Recreation & Habitat Subcommittee Meeting

6049 Main St, Tannersville, NY
February 24, 2011

Meeting Notes

In Attendance: Vince DuBois (Columbia-Greene Trout Unlimited), Jeff Flack (Greene County SWCD), Carrie Miles (GCSWCD), Walt Keller, Dan Zielinski (DEC), Amanda Czechowski (DEP), Dave Burns (DEP), Robyn Worcester (GCSWCD), Tom Baudanza (DEP), Steve Matheke (Columbia-Greene TU), Scott Wells (DEC), Mikana Maeda (GCSWCD), Rod Owre (GCSWCD), Anne Ernst (USGS), Lynn Byrne (Town of Lexington), Judd Weisberg, Peter Nichols (Schoharie County SWCD)
***see sign in sheet for email contact info*

1) **<u>Loach Infestation in the Manor Kill Sub-basin</u>**
   - **a)** Jeff stated that if the committee feels the situation warrants it, we can develop an 'emergency' Stream Management Implementation Program (SMIP) application (since Round 4 deadline has already passed) under the R/H category for loach control actions and submit in time for SWAC review on 3/30/11
   - **b)** **Discussion of status of loach infestation in NYS**—Scott Wells & Dan Zielinski, DEC
     - **i)** In the Schoharie watershed loach have been identified in the Manor Kill sub-basin in a state wetlands area (made up of 5 ponds). It is estimated that loach have been present in the region for 2-4 years. (Loach are present in 5 DEC regions in NYS)
     - **ii)** There isn't documentation of loach spreading downstream into the Schoharie Reservoir yet
     - **iii)** Most likely the first infestation on the area was caused by landowner release of loach in a pond
       - **(1)** loach are typically aquarium fish, food fish (Asian delicacy), bait, small fish (maximum length ~1ft)
       - **(2)** Since all loach are a freshwater species, any infestation is a result of human release (obviously not migrating from Asia)
         - **(a)** Other loach infestations have been documented in Australia & Europe
         - **(b)** Potential Australian/European literature/information sources discussing loach infestations and control actions?
   - **c)** **Issues that make loach eradication difficult**—Scott Wells & Dan Zielinski, DEC
     - **i)** Loach can process atmospheric air, have ability to travel between bodies of water
     - **ii)** Very little North American literature on loach, don't have a great understanding of the loach life cycle.
     - **iii)** Loach aren't preyed upon by many other fish species, nocturnal so birds don't eat them, American eel would be best bet for natural loach predator but it's not present in the Manor Kill system
     - **iv)** Asian loach are accustomed to winter water temperatures (South American loach wouldn't be able to survive our winters)
   - **d)** **What's known about loach life cycle & habitat**—Scott Wells & Dan Zielinski, DEC
     - **i)** Loach burrow in mud, not found in gravel riffles→don't really infest trout habitat

ii) Loach are batch spawners; they spawn all summer but need a colder night to trigger their spawing

iii) Stomach analyses of loaches have been completed; nutritionally compete with species on the lower end of the food chain (i.e. salamanders)

iv) Easiest way to catch loach is in a bait trap, outflow trap

e) SMIP application for loach control project

i) Dave Burns (DEP) stated that goals for the project should be to slow the spread of loach and make people aware that this invasive species problem exists

ii) Peter Nichols (SCSWCD) will coordinate with Scott and Dan to complete an 'emergency' SMIP application for a loach control/public education project

(1) Possibly tie into a macroinvertebrate study on the Manor Kill

(2) Utilize interns to aid in work completion

(3) Include public education aspects (e.g. newspaper articles, workshops) to discuss the infestation problem and what the public can do if they observe loach

iii) Would have to wait until water levels recede in summer (~June) to begin eradication work

2) Schoharie Basin Repository of Ecosystem Data

a) Dave Burns gave a quick overview of the project: SCA interns are collecting all examples of ecosystem research done in the Schoharie basin and the goal is to create an accessible web-based repository where these studies can be accessed and analyzed

i) Walt Keller suggested that it might be beneficial to expand the resource search into similar areas with comparable ecological issues to widen the range of studies that can be considered and analyzed

b) Walt advised that this project be approached from what the agency feels are the most pressing areas/topics, and the SCA interns should consider their own areas of expertise

c) Important for SCA interns to create an annotated bibliography that evaluates the various sources, their reliability, and importance of material/data

d) Meeting attendees were encouraged to forward any applicable studies/reports to **Mikana (Mikana@gcswcd.com) and Rod (Roderick@gcswcd.com)**, and to contact them if any other good sources are identified

3) Updates on SMIP R/H Grant Projects

a) 3rd Round: Culvert Design Workshop to be organized in 2011 that's geared towards highway departments and includes culvert considerations for fish migration & habitat

b) 3rd Round: Lexington Pocket Park

i) Gives access to Schoharie

ii) Way to sell landowners on riparian buffers—that a usable yard and healthy riparian zones are not mutually exclusive

iii) Parcel located on CR 13A between hotel and DEC parking area

c) 1st Round: Thermal Refuge Study--Anne Ernst (USGS) gave a quick overview of where the project stands:

i) Hoping for a spring 2011 flyover

ii) Flyover is depended on several considerations: need low water, high cloud cover, no ice, no vegetation

iii) 7 thermal loggers are installed in the Schoharie and West Kill (have 8th logger as a backup); loggers will record data all winter

iv) Once flyover is completed, can begin data analysis

d) 1st Round: Prattsville Stream Access

i) Town of Prattsville attempting to create a parking area on a DEP parcel across from a popular swimming spot

ii) Logistic problems with topography & infrastructure

iii) Only realistic option is a shared driveway with a landowner, however the landowner is not currently living in the area, has medical issues, has been very difficult to get a hold of

iv) Since this is a Round 1 project, the time for the project is running out; it either needs to be implemented or not and have the money reallocated

e) 2nd Round: Windham Path—Carrie Miles (GCSWCD) gave a quick overview of where the project stands:

i) Town of Windham proposed a trail along the Batavia Kill at the Police Anchor Camp (town owned land)

ii) Contract is done, permitting is in process, will be determining trail layout soon, construction will be in summer 2011

iii) Will have a parking area

iv) Dan Z stated that area might be a potential stocking area since there's a farm access road

4) Action Plan Update—Jeff Flack (GCSWCD)

a) Ashland fishing access—complete

b) Police Anchor Camp/Windham Path—in process

c) Lexington Pocket Park—in process

d) Schoharie Basin Ecosystem Data Repository—in process

e) Thermal Refuge Study—in process

f) Promote increased use of watershed streams—complete/ongoing

5) New Ideas for Projects

a) Retrofit perched culverts to facilitate fish passage—Walt K

i) Should form a program to install some lightweight, relatively inexpensive device (apron, fish ladder) onto the ends of perched culverts to aid in fish migration

ii) Traditionally culverts weren't designed with fish passage in mind, just what worked for the highway department and water conveyance

iii) Engineering problem to determine what type of apparatus would work best and be able to withstand flows

(1) Joel DuBois (GCSWCD) has expressed interest in this project, also David Winters (Lynn Byrne's son)

(2) Need to identify a prototype

(3) No research yet done to see if there's any devices currently available for retrofitting culverts

iv) Seems like a unique idea that hasn't been considered or implemented previously; could bring the Fish & Wildlife Service, Trout Unlimited into the mix, get regional/national recognition→help continue funding

v) Dave B stated that an issue could be identifying what culverts might be the best ones to retrofit/replace—perhaps the Thermal Refuge Study could help with that identification

vi) Dan Z stated that this will not be a simple project; it won't be easy to make the device cheap and survivable, especially if it is installed at the end of a culvert perpendicular to a mainstem

b) Work with Hunter Mountain on public handicap fishing access on Maple Ave pond—Walt K

i) Could be good PR for Hunter Mountain; tourism possibility?

ii) Warm water shallow pond, can be stocked with warm water fish; if it's fished, most of the stocked fish will be caught anyway

iii) Potential issue: wealthy landowners/condo owners in the area may not approve of public access so near their residences