

2022 Annual Report

Greene County Soil & Water Conservation District



In 2022, GCSWCD continued to assist Greene County landowners, municipalities and others in meeting their natural resource management objectives. The District continues to focus on multiple benefit programs that help achieve a balance between community growth and conservation. Over the years, the District has positioned itself as a respected agency that is known for its ability to address complex natural resource issues. The District continues to expand its technical capabilities and uses them to help constituents throughout the County. While the District continues to increase its natural resource planning activities, it still maintains its primary strength as an agency that implements effective on the ground conservation.

This report summarizes the diverse activities undertaken in 2022.

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Batavia Kill Stream Restoration Project at Red Falls: Project 2 Complete



In the mid-1990's, the New York City Department of Environmental Protection's (DEP) Stream Management Program (SMP), identified the Batavia Kill as the leader in high turbidity conditions among the streams that feed the Schoharie Reservoir. Highly turbid (cloudy) water is caused by fine sediment suspended in the water column, and turbidity interferes with the disinfection process for the drinking water supply.

Subsequent stream assessments prioritized management of the Red Falls reach of the Batavia Kill based on unstable channels and excessive erosion of hillslopes that are made of a high percentage of silt and clay. Red Falls is located in the lower Batavia Kill watershed, in the Towns of Ashland and Prattsville. It is one of the largest and most complex stream segments to be addressed by the SMP to date; in total the project is more than 6,000 feet in length and includes extensive stream channel erosion and multiple large hillslope failures. The contributing drainage area is approximately 68 square miles, with bankfull flow rates greater than 2,700 cubic feet per second (CFS) and 100-year flow rates greater than 19,000 cfs.

Monitoring of this site between 2005 and 2017 found that:

- lateral erosion rates were as high as 4 feet per year;
- the average failing bank height was 29 feet, with a single bank exceeding 50 feet in height;
- the primary factor influencing stream stability in this reach is the natural constriction of the valley and floodplain by a glacial moraine that cuts through the valley; and
- additional historic land use and land management practices, including earth berming in the downstream portion of the Red Falls reach, which disconnected the stream from its floodplain – causing channel downcutting (entrenchment) and geotechnical failures along the valley wall.

It is estimated that over 51,000 cubic yards of fine-grained material eroded over the 12-year period. That's equivalent to over 3,000 dump truck loads! This significant level of fine sediment being loaded into the water has impacted water quality and biological functions of the river system.

In response to these conditions, project landowners, DEP, and





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GCSWCD initiated a stream restoration project of the Red Falls reach using the Natural Channel Design (NCD) approach, which incorporates consideration of both stream form and process. Due to its size and complexity, the project was divided into four manageable project reaches to facilitate construction in the relatively short annual permit window of June 15th to Sept 30th, or about 107 days.

In 2022, Phase 1 & Phase 2 of Project 2 were constructed by Evergreen Mountain Contracting. The existing conditions of Project 2 consisted of large hillslope failures and excessive erosion along the glacial moraine. The primary goal for Project 2 is to reduce impacts to water quality from fine sediment loading due to excessive erosion. A project objective is to provide floodplain reconnection and a reduction of lateral erosion rates. The design began at the stable bedrock section at the downstream extents and continued upstream approximately 800' near the inlet of the passive dewatering channel.



Project 2 (before) showing hillslope with a geotechnical failure.

Project 2 (after) stabilized hillslope and constructed bankfull bench.

The Batavia Kill was bypassed for the duration of Phase 1 using the passive dewatering channel. Phase 1 consisted of restoration of 800 feet of the Batavia Kill including constructing a rock riffle at the upstream limit for grade control, a pool feature, and a tie-in at the stable bedrock section at the downstream limits.

A bankfull bench was constructed at the base of the hillslope to aid in stability and floodplain reconnection. 13,435 tons of rock was imported to the site to construct rock revetment and the riffle grade controls

Boulders were collected during channel excavation and placed throughout the riffles and pool to enhance fish habitat. 623 linear ft of buried log keyways were installed perpendicular to the flow of the stream in the floodplain for additional grade control. Bioengineering efforts included the installation of 4,448 linear feet of willow fascine, 3,501 live willow stakes, and 2,549 containerized plants.

Projects 3 and 4 are currently under design with the lower section of Project 3 expected to be constructed this season. While the project is currently in its third year of construction, it is expected that the goals of reducing erosion and fine sediment loading to the system will be met – ultimately reducing land loss, improving the aesthetic and biological values of the stream channel, and protecting water quality.

Water quality monitoring stations located above and below project reach have been tracking the site since 2016, and are intended to capture pre-, during- and post-construction conditions.

Windham Path Bank Stabilization

Windham Path is a 1.5 mile scenic recreational trail in the Town of Windham, with sections running along the Batavia Kill. In 2020, due to the active retreat of the stream bank, the Town of Windham applied for funding though the Stream Management Implementation Program (SMIP) to design a project that would stabilize the undermined bank, mitigate user safety concerns, and protect the recreational infrastructure. Additional long-term objectives included reduction of fine sediment supply loading to the stream (a drinking water source and trout fishery) and improvement of the resiliency of the Windham Path to future flood events.

The resulting project was designed to correct the existing instability by evaluating the hydrology, hydraulics, soil characteristics, and topography to determine the appropriate rock size, thickness of stone covering, depth of stone footings, extent of stone protection, and proposed bank and channel geometry. Through SMIP, the Town was awarded \$50,000 for project design in 2020, and \$200,000 for construction in 2021. The project ultimately consisted of the installation of 300 linear feet of rock revetment with live willow stakes to stabilize the stream bank, drainage swale improvements, reconstruction of approximately 240 feet of the path, and installation of a split rail fence.

Construction began in September 2021 with final completion in June 2022. The project is expected to have a positive impact on water quality by preventing erosion and entrainment of fine sediment particles, including colloidal clay, to the Batavia Kill and ultimately the Schoharie Reservoir.



Pre- (above) and post- (below) construction conditions.

County Route 17 Embankment & East Kill Stabilization

Where the East Kill flows along County Route 17 in the Town of Jewett, the road and embankment were severely damaged during the rain-on-snow flood event of Christmas 2020 – cutting off emergency responder access to one of the main north/south travel corridors in the area.

In 2021, the Greene County Highway Department was awarded \$200,000 while the streamside landowner at this location was also awarded \$200,000 in SMIP funds (a total of \$400,000 in funding) for the repair of flood damages to the East Kill and the road embankment of CR-17. Following the reconstruction and improvement of the highway infrastructure, the stream channel was modified to ensure stability and mitigate flood-related hazards in the future.

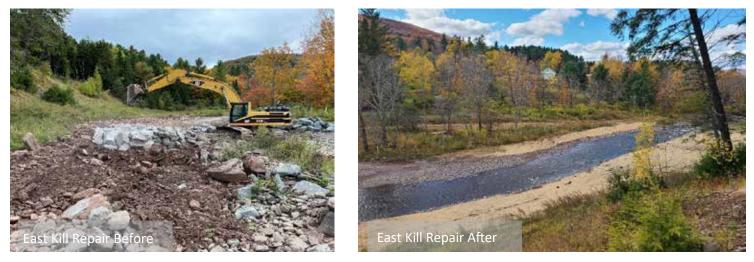
Construction of the stream channel was completed in 2022, and followed by the planting of over 700 native trees and shrubs across the full project site. Once established, the trees and shrubs that were planted on the freshly built banks will further stabilize them by adding resistance to erosion.





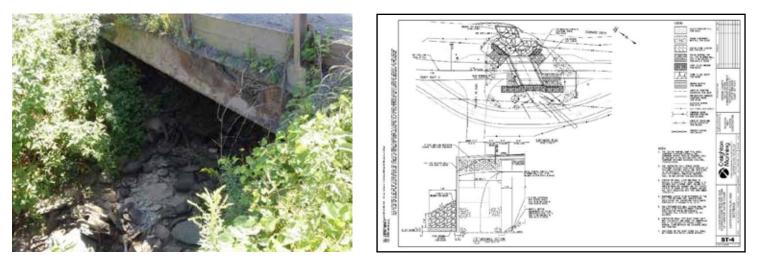
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East Kill Near CR-78 Bridge Project Repair



Flood damage at the previously constructed East Kill Streambank Stabilization Near CR-78 Bridge project site was repaired in the summer of 2022. The repairs were constructed along approximately 400 feet of stream. A total of 970 tons of stone were installed, and 531 native trees and shrubs were planted across 1.4 acres.

CR-2 Culvert Replacement Design Complete



Project designs for the culvert replacement on CR-2 were completed in 2022. This project is intended to replace a culvert conveying an unnamed tributary to the Schoharie Creek in the Town of Lexington. The existing culvert has a capacity less than current design guidelines. This culvert is located along the main access road to a major stone quarry, making passability of this road critical to many disaster response scenarios.

The goals of the project are to improve the resiliency of flow conveyance infrastructure to future flood events while minimizing its negative impacts on stream channel stability and improving aquatic and terrestrial organism passage characteristics of the structure. The project is expected to have a positive impact on water quality by improving the structure's flow capacity reducing entrainment of contaminants from road overtopping. The culvert will also minimize bed and bank scour during high flow events, reducing entrainment of fine sediment to the Schoharie Creek and Reservoir.

Through SMIP, the Greene County Highway Department was awarded \$50,000 for design in 2020, and \$200,000 for implementation in 2021. The project is expected to be completed in 2023.

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Culvert Replacement and Hazard Reduction on Rappleyea Road



Downstream (north) view of pre-, during, and post- construction (left to right) of the culvert replacement project.

Before being replaced this past summer, a small unnamed tributary to Schoharie Creek flowed underneath Rappleyea Rd. (Town of Lexington) through a concrete culvert pipe. The culvert was flagged for replacement by GCSWCD due to its deteriorated condition and lack of hydraulic capacity (ability to accommodate the natural stream flow). The single culvert at this site measured 21 feet long and 5 feet in diameter, which is below the current culvert design guidelines and undersized for this stream. As a result of being undersized, regular sediment deposition upstream, backwatering at the inlet, and high velocity flows at the outlet – carving out a 4 foot drop to the streambed – were observed at this site. Backwatering (when water pools up at the inlet) is particularly hazardous on Rappleyea Rd because it is a dead end road, so any road closures would limit the accessibility of emergency responders to several homes beyond the location of the culvert.

Given the condition of the structure and the related hazards to human life, the Town of Lexington submitted applications for funding through the Stream Management Implementation Program (under the "Highway & Infrastructure" category) to design and construct a replacement. In 2020, the Town was awarded \$50,000 for the design development, and then \$200,000 for design implementation in 2021.

The design to correct the hydraulic capacity issues was created by evaluating the hydrology, hydraulics, soil characteristics, and topography to determine the appropriate culvert size, inlet and outlet protection, and size and depth of footings. The resulting project consisted of:

- a 42 foot long, 95 inch x 67 inch corrugated metal pipe arch;
- a new guiderail;
- boulders to be imbedded in the stream channel upstream and downstream of the culvert to reduce flow velocity and provide grade control; and
- native stone and streambed material to be backfilled onto the bottom of the culvert to provide fish and other aquatic organism passage.

The larger culvert dimensions allowed for a more gradual roadway embankment slope, increased stream stability and hydraulic capacity during large storm events – reducing the risk of road closure. The increased culvert length will allow for more gradual roadway embankment slopes. The streambed was reconstructed to accommodate the increased culvert length and to reduce scour during high flow events. Additionally, stone check dams were installed both upstream and downstream of the culvert to reduce flow velocity.

The goals of the project are to improve the resiliency of flow conveyance infrastructure to future flood events while minimizing its negative impacts on stream channel stability and improving aquatic and terrestrial organism passage characteristics of the structure. With construction completed in 2022, the project is expected to have a positive impact on water quality by minimizing bed and bank scour and associated entrainment (carrying along) of sediment particles to the Schoharie Creek, and ultimately the Schoharie Reservoir. Improvement of the structure's flow capacity will also reduce entrainment of contaminants from road overtopping and flooding of nearby structures.

Local Flood Analysis Complete for Town of Jewett



The Town of Jewett was awarded \$75,000 in SMIP funds in 2020 to conduct a Local Flood Analysis (LFA). The LFA is a program that was initiated following Tropical Storm Irene to help communities within the NYC water supply watersheds, identify long-term, cost-effective projects to mitigate flood hazards.

The Town of Jewett LFA was focused in the East Jewett, Jewett Center, and South Jewett communities; and included portions of the East Kill, Schoharie Creek, Halsey Brook, and several unnamed tributaries. Hydraulic analyses were conducted by SLR, and the Jewett Flood Advisory Committee met with them throughout the LFA process to provide input on flood mitigation alternatives.

The LFA was completed in 2022.



Catskill Streams Buffer Initiative (CSBI) Planting Projects

Throughout 2022, the Catskill Streams Buffer Initiative (CSBI) and GCSWCD planted a total of 2,284 native trees and shrubs and installed 1,510 native willow stakes along 4,679 feet of stream – restoring 4.97 acres of land. These totals were spread across 6 CSBI streamside planting projects along areas of the East Kill, Batavia Kill, Bear Kill, Schoharie Creek and several unnamed tributaries. Each of these projects helps to protect vulnerable areas from being overrun by invasive species, fill in gaps to increase species diversity where native vegetation is lacking, quickly revegetate vulnerable streamside areas, and establish a



native ground cover (through seeding and mulching). Reestablishing riparian (streamside) forest buffers also plays a valuable role in providing flood control, creating wildlife habitat, and minimizing streambank erosion. CSBI also worked to install tree protection, and assessed 88 monitoring plots across 26 completed project sites. This project monitoring is conducted in an effort to collect data that will be used to determine project success and inform future efforts.



CSBI at GCSWCD is available to work with streamside landowners within the Schoharie Reservoir watershed to design and implement sitespecific riparian (streamside) buffer plantings that help protect property, create beneficial habitat for fish and wildlife, and contribute to improving water quality.

CSBI has been working with local landowners who wish to establish a new buffer or improve an existing buffer by planting native trees and shrubs, since 2010. Participation in the CSBI program is free for eligible landowners, and GCSWCD provides and installs plants in areas adjacent to the stream at no cost. If your streamside property is mowed, is lacking trees or only has a single line of trees next to the streambank, is showing signs of erosion; or if you are interested in implementing new techniques to maintain the health of your streamside land, then you may benefit from participating in this Initiative. Each planting includes a variety of trees and shrubs that are native to the Catskill Mountain region and that are found naturally-occurring in floodplains and riparian zones. Once established, the planting projects increase streambank stability as the aboveground vegetation helps to slow the velocity of floodwaters while the deep underground root

systems help to hold soils together – preventing future erosion. Additionally, these planted areas will filter out pollutants from stormwater runoff, and the flowering plants will attract birds and pollinators.

To find out more about this program, verify eligibility, or schedule a site visit, please contact GCSWCD's CSBI Coordinator, Laura Weyeneth, by e-mail (laura@gcswcd.com) or phone (518-622-3620).

Pollinator Garden: NYSDOT & CSBI Collaboration

In addition to the traditional planting projects, CSBI also partnered with NYSDOT Region 1 to convert a road pull off between the Schoharie Creek and Route 23A in the Town of Jewett to pollinatorfriendly habitat. The project was initiated by the sighting of the gyne (new queen that will breed in the fall, overwinter, and start a new colony in the spring) of the American bumble bee (Bombus pensylvanicus).

American bumble bees are vital pollinators that have completely vanished from eight states – with populations down 50% in the Midwest and Southeast and 99% in New York (Smithsonian Magazine). This 2021 observation was one of only two in the whole state (the



American bumble bee enjoying a purple aster. Photo by Jennifer Carchidi.

other was observed on Governor's Island), and is the first for the area in approximately 2-3 decades. Yet, despite these dwindling numbers, the American bumble bee has not been protected under any state or federal law.

NYSDOT's Region 1 office was quick to respond to outreach from Jennifer Carchidi (the community scientist that identified the bee) and began developing a concept for converting the large area of mowed grass to a native pollinator habitat, contacting CSBI at GCSWCD for technical assistance, and securing funding for project implementation. The project involved tilling; seeding with a special wildflower seed mix for bees; planting 225 native shrubs and other small, flowering, pollinator-friendly plants; and installing bluebird houses as well as specially designed mowing limit markers (to avoid destroying the young plants as they get established). Pollinator signage was also added to educate the public on the importance of — and the reason for — the project. On Arbor Day 2022, NYSDOT and GCSWCD staff were joined by Jennifer for project installation.



IYSDOT & GCSWCD staff were joined by Jennifer Carchidi for the Arbor Day planting



Education & Outreach Efforts

GCSWCD hired a new Education & Outreach Coordinator (Amanda Cabanillas) in July of 2022. With the position beginning on July 25th, educational programming made a swift return with a presence through the full duration of the Greene County Youth Fair (July 28th – July 31st). Time at the Youth Fair was focused on distributing outreach materials that raise awareness about programs offered through GCSWCD, and teaching the general public about stream processes using the Emriver stream table. The demonstrations at the Youth Fair reached approximately 500 people over the course of the four days.



GCSWCD participated in three more youth education opportunities following the Youth Fair: the Cornell Cooperative Extension (CCE) of Columbia and Greene County's Environmental Awareness Days on September 21st and September 28th, and a visit to Coxsackie Elementary School on November 9th. GCSWCD brought the Ward's[®] Stormwater Floodplain Simulation System (floodplain model) to the CCE Environmental Awareness Days. Both of these events worked with 6th grade students from Greene County schools. The floodplain model provided a visual way for the students to learn about stormwater runoff. Together, each group worked through four different storm scenarios:

- the stream's response to the rainfall in its natural state with wetlands in the headwaters;
- the stream's response to the rainfall after the wetland area has been developed and converted to impervious land cover;
- how downstream communities are impacted after building a berm to mitigate flooding for the communities living within the floodplain; and
- how building a retention pond downhill of the developed area could help reduce flooding for all communities downstream.



Students collected data by reading the stream gage and recording the maximum water surface levels for each scenario to get a sense of the changes that were occurring, and discussed how human activity affects stormwater, water quality, wildlife, infrastructure, and safety. GCSWCD reached a total of 207 people between these two events.

The classroom visit offered a full morning of watershed science to 3rd grade students. After beginning with a brief introduction to the water cycle, the students rotated through three stations to observe demonstrations of the Augmented Reality Sandbox, EnviroScape Watershed, and Ward's floodplain models. The full program provided an introduction to stream processes and management tailored to their existing school curriculum. Students gained an understanding of different watershed features and water quality issues. This includes: topography, drainage patterns, point vs non-point source pollution, stormwater runoff, and how human activity can impact the way streams function. This visit reached 45 people.

On November 14th, 2022, GCSWCD hosted the DEC National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) Flood Maps, Determinations and Letters of Map Change Training. The training was led by David Sherman, DEC Environmental Program Specialist; and covered how to read flood maps, navigating the resource websites, and which forms to use for letters of map change. The training provided education credits for Code Enforcement Officers and municipal staff. 12 people attended this training.

Volunteer Plantings Return

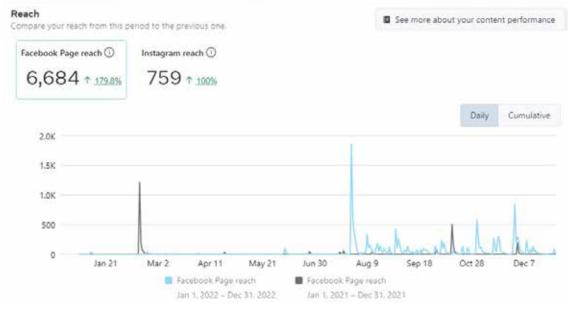


Volunteer tree plantings also returned in 2022, with a restoration planting that drew in 11 volunteers from the Catskill Mountains chapter of Trout Unlimited, the morning was a huge success – ending with nearly 300 native trees and shrubs being planted on the right bank of the East Kill stream stabilization site.

Increased Social Media Presence

In July of 2022, GCSWCD joined Instagram (@gcswcd) to increase visibility and community engagement - the page now has 180 followers. At the same time Facebook posts were increased. This effort has yielded a clear increase in reach and audience participation.



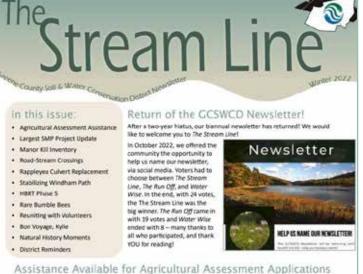


GCSWCD Newsletter

After a two-year hiatus, GCSWCD's biannual newsletter has returned. In October 2022, we offered the community the opportunity to help name the newsletter, via social media. Voters had to choose between The Stream Line, The Run Off, and Water Wise. In the end, with 24 votes, the The Stream Line was the big winner. The Run Off came in with 19 votes and Water Wise ended with 8.

The final product was distributed through the email list and on social media - printed copies were dropped off at town halls, banks, coffee shops, and community centers around the Watershed.





GCSWCD staff are now accepting requests for assistance with the 2023 agricultural assessment applications. Under the Agricultural Districts Law (1973), landowners may submit an application (available at the local assessor's office) to reduce property tax bills for land used in agricultural production. Property eligibility is determined by the local assessor or board of assessors where the application is filed.

To begin the application process, our District Technici op your soil maps and Soil Group Worksheets vill cew (Form APD 1) to classify the farmland by soil productivity. must then transfer the soil informati icultural Assessment Application (Form RP-305)



and submit the completed form RP-305, along with copies of the completed for the assessor by March 1st. d Form APD-1 and the soil map

- Basic eligibility requirements include
- Seven or more acres of contiguous or noncontiguous land which have been used for agricultural production for the preceding two years, and that have yielded an average of \$10,000 in gross sales innually
- Less than seven acres of contiguous or noncontiguous land which have been used for agricultural production for the preceding two years, and that have yielded an average of \$50,000 in grocs sales annually

in 2022, agricultural assessments were completed for 40 parets in Greene County. Nearly 813 acres of agricultural land, 137 acres of farm woodland, and 64 acres of excess woodland were included in the assessment.

To learn more about the agricultural assessment prog and GCSWCD's role in the application process, please contact Michelle McDonough by email: MichelleM@ gcswcd.com or by phone: (518) 622-3620. You may also visit the GCSWCD Agricultural Assessment webpage. nent webpage

Agricultural Programs

The GCSWCD considers the agricultural community a priority. Along with technical assistance to Greene County agricultural producers, GCSWCD facilitates participation in two New York State programs: the Agricultural Assessment Program and Agricultural Environmental Management (AEM).

Through the Agricultural Assessment Program, property tax bills can be reduced for eligible landowners with land used for agricultural production. GCSWCD assists Greene County landowners by developing soil maps and Soil Group Worksheets, which are required for participation in the Agricultural Assessment Program. Eligible farmland is classified



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by soil productivity and help determine the level of exemption. This service is free to all Greene County landowners.

In 2022, GCSWCD developed soil maps and Soil Group Worksheets for 40 parcels in the Towns of Athens, Cairo, Catskill, Coxsackie, Durham, Greenville, Halcott, Jewett, Lexington, and New Baltimore.

AEM is a statewide, voluntary program that helps farmers make sound economic and environmental decisions to help meet business objectives while preserving the state's natural resources. GCSWCD AEM program staff help farmers by identifying environmental risks in their farm operation and offering conservation plans to address the concerns. All of the information gathered through the AEM program is confidential and is only used to help the farm operation meet its goals.

In 2022, GCSWCD completed AEM Assessments on 3 active farms in the Towns of Cairo, Catskill, and Durham – all on Catskill Creek

For more information about agricultural programs, please contact Michelle McDonough, District Technician, at 518-622-3620 or by e-mail at michellem@gcswcd.com.

HBRT Phase 5 Complete

With partial support from the Stream Management Implementation Program (\$9,000 awarded in 2022), the Hunter Area Trail Coalition (HATC) announced the completion of Phase 5 of the Hunter Branch Rail Trail (HBRT). At just under a mile in length, the Phase 5 section of the trail is the former northern terminus of the Hunter Branch of the Stony Clove and Catskill Mountain Railroad, which was discontinued in 1939. The completion of Phase 5 includes the installation of a 90 foot long, prefabricated truss bridge where the railroad was once carried over a small Schoharie Creek tributary – to that end, a section of the original stone abutments has been left in place for visitors to appreciate the efforts of early railroad workers.



The HATC represents local government; state, city, and county agencies; as well as local nonprofits, and was formed in 2016 to coordinate trail projects that enhance hiking opportunities across the Town of Hunter. Together, the Coalition was successful in raising \$230,000 from NYSDEC, the GCSWCD Stream Management Implementation Program, and private donors including the Luke Patterson Memorial Fund.

The CSBI at GCSWCD installed a riparian buffer planting and tree protection at the site in October.

Plant Material Center (PMC) Upgrades

In 2022, GCSWCD purchased a Grizzly Grate to screen top soil for easier tree spading. Additionally, upgrades were made to the PMC's potting up tables and willow beds.

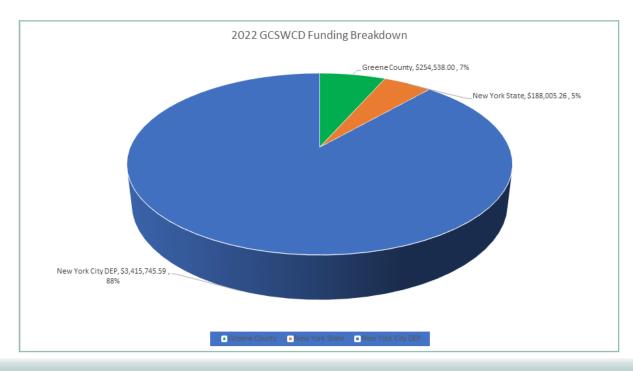
The new potting up tables have increased GCSWCD's capacity to pot up the bare root tree stock that is received annually in the spring. The containerized stock is used for riparian buffer plantings – an essential component of stream restoration and Catskill Streams Buffer Initiative (CSBI) projects.



District Funding

In 2022, the District received \$3,858,288.85 in total funding. Included in that amount is \$188,005.26 from New York State for reimbursement of technical services and conservation projects, a \$254,538.00 allocation from Greene County, and \$3,415,745.59 through the District's partnership with NYC Department of Environmental Protection.

The District's allocation from Greene County has remained consistent at \$254,583.00 for the period spanning 2018—2023; as our overall funding grew by nearly 8% from 2021 to 2022.



District Staff

Joel DuBois	Executive Director		
Laurie Deyo	Administrative Assistant/ Executive Secretary		
Rich Andreassen	Conservation District Program Engineer		
Jake Buchanan	Conservation District Program Specialist		
Chris Langworthy	Conservation District Program Specialist		
Abbe Martin	Conservation District Program Manager		
Michelle McDonoug	Conservation District Program Technician		
Brandon Terrill	Conservation District Program Technician		
Michelle Yost	Watershed Assistance Program Coordinator		
Laura Wyeneth	Catskill Streams Buffer Initiative Coordinator		
Amanda Cabanillas	Education and Outreach Coordinator		
Michael Butler	Heavy Machine Equipment Operator		
Alex Johnk	Heavy Machne Equipment Operator		



Board of Directors

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Vice Chair, Member at Large	
Treasurer, Member at Large	
Member at Large	
Practical Farmer	
Legislative Representative	
Legislative Representative	

2022

Student Conser	vation	Association	Intern
Kylie Shaw	Stream	Stewardship As	sistant