

## **Section 7 Plan Implementation**

The DEP and GCSWCD will be developing a preliminary Implementation Strategy for this Plan in the next six months. The District will work with the PAC and key West Kill leaders and advocates to prioritize the recommendations in the Plan together. The GCSWCD will then be asking for the demonstration of local commitment and leadership by asking the Town of Lexington to adopt the Plan by resolution. In doing so, the District and NYCDEP will work with the Town, the County and State agencies to develop an agreement for cooperation that will ensure that decisions made and actions taken that affect the West Kill will be consistent with the spirit and content of the Plan. With adoption of the Plan, the local groundwork will be completed for drawing technical and financial resources into the watershed. Implementing the recommendations can improve the quality of life in the valley, and improve the ecological integrity of the West Kill.

The recommendations in this plan are unlikely to be implemented without ongoing collaboration between agencies, community organizations and the public at large. The first step in that collaborative effort will involve taking the SMP to the public for review, comment and revision. In the first six months following completion of the West Kill SMP, the project team will work closely with the PAC, Town of Lexington and landowners to hold a series of formal and informal sessions during which SMP can be discussed in greater detail. As noted in Section 6, no priority or time table has been established for the General Recommendations as it is the intention of the Project Team to let these issues be evaluated by the watershed stakeholders. It is the intent of the West Kill Project Team to review the plan with a wider range of watershed stakeholders and to develop a prioritization of these recommendations together.

It is strongly recommended that the West Kill Project Advisory Committee (PAC) continue as an organization, meeting at least bi-annually to review progress towards implementing the plan and to assess new issues and opportunities as they arise. In the absence of a watershed landowner's association, it is expected that the GCSWCD and NYCDEP will continue to play an active role in coordinating the PAC and other partners. The GCSWCD and NYCDEP will continue to enhance opportunities for landowner input into the SMP and its implementation.

As the project team moves the SMP into the implementation phase, there are many possible issues or initiatives that will require further discussion and refinement. These may include, but are not limited to:

- Many recommendations in this Plan would benefit all the streams in the Schoharie Basin, and should be implemented basin-wide. In doing so, however, it will be important that we ensure that the West Kill maintain its identity as a unique stream, one with unique management issues;

- Identification of the most urgent projects or programs to implement or pursue among the recommendations in Sections 4 and 6 of the Plan will require our careful consideration of relative risks and benefits;
- We should carefully identify the obstacles to accomplishing these projects;
- We should periodically evaluate our progress toward implementing the Plan recommendations;
- Proposals and applications for grants available for stream work and stewardship will need to be developed;
- Resource and contact information will need to be updated;
- Emerging issues that require new recommendations will need to be identified and integrated into the Plan;
- Recommendations that, due to changing conditions, are not practicable, or are no longer relevant, need to be removed;
- Data from ongoing monitoring will need to be evaluated and incorporated;
- Additional assessments as necessary to make final decisions on the feasibility of certain recommendations will need to be conducted. These assessments may include fisheries habitat as well as geotechnical evaluations in critical areas;

As active members of the PAC, the Greene County Soil and Water Conservation District, New York City Department of Environmental Protection and the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation will continue to be key partners in the actual implementation of this plan. These agencies have direct stream management responsibilities, and it will be important that each integrates the findings and recommendations in their day to day activities. It is also important that the West Kill project team continue to outreach to local, county and state highway departments to develop collaborative projects and programs, and to ensure that when highway departments undertake projects in the valley that they too outreach to the project team for specific information to take into consideration, or consult the management unit of relevance in the Plan.

Whether it is routine technical assistance to landowners, new program initiatives, stream permitting or other tasks, these agencies can play a key role in the effective implementation of the SMP. These agencies must proactively provide the other members with up-to-date information regarding funding and other resources available for stream-related activities, as well as changing regulations, guidance on best management practices (BMPs), workshops and important contact information. Demonstrated local commitment to implementing the measures recommended in the Plan will be the most effective means

of ensuring that agency funding and other resources are available to assist with projects or other needs.

As members of the Project Advisory Committee change over time, other members should orient them to the effort that went into the development of the Stream Management Plan, including its goals and strategies. As policies change and other issues arise that impact the management of the stream, these changes should be reflected, where necessary, as amendments to the Management Plan.

This Stream Management Plan should ideally evolve with the goals and values of the community, the policy makers and those policies that affect stream management. The SMP, and the more detailed prioritization of recommendations that will be refined over the next six months, should serve as the primary guidance documents for future management of the West Kill. In order to ensure that the Plan continues to be useful to the community, it will need ongoing maintenance and updating in the months and years ahead. While a good planning document sets a solid framework for future activities, it also recognizes change, whether physical, institutional or programmatic, and it has a mechanism to evolve. As the watershed its stream networks change, so must the SMP.