



**Greene County  
Watershed Assistance Program  
PO Box 996, Tannersville, NY 12485  
Phone (518) 589-6871 Fax (518) 589-6874**

## **GCSWCD Watershed Assistance Program 2014 Annual report**

Formed in 2002 to assist the Mountaintop communities of Ashland, Jewett, Lexington, Prattsville, Halcott, Town of Hunter, Windham and the villages of Hunter and Tannersville in dealing with issues and programs related to the NYC Watershed, the GCSWCD Watershed Assistance Program provides much-needed coordination among various watershed programs, local, state and federal agencies, as well as the mountaintop municipalities and landowners. The WAP serves as an advocate on watershed issues for both the public, as well as the private interests to exist in the NYC watershed and to maximize the opportunities to benefit from watershed programs and resources. The WAP provides coordination in seven key areas:

### **1. Resource and referral**

The WAP serves as a clearinghouse for landowners, municipal officials, developers and other watershed stakeholders for information on watershed rules and regulations, funding programs, educational programs, and resources benefitting the mountaintop communities. A sampling of inquiries include:

- ❖ I am thinking of buying a parcel along the Schoharie Creek and am not sure if there's room for a septic system
- ❖ I have an eroding streambank and would like to know what to do
- ❖ I am building a pond and would like to know if I need a permit and a stormwater pollution prevention plan
- ❖ My neighbor is clearing his land and runoff is affecting my property, who is responsible for overseeing this
- ❖ I'd like information on the Hunter landfill reconstructed wetlands, to possibly use in a development project
- ❖ I need help paying for a new septic system, am I eligible for funding

### **2. Public outreach, workshops and presentations the WAP coordinates**

- ❖ *Annual Water Quality Summit* (held in January) – training opportunities that provide valuable sources of information and promote coordination of programs and resources for watershed officials, residents and managers. Open to all Greene County communities and neighboring counties. [www.gcswcd.com/swp/eo/sw-summits](http://www.gcswcd.com/swp/eo/sw-summits).
- ❖ *Schoharie Watershed Month* – hosted annually in May activities and workshops offer a variety of educational and hands-on activities to learn about watershed topics and resources and to help with community projects. The WAP coordinates with school districts, not for profit organizations, watershed agencies, local communities and residents. [www.gcswcd.com/swp/eo/swm](http://www.gcswcd.com/swp/eo/swm)
- ❖ *Batavia Kill Stream Celebration* – the WAP organized for five years before it was cancelled due to massive flooding from Hurricane Irene. Prior to the August 2011 flood, the BKSC was growing in popularity.



Student Art Exhibit opening, SWM 2014

### **3. Committee organization, coordination and participation**

- ❖ *Mountaintop Supervisors and Mayors Association* – WAP organizes monthly meetings of Mountaintop leaders to discuss topics of mutual concern and interest that promote inter-municipal communication and innovation. Local, county and state topics are covered based on MSMA needs, as well as the endless world of the NYC Watershed (programs, policy, partnership building). The MSMA provides input and direction for the WAP and serves as program advisor based on priority needs the local leaders see for their communities.
- ❖ *Coalition of Watershed Towns* – attendance at monthly CWT meetings to stay current on programs and policy initiatives affecting watershed communities, and to advocate for issues and concerns expressed by Greene County stakeholders. See advocacy below.
- ❖ *Schoharie Watershed Advisory Committee (SWAC) and subcommittees* (education/outreach, highway superintendents, habitat and recreation). The SWAC implements a \$2million stream management implementation program funded by NYCDEP through a contract with GCSWCD. WAP supports committee meetings, assists with application referrals, and provides regular updates to local communities on funded projects. [www.gcswcd.com/swp/smp/smip](http://www.gcswcd.com/swp/smp/smip)
- ❖ *Mountain Cloves Scenic Byway* – facilitation of monthly meetings of the MCSB, Inc. and coordination with NYSDOT on signage (expected summer 2015).
- ❖ *Catskill Park Advisory Committee* – participate in providing assistance, advice and guidance to the NYSDEC, the New York City Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) and other land managers in the management of the New York State Forest Preserve, the Catskill Park and the Catskill Watershed.

### **4. Flood Hazard Mitigation Programs and Community Assistance**

- ❖ *FEMA Flood Buyout program* – WAP is facilitating a federal buyout at pre-flood market value for 23 properties across the county. Many steps leading to closing have taken place for all properties. As of April 2015, nine properties closed and the remaining 14 will complete the program in 2015. Demolition takes place within three months of the closing and the property is restored to its natural floodplain state permanently removing any flood hazard. Some towns will use the vacant parcels to develop small parks where feasible, and with FEMA approval, others will be left fallow never to be developed.
- ❖ *Flood Hazard Mitigation Programs funded by NYCDEP* – facilitating two new programs available to Greene County Watershed communities – 1) NYC Voluntary Flood Buyout and 2) Local Flood Analysis (LFA). GCSWCD and the WAP are assisting landowners and local communities through these programs including forming flood advisory committees that oversee LFA recommendations. Eligible projects in an LFA can apply for funding through the Catskill Watershed Corp, the organization that implements the \$17million Flood Hazard Mitigation Implementation Program.
- ❖ *Greene County All Hazards Mitigation Plan update* – support mountaintop communities with updating their annexes to the county plan and applying for HMGP funds when grant rounds are announced.

## 5. Advocacy for Greene County Mountaintop Communities

The GCSWCD WAP participates in meetings between watershed communities and NYCDEP, NYS Dept. of Health, NYSDEC, Catskill Watershed Corporation (CWC), NYS Dept. of State and other agencies, groups or organizations active in the watershed area and coordinates comments, concerns and other items related to watershed program and policy development affecting Greene County watershed communities. In the last four years core issues the WAP has monitored and provided input on include:

- ✓ Filtration Avoidance Determinations (FAD) between the US Environmental Protection Agency, NYS Dept. of Health and New York City (this is what drives watershed programming and funding)
- ✓ Land Acquisition Program Water Supply Permit amendment and hamlet redesignation areas in City watershed communities
- ✓ NYCDEPs Long-Term Watershed Protection Plan (LTWPP) which precedes FAD Milestones
- ✓ Proposal for Greene County Stormwater Technician (recommended in Hunter Corridor Strategy), was pulled from consideration after Hurricane Irene
- ✓ NYC Voluntary Flood Buyout Program (\$15million program to support eligible landowners)
- ✓ Flood Hazard Mitigation Implementation Program (\$17 million administered by CWC)

## 6. Outdoor resource enhancements compatible with watershed protection

- ❖ *Kaaterskill Rail Trail* – 1.5 mile non-motorized family trail on the Ulster & Delaware RR bed, Haines Falls. Opened June 1, 2013. The WAP facilitated the Mountain Community Resource Strategy (2010), a \$50,000 NYSDOS grant to conduct a locally driven plan for the enhancement of outdoor, cultural, historical and open space resources, and this resulted in years of planning to open the KRT.
- ❖ *Phase 2 and 3 of the KRT* – in process. Phase 2 is a pedestrian bridge over Spruce Creek connecting the popular North/South Lake campgrounds to the KRT (NYSDEC constructing this summer). Phase 3 will connect the KRT in Haines Falls to the popular Huckleberry Trail in Tannersville.



Kaaterskill Rail Trail Committee, opening day

- ## 7. Grants and funding opportunities – the WAP assists local communities with maximizing funding opportunities for land use planning, watershed and flood mitigation planning, and economic development projects, such as the Hunter Corridor Regional Planning Study (\$174, 500); the Mountaintop Community Resource Strategy, Quality Communities program (\$50,000); Town of Jewett Stormwater Analysis (\$43,000); Mountaintop Better Site Design Workshop (\$62,000); Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (Kaaterskill Creek Landslide/Town of Hunter, Village of Hunter & Tannersville local flood analysis); Town of Halcott HMGP Townsend Stream Crossing;