

Esopus Creek Management Planning Process
Project Advisory Council
CCE Phoenicia Office
Wednesday, April 19, 2006
Meeting Report

Meeting Participants

Name	Affiliation / Background
Chris Baltz	Broadstreet Hollow Landowners Assoc.
Bob Cross	Town of Shandaken Supervisor
Michael Courtney	Cornell Cooperative Extension of Ulster County – Educator
Dan Davis	NYC DEP Geologist/Project Manager
Mike Flaherty	NYS DEC Region 3 Fisheries
Harry Jameson	Town Tinker Tube Owner, Catskill Mountain Railroad
Keith Johnson	Shandaken Highway Superintendent
Jeremy Magliaro	Cornell Cooperative Extension of Ulster County – Project Coordinator
Glenne Miller	Town of Shandaken ZEO
Joe Munster	Shandaken Town Board
Joe Nalepa	Ulster County Highway Department
Jennie Snyder	Ulster County EMC
Michelle Spark	Esopus Creek Landowner
Sarah Tarallo	Cornell Cooperative Extension of Ulster County Intern

1. Introductions**Announcements:**

- a)** Bob Cross (Town of Shandaken) announced that he received a study from the Watershed Inspector General, James Tierney, dated April 14th about the Esopus Creek Corridor, which referred to flood control methods and turbidity prevention from the Stonyclove and Shandaken Portal. CCE will gain a copy of the study for the project office.
- b)** Bob Cross announced that a resolution was passed by the Shandaken Town Board *requesting that NYCDEP lower its Schoharie intake to allow a max of four hundred (400) cubic feet per second when water levels reach nine (9.00) feet at Coldbrook Station and close the intake when water levels reach twelve (12.00) feet at Coldbrook Station as the Town of Shandaken floods at fourteen (14.00) feet. When the water recedes to a level below twelve (12.00) feet they be allowed to open the Schoharie intake to allow a four hundred (400) cubic feet per second transfer and when water levels drop below the nine (9.00) feet reading previously mentioned the New York City Department of Environmental Protection be allowed to resume the necessary flow at that time.* [Editor's note: language



- above reflects was copied from the resolution introduced at the 4.3.06 Town Board meeting].
- c) Harry Jameson (Town Tinker / CMRR) announced that he sent a letter to Bob Cross along with other officials voicing his concerns over the issues of the Gilboa Dam and construction on the Schoharie Reservoir. The draining of cold water reserves running and water supply in the Schoharie due to current portal discharge rates were the main concerns voiced.
 - d) Joe Nalepa (UC Highway) announced that the missing beams from Lost Clove Bridge were found in Ohio and Kentucky and now are on their way back, arriving on Thursday April 20th. Joe will speak with staff about possibility of removing the remaining center bridge abutment before the new steel bridge span is installed. The abutment will have to be removed after April 30 to avoid trout spawning per DEC.
 - e) Jeremy Magliaro (CCEUC) announced the likely addition (almost finalized) of Walt Keller to Cornell Cooperative Extension of Ulster County. Walt will be conducting a “Phase I” Aquatic Habitat Study on the Esopus Creek, which will consist of: summarizing the published and unpublished (agency) historical data and studies, identifying trends, gaps in information, and potential limiting factors, and providing analysis and recommendations for further study.

2. Project Updates

Michael Courtney: Education Outreach Work Plan – DRAFT

- a) Michael Courtney (CCEUC) passed out a handout of a draft Education/Outreach work plan for year 1. Excerpts from the work plan include:
 - 1. The main target group for the Education Outreach Plan is the landowners that are gathered along the main stem of the Esopus Creek, but not excluding the other branches of the watershed.
 - 2. Informal Meetings, potlucks and neighborhood gatherings are just some of the ways in which to help inform the streamside community of ways to become more involved and informed, creating a way to work together.
- b) Michael also mentioned that the Education Outreach Committee meetings are being held on every second Wednesday of the month and wants to encourage members of the streamside community to attend and help to provide feedback and commentary on the Esopus Plan.
- c) Chris Baltz (Broadstreet Hollow Landowner) asked the question of liability at these informal gatherings (like stream cleanups) should someone get injured. Suggestions were made to contact the American White Water Association, Catskill Watershed Council, and Trout Unlimited to see what their practices are in the way of liability and if it could be used in these Esopus Creek gatherings. Scenic Hudson has their annual Great River Sweep, which might also be a source of information.

3. Are we thinking logically? – A small group discussion

Assumptions:

Jeremy Magliaro (CCEUC) passed out a handout of five assumptions drafted about the planning of the Esopus Creek and asked members of the committee to comment.

These assumptions are intended to serve as the underlying foundations of the Esopus Creek Management Plan.

- a) *Stream management is a community issue with multiple stakeholders; and communities will form partnerships to resolve stream management issues.*
- b) *The long-term condition of the Esopus Creek can be improved through the coordination of individual management actions.*
- c) *A sound, scientific assessment of the Esopus Creek and its adjacent ecosystems is necessary to make informed management decisions.*
- d) *An understanding of the basic scientific principals and best management practices in stream and riparian buffer management is necessary to make informed management decisions.*
- e) *Community-based stream management will incorporate and be reflective of the community's economic development, recreation, land use, hazard mitigation and environmental stewardship goals.*

Comments included:

- Define and clarify “individual” management actions (b).
- Include assumption that this planning will open up funding sources to address identified problems;
- Include that the plan will provide guidance for post-emergency flood repair work.
- It is unclear how individual landowners will understand and influence each other's decisions.
- Who defines Best Management Practices (iv)...DEP, DEC, Town, others? How will new BMP science be incorporated?
- Letter (e) is confusing.
- The Plan should clearly articulate scientific methods used to base management actions, so that the plan can evolve as stream science evolves.

These assumptions will be revised accordingly, and incorporated into a logic model framework prior the next meeting for further review. These assumptions will help the committee to refine stream management goals, metrics, and outcomes.

4. The Portal – Moving the Issue Forward

This topic was placed on the agenda for two purposes: 1) to discuss methods for this committee to address and incorporate community concerns about the Portal into the planning process; and 2) if inclined, to set an agreed-upon agenda for how to proceed.

Bob Cross provided an update of his current knowledge of the Schoharie Reservoir and planned repairs over the coming years. According to Bob, there has been no virtually no discharge over the dam into the Schoharie creek since February, all water has been going through the Shandaken portal, and the Schoharie Reservoir is currently (on ~4/19/06) at 12% capacity. The DEP informed him that the Portal will be fully open through the end of August 2006 to coincide with the installation of reinforcement anchors at the dam. In 2007 dredging is scheduled to occur at the reservoir, and then 2008 – 2011 the Dam is scheduled for permanent repair.

The discussion then turned to “Part 670”, the NYS Regulations dictating how the Portal is operated. According to Mike Flaherty (DEC), Part 670 is quite long (20-30) pages, and



covers a range of operating conditions. It was questioned whether the DEP would be (or currently is) violating Part 670. It is believed that there are emergency provisions in the statute, and because of the Gilboa Dam emergency status there is no violation.

Recommendations for Further Action:

Short Term (by next PAC meeting):

Address Uncertainty about how the ongoing repair work in Schoharie basin will impact the Esopus Creek and its residents and managers:

- Invite NYCDEP portal operations and NYSDEC dam oversight officials to a meeting ASAP, to understand likely conditions for stream flow, elevation, and discharge water temperature this summer and over the coming years of Schoharie Reservoir dredging and dam repair.
- Inquire appropriate authorities about establishing stream monitoring gages to measure e changes in elevation by the Portal. Gage sites could include:
 - o Right below Portal
 - o Above the confluence with Woodland Valley
 - o Below each tributary confluence (below the portal)
- Have a representative from DEP portal operations on the advisory council.

Long Term:

Revisit Part 670.

- Establish a working committee to make changes to Part 670 to reflect updated science and data findings. The last time a policy revision on Part 670 was considered was ~1996, and much more is known now.
- Keep abreast of updates on SPDES Permit process for Portal discharge.
- Create Portal Fact sheet for public reference.
- Engage DEC – Forest Reserve Grants to try and help with the problem of the keeping a cold water reserve for the Esopus.

5. Helicopter Virtual Tour - Dan Davis (NYC DEP)

Dan Davis showed footage of a helicopter reconnaissance of the Esopus Creek main stem that was taken this April. Using the video footage, along with detailed maps, he pointed out the areas where possible cross sections will be surveyed along with the areas where further study will be directed for “Phase 3” of the Geomorphic Assessment.

Commentary throughout the presentation revolved around historical information of the Esopus, places where members thought clean ups and debris removals should take place, along with other recommendations for stream cleanup and safety.

Next Meeting: Wednesday June 21st, 2006 at 10 am at the Cornell Cooperative Extension of Ulster County, Phoenicia Office, 5575 Route 28, Phoenicia.