

Tools for Protecting Nature in Your Community

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Introduction

Habitat conservation priorities of the Hudson River Estuary Program:

- estuary shoreline
- stream corridors
- wetlands
- grasslands and shrublands
- unbroken forests
- caves and cliffs

Steps for conserving biodiversity:

- identify resources (*What do you have?*)
- prioritize resources (*What's most important?*)
- plan, protect, manage (*What are you going to do about it?*)

Various resources available to assist with land-use planning:

- maps and data
- conservation guides
- training and education
- publications
- funding.

Overview of Available Resources

1) Maps, Data, and "Conservation Guides"

Hudson River Estuary Wildlife and Habitat Conservation Framework

(Penhollow et al. 2006). Provides an overview of biodiversity issues in the Hudson River estuary corridor, describes key plant and animal habitats, includes a map and descriptions of Significant Biodiversity Areas in the region, and proposes various strategies for their conservation. Available from the NYS DEC Hudson River Estuary Program (also will be available on-line in summer 2008.)

Mapping Nature in Your Community: Important Areas Maps

These maps were developed by the NY Natural Heritage Program in partnership with the Hudson River Estuary Program, and include areas important to known populations of rare plants and animals, and to known significant ecosystems. Completed in December 2007, the Important Areas GIS data are currently being distributed to county agencies and municipalities by the Hudson River Estuary Program for use in open space planning, development of natural resource inventories and master plans, and other regional land use planning efforts.

Habitat Summaries

The Hudson River Estuary Program can provide your municipality with a summary of documented significant ecological communities, rare plants and animals, and other available data on biological resources in your town. Communities in Albany, Rensselaer, Columbia, and Greene counties can contact Karen Strong at klstrong@gw.dec.state.ny.us and in Ulster, Dutchess, Orange, Putnam, Rockland, and Westchester, contact Laura Heady at ltheady@gw.dec.state.ny.us.

Conservation Guides

The NY Natural Heritage Program maintains online animal, plant, and community guides that include description, habitat, distribution, places to see, conservation issues, and other information on the species and communities they track in their database. Future updates will include additional recommendations for planning and management. See guides.nynhp.org.

Additional On-Line Data

NYS Breeding Bird Atlas: www.dec.ny.gov/animals/7312.html

NYS Amphibian & Reptile Atlas: www.dec.ny.gov/animals/7140.html

2) Training and Education

Biodiversity Assessment

Hudsonia offers a 10-month training and 3-day short course on biodiversity assessment to land-use decisionmakers and planners. Participants learn how to use maps, air photos, and field investigation to identify important habitats and discuss strategies for conservation.

www.hudsonia.org

Land Use Law

Pace University's Land Use Law Center offers their "Land Use Leadership Alliance" training to community leaders involved in land-use decisionmaking. The 4-day course covers the technical and process tools needed to develop sustainable communities. www.landuseleaders.com

The **Hudson River Estuary Program** also partners with **Cornell University** to provide GIS training, and workshops on priority habitats to landowners and planners. Contact the Estuary Program for more details.

3) Publications

Metropolitan Conservation Alliance (MCA)

The MCA has published a number of biodiversity plans for different parts of the Hudson Valley, as well as technical guidance on a variety of planning and conservation topics. Many are available as free downloads at: www.metropolitanconservationalliance.org.

Pace Land Use Law Center

The Center offers many guidance books related to land use law and planning. See www.landuseleaders.com for a list of available publications. In addition, the Land Use Law Center maintains a free database of land use resources and ordinances from across the United States at landuse.law.pace.edu.

Conserving Natural Areas and Wildlife in Your Community: *Smart Growth Strategies for Protecting the Biological Diversity of New York's Hudson River Valley*

This new offering from the NYS DEC Hudson River Estuary Program will be completed in summer 2008. Limited paper copies will be distributed, but digital copies will be available on CD and on the DEC website.

See also **Hudson River Estuary Wildlife and Habitat Conservation Framework**, above.

4) Funding

Hudson River Estuary Grants

The Hudson River Estuary Grants are offered annually to municipalities and not-for-profit organizations, and include a category for community-based habitat conservation and stewardship. The 2008 grants are due June 27. See details at www.dec.ny.gov/lands/5091.html.