

Watershed Protection is Key to Protecting Natural Resources

Area watershed groups share successes, ideas and challenges

By Katy Dunlap, HRWA Coordinator



On July 1, 2008, representatives from more than 24 watershed groups gathered with regional resource providers at the Beacon Sloop Club to share success stories, discuss challenges, and outline opportunities to advance protection of the watershed sub-

basins that feed into our Hudson River. Sponsored by the Hudson River Watershed Alliance and the NYS DEC Hudson River Estuary Program, the purpose of this meeting was to learn about progress being made, to prevent re-invention of the wheel, to determine what other resources and tools were needed to improve efforts, and to recognize and reward the hard work and dedication of our local watershed leaders.

While each group is at a different level in the watershed planning process, in general, groups are adopting similar strategies to protect our tributaries including engaging the public, conducting stream assessments, developing watershed management/conservation plans, and working with municipalities to implement plan recommendations.

Two common obstacles were identified from among the many challenges faced by community watershed groups: lack of funding and lack of committed volunteers. Resource providers from NYS Department of State, NYS Department of Environmental

Conservation, county Cornell Co-operative Extensions, and county environmental agencies, explained different opportunities to advance our on-the-ground work. The ultimate goal is for our community watershed groups to become self-sustaining, without requiring each group to apply for funding year after year.

After the morning meeting, we boarded the sloop *Clearwater*, where we were greeted by Pete Seeger, who shared stories of the sloop's origin, sang Hudson River songs, and encouraged attendees to continue working hard to protect our watershed and clean up our streams. Our community watershed representatives spent the rest of the day networking on the sloop and brainstorming on ideas to improve efforts while the weather wavered between sunshine, clouds, rain, intense heat, and lightning

Suggestions for additional resources and improving efforts include: develop a watershed hotline, help promote cost-sharing resources among neighboring watersheds, assist groups in leveraging public television and radio, providing technical research and DEC information to watershed groups, training in how to forge partnerships with agencies/municipalities, establish a stream monitoring equipment borrowing program, and work with MS4 municipalities to incorporate watershed protection principles.

For a full report on the watershed meeting and sail, please see www.hudsonwatershed.org.



Watershed Tool Kit

In each issue of the *Navigator*, we'll include information on different tools you can use to protect your watershed and ultimately, your Hudson.

GET INVOLVED!

With more than 65 major tributaries to the Hudson River, there's a lot of work to do and we need your help! Learn about watershed groups working in your area and find out how you can help improve the health of your stream. Go to www.hudsonwatershed.org to learn about existing watershed protection efforts. Don't have a watershed group already working in your area? Interested in getting one started? Contact Katy Dunlap, 845-454-7673 x116.

WE ALL LIVE IN A WATERSHED!