

## SECTION 6 – EDUCATIONAL AND RECREATIONAL ASSETS

### **6.1 Educational**

Educating the public is important when discussing management practices to improve watershed health because people's actions directly affect the quality and quantity of water in the lakes, streams and rivers. Everyone lives within a watershed and without the basic knowledge of what practices and policies affect the health of the watershed, an effective management plan cannot be implemented. The design of a watershed education program that creates awareness is of fundamental importance. Four types of watershed education programs are:

- Watershed awareness: raising basic watershed awareness using signs, storm drain stenciling, stream walks, maps
- Personal stewardship: educating residents about the individual role they play in the watershed and communicating specific messages about helpful and harmful behaviors and practices.
- Professional training: educating the development community on how to apply the tools of watershed protection
- Watershed engagement: providing opportunities for the public to actively engage in watershed protection and restoration.

Collaboration between towns and citizens within each town will have the benefits of information exchange, expanding the audience, and learning from current and past mistakes. The Rondout watershed currently is home to many not-for-profit, private, and government funded organizations that currently educate and promote watershed stewardship. Appendix M presents an annotated list of the organizations and groups currently active in the watershed including:

- a. Local Conservation Advisory Councils or Committees
- b. Ulster County Government Contacts and Organizations
- c. City/State Agencies and Contacts
- d. Local Education Centers and Organizations
- e. Relevant Non-profit Organizations
- f. Recreational Organizations and Contacts
- g. Tourism Resources
- h. Schools

The Rondout Creek Watershed Council is committed to protecting water resources, increasing community awareness through education and improving conservation efforts throughout the Rondout Creek Watershed.

## **6.2 Recreational Assets**

It's the recreational exposure that reconnects people to the earth and provides the motivation to protect the natural resources.... (appendix \_\_)

### **Recommendations:**

The following recommendations take into consideration the feasibility, finances and what's best for the protection of the Rondout Watershed and its culture. An example of a long-term goal is environmental education for children. If our children are taught about the problems that threaten our livelihoods, they will be informed and prepared to make changes now and in the future to protect and preserve the environment. Short-term goals are one's that can be implemented now with benefit the present and the future. For instance, the "Great Outdoors Initiative" that is currently in Washington, "will promote and support community-level efforts to conserve outdoor spaces.

(<http://www.doi.gov/americasgreatoutdoors/Press-Release.cfm>)." This bill has the potential to create jobs, raise revenue for local businesses while protecting our planet. Local businesses and people are encouraged to participate in completing goals in order for the community to feel sense of ownership, entitlement and that they are directing their own future.

Once a management plan is developed, communities still need to invest in strategies for ongoing watershed stewardship. The goals of watershed stewardship are to increase public awareness about watershed management efforts and to increase participation in the process to ensure stewardship on their own property and within their communities. There are six basic principles that should be addressed to promote greater watershed stewardship:

1. Watershed advocacy
2. Watershed education
3. Pollution prevention
4. Watershed maintenance
5. Indicator monitoring
6. Watershed restoration

Create public access maps of the Rondout Creek that are easily read and straightforward. Hardcopies should be available in addition to making them available on the internet. The maps should also include recreational assets and watershed delineation. People with professional training in watershed management should create the maps in collaboration with Ulster County Tourism and each municipality. Communication between stakeholders (landowners, citizens), and policy makers (town boards, CAC's, non profits) should be improved to foster cooperation through the use of town hall meetings. In order to promote awareness Service Learning Projects such as water monitoring, habitat restoration, and removal of invasive species, by volunteers with write ups of each projects given to schools and organizations so interested students can use these projects to complete community service requirements, Eagle Scout badges, or internships. In addition to the previously mentioned volunteer projects, monitoring and regulating

development that threatens sensitive areas of the Rondout Watershed could be done by a volunteer group lead by members of the CAC's or the town board. Advertising and sponsoring Earth Day events and Clean up days are also great ways to raise awareness. Creating eye catching and attractive physical signs for access points will foster increased use of recreational assets within the watershed. To increase media exposure a marketing campaign with a logo that is used through the county that addresses the goals of RCWC and the management plan should be used. A tag line that could be used to identify the project is "It's about our quality of life-we need to appreciate, enjoy and take actions to protect our watershed home." In addition to advertisements a mailer package that contains an educational section, a local threat section and a children's coloring book is a possibility for raising awareness. The establishment of a basic set of watershed stewardship principles that include community engagement and education principles should be located on the website of RCWC and each municipality to keep everyone focused on the goals of the plan. An easement or land trust workshop should be created to educate land owners of the ways they can preserve the natural beauty of their land.

