

Esopus Creek Stream Management Planning Process
Project Advisory Council
CCE Phoenicia Office
Wednesday, February 15, 2006
Meeting Report

Meeting participants

Name	Affiliation/background
Christine Baltz	Broadstreet Hollow Landowner, Phoenicia Rotary
Michael Courtney	CCE Community Educator for Esopus Creek Stream Management Plan
Bob Cross	Town of Shandaken Supervisor
Virginia Craft	Ulster County Department of Planning
Dan Davis	NYCDEP – Stream Management Program, Esopus Creek Project Manager
Craig Fischenich	U.S. Army Engineer Research Development Center, Principal Investigator for the upper Esopus Creek watershed assessment
Mike Flaherty	NYSDEC Region 3 Fisheries
Jack Isaacs	NYS DEC Region 3 Bureau of Habitat
Harry Jameson	Town Tinker Tubes, Catskill Mountain Railroad
Chester Karwatowski	Trout Unlimited, Ashokan-Pepacton Chapter
Amanda LaValle	Ulster County Community College
Wm. C. LaRuse	NYSDOT Region 8 (Kingston)
Jeremy Magliaro	Cornell Cooperative Extension – Ulster County (Project coordinator for Esopus Creek stream management planning)
John Marino	NYSDOT Region 8 (Kingston)
Joe Munster	Shandaken Town Board, Phoenicia Fish & Game, Catskill Mountain RR, others
Joe Nalepa	Ulster County Highways
Beth Reichheld	NYCDEP Stream Management Program
Keith Savoury	NYSDOT Region 8 (Kingston)
Michelle Spark	Esopus Creek landowner
Rob Stanley	Shandaken Town Board
Tom Story	NYSDOT Region 8 (Kingston)

1. Introductions.**Announcements:**

- Virginia Craft (UC Planning) announced that \$580,000 in funding (\$560K in direct assistance) was received to assist homeowners in recovering from the April 2005 flood. Applicants must be below 80% median income. RUPCO is coordinating the program, contact Robyn Awand.
- Dan Davis (DEP Stream Management) announced that construction of the notch on the Gilboa Dam has begun and should be completed by mid-March [editor's note, the DEP announced on 2/18/06 that the 200' X 5.5' notch was completed). Discharge through the Shandaken Tunnel is expected to continue at max. capacity, though DEP will now consider shutting it down during floods that exceed 9 feet at the Cold Brook gage.
- The CCE-Phoenicia project office has office hours open for the public: Tuesdays and Wednesday's 10 am – 4 pm; Thursday's 12 pm – 6 pm.
- Upcoming events at the Phoenicia Plaza Office: 2/22/06 @ 6:30 pm - Diane Galusha speaking on history of NYC Water Supply System; 2/28/06 @ 6:00 pm – A kayak/whitewater recreation discussion group; 3/29/06 @ 7:00 pm – Bob Titus will present on “Voyages in Catskill Geology”. Questions about the events can be directed to Michael Courtney.

2. Guest Speaker: Dr. Craig Fischenich, P.E., U.S. Army Engineer Research Development Center, Principal Investigator for the upper Esopus Creek Watershed Assessment.

- [Editor's Note: A copy of Craig's presentation will be available on the project website: <http://www.esopuscreek.org>]
- Dr. Fischenich presented a tutorial on streams: how they adjust to natural and human caused changes to land and stream use; the channel evolution model; the relationship between stream slope, sediment transport and water flow; and examples of stream systems throughout the world. He then discussed the watershed assessment approach conducted in the upper Esopus Creek, and preliminary observations.
 - A Phase I Assessment was conducted by Dan Davis, DEP and Susannah Erwin, which summarized watershed characteristics, riparian vegetation, stream channel geometry, bank conditions, stream bed conditions, erosion processes, and the hydrologic character of the stream.
 - Currently, Craig is finalizing a more in-depth “Phase II Assessment” which he expects to complete by early summer. The major categories of the Phase II include:
 - § Ecological Assessment: a cursory and relatively simple assessment of the different aquatic habitat conditions along the stream
 - § Erosion Hazards: understanding current erosion sites and an assessment of each site. Identify areas of critical concern because they are highly susceptible to erosion or because there would be significant consequences

§ Hydrology and Hydraulics, updated FEMA mapping underway, but cannot wait. Looking to construct a simple hydraulic model for much of the upper Esopus Creek.

§ Sediment Analysis. Sediment analysis to understand fine sediment transport in the system. Initial projections, 4 million cubic feet of sediment is transported down the creek on an annual basis. Trying to discriminate all sources of sediment. The upper foot of river bottom is 1.5% deposited silt and clay, even above the portal in the headwaters. Trying to understand the sources of this.

- The Phase III Assessment (upcoming Summer 2006), will take Phase I and II data, combine it with areas identified by the PAC and others, and identify preliminary sites where active stream management may be warranted. The PAC will be actively involved in finalizing these sites. General management recommendations (stream corridor-wide) will also be identified pertaining to invasive species, riparian buffers, woody debris management, gravel mining/bar removal and others.
- CCE will be contacting each PAC member individually to elicit issues that the community (Council) wants to address in a general sense and also specific sites where problems may exist. The goal is to reach (some form of) consensus on problem identification and management priorities at the April meeting.

3. Project Update

- An estimated project timeline was discussed. A draft plan is still scheduled to be completed by December 2006. First priorities continue to be finding consultants for more in-depth Riparian and Aquatic Habitat studies. CCE has spoken with representatives at American Whitewater about the topic of large woody debris removal/management for recreational purposes. There continues to be difficulty identifying a knowledgeable legal counsel to provide legal guidance on non-emergency removal of debris. Further discussion will occur at the kayak/whitewater discussion group.
- Mike Flaherty has further information on creel surveys done in early 1992-93. NYSDEC may be conducting their statewide stream surveys this year. The upper Esopus Creek usually falls within the top 50. It is unclear how Tunnel discharge will impact angling use of the stream this year.
- Regarding Bridge Assessments: Fischench requested any information on bridge replacement or maintenance schedules, and any historic cross sections, and areas of chronic problems alongside roadways. Jeremy will coordinate with Tom Story (NYSDOT), Joe Nalepa (UC Highways), and Keith Johnson (Town of Shandaken Highway Superintendent), to obtain this information.

4. Education Work Group Updates

Education & Outreach Work Group:

Michael discussed the overall strategy for building an Education Program over the coming year. The year's main goals include:

- Building a volunteer base at various levels of involvement
- Aim towards piloting a stewardship program, using the Cornell Cooperative Extension “Master Gardener” program and Oregon State Extension’s “Master Watershed Steward” program as guides.
- Deliver training to professionals and public officials as appropriate.
- Suggestions for Michael included:
 - a. Taping presentations like Craig’s and putting them on local cable tv access channel.
 - b. Developing a neighborhood watch program around the stream.
 - c. Utilizing prison work forces for stream clean-ups where appropriate.
 - d. Coordinating activities with the various recreation programs in Olive and Shandaken.

Next Meeting: Wednesday April 19th, 2006 at 10 am at the Cornell Cooperative Extension of Ulster County, Phoenicia Office, 5575 Route 28, Phoenicia.