising and promotion on WRIP and WIOX and in the Mountain Eagle, Windham Journal, Delaware County Times, and Watershed Post. Other organizations, such as the Catskill Watershed Corporation, assisted in electronic promotion.

## **Conclusion**

In contrast to GCSWCD's other Watershed related events, such as the one-day Batavia Kill Stream Fest, Watershed Month is a grouping of several events under one banner throughout the whole month. While this has the benefit of collective promotion of diverse events under the themes of watershed awareness and protection, it carries at least a partial dependency on other organizations and individuals to act independently in planning for and carrying out the events. Fortunately, for the most part, the self sufficiency of these partners has been strong. And in some cases, like the art exhibition, the activities are largely driven by a motivated and well-organized volunteer or organization. Organizing and implementing Watershed Month requires that a balance be struck between already "packaged" events and those that require more planning, which is often carried out by GCSWCD.

Schoharie Watershed Month has a proven track record of success; yet it also holds great potential to become even more successful. Considering that only one planning meeting was held this year, and only two months in advance of May, the attendance at and the diversity of events was impressive. More advance planning for SWM will accomplish several objectives. It will help reveal which events are more organized, which events need more assistance and what type of assistance, and it will allow ideas to be cultivated and mature over the course of months, instead of weeks. For example, several organizations conduct many activities that are compatible with SWM, and if they had more advance notice, this would allow for a more structured and self-sufficient event. Organizations would like their programs to be part of SWM, especially when they are given ample time to prepare, advertise, and execute these events in ways that have positive and reinforcing effects.

As in the past, this year's SWM saw some experimentation, which opened new channels for future programming. The totality of events in all years could be assessed for their pros and cons and their ability to change and grow. Also of consideration is assembling a steering committee at a much early stage. SWM is a platform for creativity because it unites the efforts of multiple partners within common themes throughout a defined region. After five successful years, SWM is poised to be even stronger. And, along with other activities of the Watershed Assistance Program, it can serve as a model for other basins in the Catskill/ Delaware Watershed.

### SWM 2014 Participant Totals

Activity	Partner Organizations	Date	# of participants	Notes
Student Art Exhibit	CMF, three basin school districts, Bob J. (organizer), Windham Arts Alliance	5/3/14	50	Great turnout!
Japanese Knotweed Not In my Backyard/Invasive Species Workshop	CRISP, Catskill Center for Conservation & Development	5/10/14	11	
City that Drinks the Mountain Sky, theater performance	CWC, Prattsville Fire Dept.	5/10/14	50	People watched from a distance
Rain Gardens for Clean Water	C-G CCE, GCSWCD	5/10/14		Cancelled, low registration
Gilboa Dam Tour	NYCDEP	5/16/14	29	
Mrs. Puddle Ducks Water Workshop	Mrs. Puddle Ducks, Hunter-Tannersville Elementary Pre-K class	5/21/14	50	Great day!
Windham Day on the Batavia Kill	Windham Area Recreation Foundation, Community of Windham Foundation, CCCD, NYSDEC, CSBI	5/24/14	50	Overcast, light drizzle
Schoharie Reservoir Guided Tour	CWC, Gilboa Historical Society,	5/30/14	50	Suggestion – hold earlier next yr. before foliage is out
Free Paddle Trip on Schoharie Reservoir		5/30/14	17 including guide signed up	Cancelled, too windy, trying to reschedule
<b>Total Participants</b>			<b>307</b>	

<b>Schoharie Watershed Month Budget</b>		
<b>Item</b>	<b>Cost</b>	<b>Vendor</b>
Rack cards	95	Catskill Mountain Printing Services
Porto O let	100	Dan's Septic
Radio advertisements		WRIP (haven't received invoice, ~\$210)
Ad on website	150	Watershed Post
Newspaper Ad	190	Register Star/Hudson-Catskill newspaper
Materials & refreshments for student opening reception	359.38	Bob J.
Tables and chairs for Windham Day		Waiting on invoice from COWF
40 booklets for bus tour	55.84	The Village Printer
Bus rental	477	First Student
Kayak rentals	650	Outback Adventure/need to reschedule (\$200 added to rescheduled date, due to gas and employee payroll)
<b>Total</b>	<b>2077.22</b>	