

# Schoharie Watershed Advisory Committee

c/o of GCSWCD WAP, PO Box 996, Tannersville, NY 12485

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## Recreation & Habitat subcommittee meeting

12/18/2008

Present: Dan Zielinski (NYSDEC), Pete Nichols (Schoharie Co. SWCD), Walt Keller (Fisheries Biologist), Anne Ernst and Barry Baldigo (USGS), Carrie Miles & Michelle Yost (GCSWCD-WAP), Dave Burns (NYCDEP).

### 1. Background to Schoharie Watershed Advisory Committee (SWAC) and subcommittee

Taking Schoharie Watershed program to next level of planning and implementation, the SWAC, formed in May 2008, evolved from the smaller Project Advisory Teams that participated in the development of the individual Stream Management Plans. Three subcommittees, of which this Habitat and Recreation (H/R) is one, are being organized to provide input into work plan projects the Stream Management Implementation Program (SMIP) could fund. The other two subcommittees are Highway Superintendents (for water conveyance, infrastructure-related projects) and an Education and Outreach. Task for this group – provide input and direction on habitat and recreation projects to be included in annual action plans (with 2 year horizons) that could be funded by the SMIP. Proposals could originate with subcommittee members as sponsors, or be critiqued by the group for consistency with SMIP principles.

### 2. Stream Management Plan Recommendations and possible projects for improving stream habitat (separate handout provided before meeting) compiled from the Habitat and Recreation recommendations from stream management plans.

- **Perception: fish not as many as before. Is there data to prove or disprove? Results of Stocking program**

Concern shared (through angler survey and DEC tracking) high percentage of yearlings disappearing, not being caught, partially due to mergansers, which have become more common on Schoharie Creek, and thermal impacts during summer. Possibly going down to reservoir?

#### Recommendation:

- Continue to quantify fish populations (stocked, natural, yearlings) and migration patterns (how many caught, brought home, left in stream) and compare with old surveys, continue to collect data. State may decide to cut back on hatcheries program if stocked fish continue to decline (cost-benefit factor).
- Increase recreational use for fisheries by providing stocked fish in still waters (lakes, ponds) in addition to streams, may provide fishing opportunities, such as hosting more fishing derbies, get communities involved, good for tourism – RipVan Winkle Lake, Dolan's Lake, CD Lane Park, Rexmere Pond (Stamford), Colgate Lake

#### **Town of Ashland**

James Lawrence

#### **Town of Conesville**

Eric Dahlberg

#### **Town of Gilboa**

Janet Orlando

Rebecca Wilburn, Alt.

#### **Town of Hunter**

Nancy Allen

Dennis Lucas, Sr., Alt.

#### **Village of Hunter**

Michael Tancredi

Allan Higgins, Alt.

#### **Town of Jewett**

Michael McCrary

#### **Town of Lexington**

Lynn Byrne

Dixie Baldrey, Alt.

#### **Town of Prattsville**

Kory O'Hara

Richard Morse, Alt.

#### **Town of Roxbury**

Joseph Farleigh

John McDaniel, Alt.

#### **Village of Tannersville**

Linda Kline

#### **Town of Windham**

Steve Walker

Erik Allen

Highway

Superintendent

John Valenti

Educator

Walter Keller

Fisheries Biologist

James Hitchcock

Larry Gardner

Greene County

Legislators

- Stocking ponds is a statewide policy decision, not made at regional DEC level, however, maybe a pilot program could be considered through this program
- Stimulate interest in fishing for wild fish (in the tributaries) as opposed to fisheries/stocked fish. Wild brook trout spawning in upper tributaries has been documented, opportunity to promote recreation. Also important to identify areas of reproduction for protection.

### **6.2.1 Water Temperature Impacts on Fisheries Study**

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Limiting factors for fish survival in streams: temperature and dissolved oxygen. Temperature impacts in Schoharie adversely impact cold water fish, believed to be part habitat-related (no cover) and limited cold water refugia. The group felt this is a high priority.

Project recommendation:

- Outsource for thermograph study to identify thermal refugia along Schoharie Creek. Using infrared thermography to monitor temperature distributions along the Schoharie, survey could go approx. ½ mile out from main stem. USGS using RIT, approx. cost for surface fly over ~\$15,000 to identify cold water areas, such as spring seeps and tributaries. Spring and fall best time. Data interpretation more expensive (\$30 – 40,000), would need 1 -2 months.
  - This information would be very useful in working with highway departments, and with other stream work, for helping understand importance of cold water inputs and how to avoid impacting these sources (cross reference with 6.8.8 below). These cold water inputs are what sustains trout through the summer months.
- Other options –
  - choose control study area, purchase equipment (temp. probes, ~ \$300 – 400, transmitters in fish, telemetry), would need to be continuous, monitor daily to collect stream temperature data but then need someone to interpret data. Solicit assistance of anglers (Trout Unlimited) or college interns for data collection; consistency in follow through potential obstacle.
  - Colleges good resource for field data – SUNY Cobleskill has fisheries monitoring program, maybe able to get an intern, graduate student.
  - Prattsville gauge measures stream temperature, though localized to that area
- Identify other habitat characteristics to protect, such as woody debris if there's no cold water sources in area
- Protect groundwater seeps when constructing stream projects; and add habitat components to constructed pools.

### **6.2.2 Public Fishing Access – increase public access to all streams**

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- Public fishing rights: DEC has fund to pay for access rights; 1 time payment, in the deed. Make public aware this option exists (pair with education and outreach project). Buy fishermen footpaths. Approx. \$15,000 for one mile equivalent of stream length, 33' from bank.
- Hard to predict where access would be best because of fish migration, take what's available when property owner willing to allow access.
- Reach out to OMRDD (state disabilities office), Camp Harriman, enhance access around Colgate Lake and Capra Lake (privately owned). Access around camp is restricted due to protection issues of population served.

### **Expand recreational uses on Schoharie Reservoir**

- Following pilot program on Cannonsville Reservoir, work with DEP to allow all non-motorized uses including canoes, kayaks, sailboats, ... on the Schoharie Reservoir. Delaware County took lead in working with DEP; starting Memorial Day on the Cannonsville Reservoir, the city is allowing these uses as a pilot program.
- Establishing boat rental business (private or municipally-run) could address concern with steam cleaning boats (requirement before putting any vessel in the reservoirs).

### **6.6.2 Characterize Current Stream Ecosystem & monitor fisheries benefit at restoration sites (6.6.1)**

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- In addition to thermal study above, collecting data on other habitat characteristics – indicator species, food web, primary producers – would also be useful in knowing species presence or absence and why
- Need money to go back to restoration sites, monitor fisheries improvement, pair with other projects when possible.

### **6.8.8 Stream Stability Restoration and Temperature Protection**

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- Once thermal refugia are identified, that information can be used for many audiences, particularly working with highway departments, educating local, county and state departments on importance of cold water to fish, avoid impacts from infrastructure work.
- Other audiences – streamside property owners, anglers, fishing clubs/organizations, schools

**Homework:** everyone please look over the Recommendations from the management plans and write down what's been done toward the recommendation for the next meeting to see where the gaps are. Carrie will call or email individuals to gather their information.

**Next meeting: March 25 at 3:30 p.m. WAP office, Tannersville**