



Schoharie Watershed Advisory Committee Meeting

December 4, 2013

Windham Town Hall

Attendance: Rebecca Wilburn and Val Reidman (Gilboa); Joe Farleigh (Roxbury); Michael McCrary (Jewett); Erik Allen (Highway Superintendent); Beverly Dezan (Lexington); Zachary Thompson (Schoharie County Planning); Jim Lawrence (Ashland); Eric Dahlberg (Conesville); Karen O'Leary (Conesville); Ron Urban – President, NY Chapter Trout Unlimited; Jeff Flack, Michelle Yost (GCSWCD); Dave Burns (DEP).

The meeting started with a holiday dinner to thank Advisory members for their service and time during the past year. Thank you!!

Chairwoman Wilburn brought the meeting to order at 7PM.

1. End of year SMIP update presentation

- a. Jeff F. gave an overview of the Stream Management Implementation Program to date, projects completed this year, status of program categories and remaining program balance.
 - i. *County Route 6 Slope Failure* – the stream restoration component is done at a cost of \$2.5 million. Stormwater components still need to be completed (~\$280,000). A home was purchased and demolished for the project. The total cost for this project was over \$3million. NRCS covered 75% of the stream portion and DEP the other 25%. From the 25% (~\$636,280), the SMIP covered \$225,000.
 - ii. *Lower West Kill* – project complete total ~1.1 million. Local cost share for town's portion of hazard mitigation grant covered by DEP was – \$\$363,330, with SMIP covering 200,000.
 1. Beverly D. inquired about work below Pushman's bridge near the bank failure on the east side of the West Kill. If funds are available that would be Phase 2 of the Lower West Kill project completed last month. A survey was done downstream to the next state bridge. Options would undergo a Cost Benefit Analysis (CBA) to determine if the benefit of restoration would outweigh the costs of what the project is intended to protect.
 - iii. *Cost Benefit Ratio (CBR)* – one goal for project funding involves the benefits vs. the costs of what is proposed. If the CBR is 1:1 or higher (benefit is equal or more than the cost) projects receive favorable rating. Mike M. pointed out it is not always easy to rate projects and that costs need to be factored in wherever possible. Funding sources are tightening up on what gets approved. Analyzing costs against benefits comes into play with hazard mitigation and stream or capital projects, not so much education or planning requests.
 - iv. *Landowner Stream Assistance project* – seven projects received funding depleting this category of the program. Two highlighted tonight were Holden on the Batavia Kill (Ashland) and Apple Hill (Kirk/Rotella and Nikoliadis) on the East Kill (Jewett). Federal assistance was integral to leveraging funding on many of the projects, notably Apple Hill, Lower West Kill, and County Route 6. Partnerships with agencies, such as Army Corp of Engineers and Natural Resource Conservation Service allowed SMIP funds to go much further.

- v. *Windham Path* – Beverly D. and Jim L. shared the WP is getting a lot of use. Jim shared a local resident who suffered a mini-stroke uses it almost daily for walking, and Beverly shared a friend with Parkinson’s was able to walk the Path because of the smooth flat surface.

vi. *Status of Categories and budget*

Grant Categories & Amounts (initial allocation when program began in 2008)

• Landowner Stream Assistance	\$800,000
• Education on Watershed Protection	\$100,000
• Recreation & Habitat Improvements	\$100,000
• Stormwater Implementation	\$200,000
• Highway & Infrastructure Improvements	\$500,000
• Planning & Assessment	\$100,000
• General Fund/cover overages	\$200,000
	\$2,000,000
• Hazard Mitigation	\$323,677 (in November 2011, following Hurricane Irene, remaining funds were put into a new category to assist local communities with the 25% non-federal match on hazard mitigation projects.
○ 3 Projects Funded Totaling	\$259,262
○ Balance for hazard mitigation	\$64,415

To Date: 8 Rounds of Funding supported 40 approved Projects totaling \$ 1,876,038. This leaves the SMIP budget with a balance of \$123,962 (unreconciled). The Committee discussed allocating what remains in 2014 as projects come forth, such as the Conesville Recreation Path. The new contract between DEP and GCSWCD includes \$3million for the SMIP – \$2million for continuation of the base program (categories above) and \$1million for Local Flood Analyses and whatever is left over for implementation projects. It is expected to be renewed in the Fall 2014.

Whereas, there will be an increase in the SMIP balance once projects are reconciled (some did not use all of the allocated amount, or did not get implemented), there may also be an increase in project costs for others, such as the culvert projects in the Village of Hunter (Glen Ave) and Town of Hunter (Cranberry).

- vii. *Town of Hunter Land Use Regulation and Development Guidelines* (Round 2, \$35,000) - approved in Round 2 February 2010, this grant has not had any activity because the consultant, Greene Co. IDA, does not have the time to implement. The SWAC suggested sending the Town a letter letting them know the grant will be rescinded unless they show interest in using it. If the town is interested, Dave Kukle, Hunter Councilman and town representative to the SWAC, will update the SWAC at the next meeting. There is a two year window to implement projects, but an extension can be granted.

2. Input on Memorandum of Understanding between towns and GCSWCD

- Copies of the MOU were handed out; members were asked to review and comment on additions (reference to assisting towns with planning and implementing local flood hazard mitigation analyses).
- Overall representatives thought the MOU was okay. Current MOU’s need to be updated and signed by the town and GCSWCD (The Town of Hunter’s, for instance, expired in October 2013). Each community will be asked to review and enter into another five year agreement.

Committee suggested inserting language that a town “conducting a local flood hazard mitigation analysis” shall do so with resources or something to that effect so the funding is clear and the Town is not on the hook to pay for the flood analysis. Paragraph 7 references funding which does not obligate either the town or GCSWCD.

- Clarify with Schoharie and Delaware Counties how to process the MOU with Conesville, and Gilboa (Schoharie) and Grand Gorge area (Roxbury, Delaware Co.). Currently Roxbury has signed agreement with DCSWCD for the East Branch Delaware and Conesville had agreement with SCSWCD.
- The Committee offered whether all future projects should have more flood hazard mitigation benefit, or use that in the ranking of future projects. It was also acknowledged that many of the previously SMIP funded projects included flood mitigation benefits.
- Rebecca noted it is important to have the local flood analyses on file and coordinate with the county emergency personnel, as some of the work covers their area. NYS SEMO has been asked to reconcile the county hazard mitigation emergency plans to the federal government to show there has not been excess use of funds.
- Each committee member should review the MOU, provide comments if they would like. In 2014, towns will be asked to sign the MOU with GCSWCD. This is a prerequisite to receiving SMIP funds. Michelle and Jeff will attend town board meetings to give an update on SMIP projects within their municipalities and answer any questions related to the MOU.

3. Overview of SMIP, assess going into next contract

- Going into a new contract, the committee was asked to think about the first five years of program implementation and would they change anything, Joe F. indicated the process is working well, the program categories and budget seem adequate.
- The Committee acknowledged that even proposals that inevitably weren't funded were presented to the Committee with enough information to make a determination.
- Mike M. inquired about the subcommittees, which meet at least once a year. The frequency has decreased due to the Educator/Outreach Coordinator position being vacant. McCrary encouraged the subcommittees to be more active and proactive in project identification, such as the Lexington Pocket Park. There was general agreement that the Committee should get back to forward-thinking projects and programs as opposed to reactive.
- The Committee will assess categories of funding and allocations (see above) and discuss if any changes are warranted. Flood Hazard Mitigation and highway/infrastructure, for instance, could have significant overlap.
- The Committee will discuss goals with the new allocation and objectives for the next five years of implementation at the next meeting.

Next meeting – March 26, 2014 at the Jewett Town Hall, 6PM