

2.1 Regional Setting

The Upper Schoharie Creek watershed is located in the southeastern region of NY State (Fig 2.1.1). Approximately 80% of the 93 mi² main stem watershed lies within the towns of Hunter, Jewett, Lexington, and Prattsville. The remainder of the watershed lies within Gilboa and Roxbury, with small pieces in Ashland and Conesville. The entire watershed basin is 316 mi² and receives waters from other creeks such as the Batavia Kill, West Kill and East Kill. The entire watershed basin also includes Windham and small parts of Jefferson, Stamford, and Halcott (Fig 2.1.2). Approximately 75% of the Schoharie Creek watershed is located within the Catskill Park.



Figure 2.1.1 Schoharie Creek watershed counties

In 1885, the Catskill and Adirondack Forest Preserves were established by the NY State Assembly. An 1894 amendment to the New York State Constitution (now Article 14) directs “the lands of the State now owned or hereafter acquired, constituting the forest preserve as now fixed by law, shall be forever kept as wild forest lands. They shall not be leased, sold or exchanged, or be taken by any corporation, public or private, nor shall the timber thereon be sold, removed or destroyed” (NYS DEC, 2006).

In 1904, the Catskill Park was designated, establishing a boundary or ‘blue line’ around the Forest Preserve and private land as well. Over the years the Catskill Park grew, and now comprises roughly 700,000 acres, about half of which is public Forest Preserve. The Catskill and Adirondack Parks are nationally unique because they are a checkerboard of public and private land; a grand experiment in how nature and human society can



State Land historical marker

coexist in a landscape (Catskill Center₁, 2006).

The Schoharie Creek meets up with route 23A in the town of Hunter and roughly follows the road northwest. This is the major highway for this part of the region, connecting the Hudson Valley region of Catskill with the western part of New York State. Tourists get off the New York State Thruway in Leeds and use route 23A to reach this part of the Catskill Park, namely the Hunter Ski region.

A dominant characteristic of the Schoharie Creek watershed's regional setting is its location within the 2,000 square-mile New York City Watershed. The NYC Watershed is the largest unfiltered water supply in the U.S., providing 1.4 billion gallons of clean drinking water each day to over nine million residents in New York City and some smaller municipalities (nearly half the population of New York State) (Catskill Center₂, 2006).

The Schoharie Creek is dammed by the Gilboa Dam, creating the Schoharie Reservoir just outside the Catskill Park. The reservoir covers 1.9 mi², is 140' deep, and receives 80% of its water from the Schoharie Creek. The other 20% comes from local direct drainage basins. At the reservoir part of the water is transfer through the Shandaken portal to the Esopus Creek and

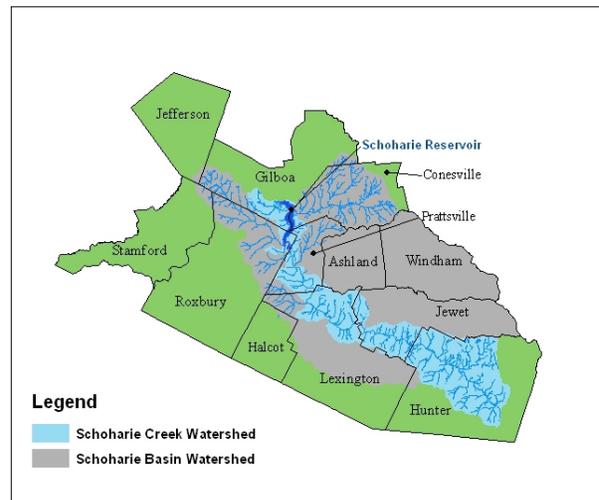


Figure 2.1.2 Schoharie Creek watershed towns

Ashokan Reservoir. The Ashokan provides approximately 10% of NYC's drinking water. The NYC Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) operates this drinking water supply under a Filtration Avoidance Determination (FAD) issued by the Environmental Protection Agency and the New York State Department of Health. Central to the maintenance of the FAD are a series of partnership programs between NYC and the upstate communities, as well as a set of rules and regulations written to protect water quality.

References

Catskill Center₁, 2006. About the Catskill Region. Available on web: www.catskillcenter.org/region.html
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