



Schoharie Watershed Advisory Council Midterm Review Meeting November 2, 2011 Schoharie Watershed Program Office, Tannersville

Attendance: Rebecca Wilburn (Town of Gilboa Alt), Lynn Byrne (Town of Lexington), Mike McCrary (Town of Jewett), Dennis Lucas (Town of Hunter Alt), Eric Dahlberg and Mike Brandow (Town of Conesville Primary and Alt.), Joe Farleigh (Town of Roxbury), Erik Allen (Highway Committee liaison), Liz LoGiudice (GCCCE Educator), Judd Weisberg (Fisheries Guide)

Municipalities not present: Ashland, Prattsville, Windham, Village of Hunter, Village of Tannersville

Others: Jeff Flack, Joel DuBois, Michelle Yost, Robyn Worcester, Abbe Martin, Carrie Miles (GCSWCD); Beth Reichheld, Dave Burns (DEP); Paul Dibbell (Town of Hunter); Zachery Thompson (Schoharie Co. Planning);

1. Hurricane Irene, Response in the Schoharie Watershed

- a. Jeff Flack started this discussion by talking about the enormous magnitude of the Irene event, especially in the Schoharie watershed
 - i. A 100-year storm is typically 12.5 inches of rain in 24 hours, with Irene some areas in the Mountaintop received over 16 inches of rain within 24 hours → 200+ year storm
 - ii. The most rain on the Mountaintop fell on the Windham/Maplecrest area
 - iii. Greene County is the wettest area in NYS (according to the Northeast Regional Climate Center), rainfall data shows doubling in last 20 years
- b. GCSWCD, DEP, and other agencies' response with the recovery effort after Irene
 - i. DEP and GCSWCD facilitated bridge inspections with the County Highway Department and engineering firm Malone & MacBroom
 - ii. GCSWCD facilitated woody debris removal with NYS DOT
 1. DOT and contractors removed hazardous debris from channels and stockpiled
 2. DOT provided tub grinder to grind debris
 3. If towns still have debris issues let GCSWCD know, and we can try to facilitate DOT tub grinder access
 - iii. GCSWCD facilitated permit acquisition through NYS DEC to enable landowners, residents, and businesses to begin stream repair work
 - iv. GCSWCD provided proper channel sizing assistance to highway depts. and contractors when working on streams/culverts
 - v. Landowner assistance
 1. GCSWCD has received approximately 150 separate private landowner requests for site visits and technical assistance since the storm
 2. Have been able to visit and facilitate permit acquisition with approximately 75% of these landowners
 - vi. Jeff presented a map that shows statistics of the Schoharie watershed pertaining to streams
 1. 707 miles of stream within the Schoharie watershed
 2. 539 miles of stream within the Greene County portion of the watershed

3. 3,162 Greene County tax parcels adjacent to a stream
 - a. 33 parcels owned by municipality
 - b. 104 parcels owned by NYCDEP
 - c. 155 parcels owned by NYS/NYSDEC
 - d. 2870 parcels privately owned
4. The map & statistics show the large amount of streamside property in the Schoharie basin/Greene County
5. Most received some sort of damage during the storm
6. Impossible to address all these properties and damage – not enough money available; cannot return everything to pre-storm conditions
7. We need to prioritize projects that serve multiple objectives/stakeholders, public benefit, water quality issues
- vii. Overall the GCSWCD/DEP demonstration restoration projects held up well to the storm
 1. E.g. The Long Road project in West Kill most likely helped prevent CR 6 damage/closures, as historically that area has washed out in smaller storms than Irene
 2. Mike McCrary commented that it would be interesting to see a list of project areas involving streams and infrastructure that did hold up well through Irene
 3. These projects are designed and supported by science- and data-based principles. → The future lies in scientifically-supported stream management
 - a. Need to avoid unengineered dredging of streams
 - b. Keep development out of the floodplain
- viii. Michelle Yost asked if the committee thought anything more could have been done for communities
 1. Rebecca Wilburn responded that in most cases the best defense is a good offense: communities should recognize that another large storm will come in the future, and should be prepared so they don't experience such damage and devastation again
 2. Jeff F. commented that Irene has changed many people's perspectives: there seems to be more interest in all-hazard mitigation planning, identifying recurring problem areas. Communities need to identify these issues and move forward in trying to repair and improve them
 3. Judd Weisberg commented that each town seems to have their own method of dealing with the flood and recovery (e.g. Windham vs. Prattsville); different amount of resources, tourism interest in communities, etc.
- ix. Judd W. brought up the issue of relocation and floodplain reclaiming
 1. Rebecca W. said that in order for a community to be eligible for a buyout, they need to have an adopted hazard mitigation plan, but the entire state will be competing for that money
 - a. Lynn Byrne asked how communities start the process and get in line to receive buyout money

- i. Rebecca W: work with county emergency management personnel, Office of Emergency Management
2. Paul Dibbell asked if this is the same source of money as FEMA buyout funds
 - a. Rebecca W: sort-of, FEMA does hazard mitigation buyouts and forced buyouts. Hazard mitigation buyouts are weighted toward priority property designations
 - b. Rebecca W. stated that the final money value of the FEMA hazard mitigation program has not yet been determined, but will be during the next couple of months. The funding amount is dependent on the total dollar value loss due to the storm (includes all work crews, staff time, damage, etc.). The funding amount will be 10-15% of that total
3. Dave Burns stated that the towns/county need to develop a plan and apply to FEMA/SEMO for buyout program. However, this is very time-consuming and confusing.
 - a. Rebecca W. said there are consultants available to help towns/landowners with this process: Public Assistants and Independent Assistants
4. Lynn B. stated that she would prefer not to see a lot of money put back into homes that shouldn't be there to begin with (i.e. homes in the floodplain)
5. Rebecca W.: Ideally a town has a buyout plan established before a disaster; by now any appropriate properties for buyout should be identified
6. Beth Reichheld asked if Greene County is considering a buyout program
 - a. Both Dennis Lucas and Rebecca W. said that they don't think so
7. Rebecca W: buyout applications are submitted on an ongoing basis, and every emergency manager received notice as soon as a federal disaster was declared
 - a. A Letter of intent should be going out in the next couple of weeks announcing the opening of the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program. An email blast will be sent to municipalities when that is known
 - i. Not sure of exact deadline, spring/summer 2012
 - ii. Dave Burns asked if this date could be determined and sent around to everyone
8. It appears FEMA is leaning more towards pro mitigation and looking for good hazard mitigation proposals. This needs to be the cornerstone because we will have another flood and we want to avoid the same level of damage
9. Michelle Yost heard the following tips when dealing with FEMA:
 - a. Plead your case
 - b. Push the process
 - c. Ask for more money than you need

- d. Settle for less money than you need
 - e. Projects under \$64K get the full reimbursement much quicker than projects of \$64K which take longer to receive the full reimbursement → Break projects down into smaller segments if able to speed reimbursement
10. Rebecca W. advised that municipalities should keep track of all time and materials (including volunteers) involved in cleanup/recovery. She also advised to have a contract/state representative with you when meeting with FEMA because they know the system and what to argue
- x. Joel DuBois presented a HEC RAS (Hydraulic Engineering Center, River Analysis Systems) model that analyzed a sample section of the Schoharie
- 1. Modeled a proposed 3 foot stream dredge through the Lexington hamlet along CR 13A
 - 2. Some of the cross sections modeled actually showed a floodwater surface elevation after the dredge → dredging can have unpredictable results
 - 3. The model also showed that a massive amount of streambed soil would have to be removed just for the 3' dredge, and since this didn't lower the water level much (and actually increased it at some cross sections), it would be a cost-prohibitive
 - 4. Model showed that in order to keep floodwaters within the channel boundaries, stream bed would have to be dredged down 30 feet in some cases → completely unrealistic and unfeasible. Furthermore excavation on this scale would result in stream bank destabilization threatening homes and roads
 - 5. Joel D. reiterated that this model shows that streams can be unpredictable and reaches should be properly modeled and engineered before any in-stream intervention
 - 6. Lynn B. asked if it might be fiscally smarter for towns to relocate people/homes instead of manipulating and trying to control streams
 - a. Joel D. responded that he completely agrees. Stream management as a tax-based protection needs to be well-thought-out
 - 7. Michelle Y. stated that there is a difference between inundation (which Joel's model focuses on) and streambank erosion. Most District projects focus on erosion because it is a water quality issue
 - 8. Beth R. stated that hydraulic constrictions lead to debris accumulation and eventually require intervention. It is very important to get channel alignment and dimensions correct in order to have stable streams and reaches

2. Summary of Round 5 Applications – Received August 1, 2011

- a. *Landowner Stream Assistance category*: (Joel DuBois presented these projects and gave their summaries). Votes occurred after all proposals were reviewed.
 - i. Apple Hill
 - 1. The original project application is intended to mitigate an existing hazard to private homes and a septic system. However, the project

will also address an active landslide along the East Kill. Soil borings conducted by the homeowners' engineering consultant have confirmed the existence of unstable sub-surface soil conditions. Stabilization of the slope will not only mitigate the hazard to the homes and septic, but will address stream stability through the reach and reduce sediment loading and turbidity in the East Kill.

2. The two properties associated with this project are directly upstream and adjacent to the Nikolaidis property that received a Round 4 LSA grant to complete a stream restoration project. This and the Nikolaidis project could be combined into one. Additionally, there is clay present throughout this area of the East Kill; completing this project will be beneficial for water quality.
 3. Project scored high enough to be eligible for funding (60/100)
 4. Agency personnel recommend funding the project at \$150,000
 5. **Resolution #9 of 2011** – motion to fund project at \$150,000 made by Dennis Lucas, seconded by Lynn Byrne, with all present in favor
- ii. County Route 6 at RAH
1. This project is intended to address an existing slope failure that is impacting the stability of County Route 6, and contributing clay rich sediment to the West Kill. The slope failure has resulted in dangerous conditions along the sole roadway servicing the upper portions of the West Kill watershed. Stream bank and bed erosion of clay-rich soils and roadway drainage issues appear to be the main causes of the instability. The proposed project, still in the preliminary assessment phase, is expected to include stabilization of the toe of the slope and management of groundwater conditions within the slope. These treatments are expected to mitigate the hazard to the roadway, an adjacent home, and the water quality and habitat value of the West Kill.
 2. The Greene County Highway Department applied for funding for this project during the 4th SMIP grant round and received \$75,000 in assistance from the H/I category under the project title of “County Route 6 Slope Failure.”
 3. This project scored high enough to be eligible for funding (93/100)
 4. Agency personnel recommend funding this project at \$150,000
 5. Lynn B. inquired about the timeline for this project
 - a. Jeff F.: we're hoping for construction this summer
 6. Dave B. stated that this project will cost more than what can be provided from SMIP, but the county is looking into additional funding opportunities
 - a. DEP Stream Management is covering the stream engineering portion
 - b. The county will cover road/infrastructure engineering
 7. **Resolution #10 of 2011** – motion to fund project at \$150,000 made by Joe Farleigh, seconded by Eric Dahlberg, with all present in favor
- iii. Petosa Stream Restoration

1. This proposal involves the realignment of approximately 800 linear feet of streambed and the installation of rock vanes and rip rap. This project would be undertaken to prevent further streambank erosion.
 2. Although the applicant included a significant in-kind amount, this project still scored too low to be eligible for funding (53/100)
 3. Project is heavily weighted toward 1 objective (private property protection)
 4. Overall, the stream reach is stable with not much clay deposits (mainly glacial till) – not a great water quality project
 5. Mike M. inquired if completing this project might benefit the situation downstream at CR 6 at RAH Stables
 - a. Joel responded that this would not impact/improve the situation at RAH
 6. Mike M. wondered if in-kind contributions could be used elsewhere benefitting the program and whether there might be implications of funding/not funding the project
 - a. Joel D. and Jeff F. stated they will follow up with the applicant, that there shouldn't be any repercussions if the project doesn't receive funding
 7. Beth R. urged the Committee to be judicious when considering what projects to fund this round because any left over money could be used as a local match for FEMA/SEMO recovery projects
 8. Erik Allen asked if this project could be revisited in the future – yes
 9. **Resolution #11 of 2011** – motion to not fund project made by Joe Farleigh, seconded by Dennis Lucas, with all present in favor
- iv. Sawicki/LaPierre Streambank Stabilization
1. This project proposes to provide for the stabilization of a eroding bank of the Schoharie Creek by a properly-engineered installation of approximately 275' of rip rap, planting of ecologically-appropriate trees and shrubs, and grass seeding. This project will not only stabilize the bank, but will reduce siltation resulting from the exposure of a clay deposit due to stream and surface runoff erosion; reduce or eliminate land loss; support the deposition of sediments and the natural establishment of willow on the field downstream of the rip rap; and will preserve on of the few deep and cool pools for trout in this immediate area.
 2. Project scored too low to be considered for funding (49/100) due to scope of project being heavily weighted towards private property protection. The at-risk property is comprised only of grassed yard; no structures are endangered. Completing this project will not have substantial water quality benefits due to the general lack of large clay exposures
 3. **Resolution #12 of 2011** – motion to not fund project made by Mike McCrary, seconded by Joe Farleigh, with all present in favor
- v. Gordon Streambank Restoration
1. Prior to Hurricane Irene, applicant applied for streambank stabilization treatments.

2. Irene caused considerable more damage to this property after the application was submitted, and as a result the house on the property is condemned.
 3. Agency personnel view this as an unfeasible project and do not recommend funding
 4. **Resolution #13 of 2011** – motion to not fund project made by Eric Dahlberg, seconded by Judd Weisberg, with all present in favor
- b. *Recreation and Habitat Improvements category*
- i. Prattsville Creek Walk (Michelle Y. presented this project)
 1. Prior to the Hurricane, Prattsville submitted an application to receive funding to enhance Conine Park with educational signage and a low-impact walking path to the streams
 2. Irene destroyed the project site (Conine Park), and it is now full of debris. The proposed project seems currently unfeasible
 3. Erik Allen stated that money for a creek walk is the last think Prattsville needs, if we are going to give them money, it should be for something more useful in terms of their recovery/rebuilding
 4. Rebecca W. also noted that the park floods repeatedly
 5. Judd W. stated that this is a good opportunity for enhanced public fishing access—should also be included in proposal/project
 6. Erik Allan was not in favor of allocating funds at this time due to many other priorities facing the community
 7. Rebecca W. suggested that the Committee should table the application and will review it in the future upon Prattsville’s request.
 8. The Committee wants to support Prattsville in this endeavor and when they are ready to rebuild the Park, the town is welcome to reapply for funding.
 9. **Resolution #14 of 2011** – Motion to table application and review in the future upon Prattsville’s request made by Judd Weisberg , seconded by Dennis Lucas, with all present in favor.

3. Summary of Budget

- a. Due to funding both of the recommended LSA projects at \$150K, the LSA category was overdrawn by \$100,000
 - i. Agency personnel recommended covering this \$100K overage from the General Project Contingency fund, leaving \$85,274 in the contingency fund
- b. Agency personnel also recommended moving all remaining SMIP monies (besides the contingency fund) into one fund to be used as a local match to leverage Hazard Mitigation funds (state/federal recovery assistance) that improve conveyance and drainage where repetitive problems exist, such as the Griffin Road culvert. Funds would be limited and communities would have to apply for the 25% local match
 - i. There would be a total of \$323,677.50 for this effort
- c. **Resolution #15 of 2011** – motion to accept agency budget recommendations made by Paul Dibbell, seconded by Lynn Byrne, with all present in favor
- d. Current Budget Satus:
 - i. \$323,677.50 available to use as 25% local match for hazard mitigation projects
 - ii. \$85,274 remaining in Contingency Fund

4. Meeting Schedule for the New Year

- a. Schoharie Watershed Summit – January 21, 2012
 - i. Topics: recovery, flooding, stream management
- b. SWAC
 - i. February 1, 2012 is the next grant round deadline; may coordinate nicely with hazard mitigation proposals
 - ii. SWAC will meet in March/April to discuss Round 6 applications
 - iii. Beth R. stated that the SMIP funds will most likely be replenished, but are at least 18 months off
 - 1. This hiatus might be good to allow completion of unfinished projects