Ulster County
Water Quality Coordinating Committee

Providing a coordinated and collaborative approach to protect and improve the waters of Ulster County and ensuring the resilience of our watershed systems

Members: UC Dept of the Environment, UC Dept of Health and Mental Health, UC Dept of Public Works, UC Planning Dept, UC Soil and Water Conservation District, UC Environmental Management Council, and Cornell Cooperative Extension of Ulster County.

Mission:

Provide a coordinated and collaborative approach to protect and improve the waters of Ulster County and ensure the resilience of our watershed systems.

Vision:

The Ulster County Water Quality Coordinating Committee envisions a resilient watershed system serving the health and welfare of the community and ecosystem within the County and the region.

2021 Annual Report

Contents

I. Introduction

The Ulster County Department of the Environment was appointed the County's Water Quality Management Agency in 2017 by the Ulster County Legislature, pursuant to New York State County Law Article 5 § 220-A. The Department of the Environment has the responsibility of meeting the requirements of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Phase II Stormwater Program (MS4 program) which requires coordination regarding stormwater management. They must also respond to an ongoing need and responsibility to drinking water protection and watershed management planning, as well as identifying and addressing significant changes due to climate change. As the Water Quality Management Agency, the Department of Environment convened the Ulster County Water Quality Coordinating Committee (UCWQCC) in 2019 for the purpose of coordinating and collaborating with other agencies and organizations to ensure resilience in our watershed systems.

II. 2021 Ulster County WQCC Activities

Members

The 2021 UCWQCC was made up of the following organizations:

- Ulster County Department of the Environment
- Cornell Cooperative Extension of Ulster County
- Ulster County Department of Health
- Ulster County Department of Planning, Economic Development and Transportation
- Ulster County Department of Public Works
- Ulster County Environmental Management Council
- Ulster County Soil and Water Conservation District

Summary of Activities

The UCWQCC met six times in 2021. These included hosting three open meetings and inviting community partners, other agencies, and non-profits. A summary of the Committee's activities is below:

February 8th : The main discussion topics were ideas for speakers in 2021 and the CATALUM SPDES Permit public comment period and DEIS review as it related to the Lower Esopus.

February 18th : This was a special presentation open to local partners. Brian Yellen, UMASS Amherst, presented on sediment processes in the Catskills, Lower Esopus, and the Hudson River Estuary.

April 12th : This was an open meeting of the WQCC and the Committee hosted Guy Foster, Water Quality Networks & Research, Section Chief, US Geologic Survey (USGS), for a presentation on the USGS Gage network and data collection in Ulster County. Other meeting topics included the DEIS review of the CATALUM SPDES Permit, Ulster County stormwater updates, and community updates.

June 14th : The June meeting of the UCWQCC included a presentation by Natalie Browne, NYSDEC, on the Water Quality Improvement Program WQIP funding. The other topics discusses were the Ashokan releases to the Lower Esopus, an update on the ARWG comments on the DEIS, and member updates.

October 18th : The October meeting of the UCWQCC involved a presentation by Chana Friedenberg, Hudson Valley Regional Council. Chana gave an update on the Drinking Water Source Protection Program (DWSP2). Other topics included Ulster County Stormwater updates, member updates, and speaker ideas for the December meeting.

December 13th : The final meeting of the UCWQQ of 2021 included two presentations. Steven Winkley, New York Rural Water Association, presented on local groundwater pollution and resources. Tom Niekrewicz, Hudson River Estuary Program, presented on the Estuary Program and upcoming water quality monitoring efforts. Other discussion topics were the County's MS4 program, updates on the Lower Esopus, DWSP2 updates, PFOA testing in drinking water, the County's upcoming Natural Resources Inventory project, member updates, the 2021 annual report, speaker ideas for the next year, and the 2022 meeting schedule.

The Committee web page hosts meeting information and the yearly meeting schedule.
https://ulstercountyny.gov/environment/ulster-county-water-quality-coordinating-committee

Goals of the UCWQCC for 2022 include

- Making more connections to agriculture and regenerative agriculture techniques and how it relates to water quality.
- Updating the Water Quality Strategy for Ulster County

Proposed presentations in 2022 include

- CSO's
- Small stream, waterbody, and wetland protections
- Emerging contaminants

III. Water Quality Management Agency Report

New York State County Law Article 5 § 220-A outlines annual reporting requirements for the County's Water Quality Management Agency. The purpose of the report is to identify needs and document progress in water quality management. Resources and organizations for more information are listed where applicable.

1. **Recommended changes in surface and groundwater classification**

   No recommendations at this time

2. **Status and results of water quality monitoring activities**

   The following entities are actively monitoring water quality in Ulster County
   a. United State Geological Survey (USGS)
   b. NYSDEC
   c. Department of Health - Drinking Water – Monitors public water supply
   d. Citizen Science and other monitoring activities

i. NYSDEC water reports
ii. Riverkeeper

3. Status of facilities construction

Nothing to report

4. Onsite sewage facilities programs

No report at this time

5. Hazardous and toxic materials disposal

No report at this time

6. Status of point sources control and operation

One of the larger challenges for surface water in Ulster County is the management of the Lower Esopus, which in large part is dictated by the NYCDEP operations of the Ashokan Reservoir. In 2021 there was the opportunity to review the Draft Environmental Impact Statement regarding the NYCDEP Modification to the CATALUM SPDES Permit and proposed turbidity control measures. For more information see: https://www.dec.ny.gov/lands/79771.html

7. **Nonpoint source management**

These entities are programmatically working on nonpoint source management in Ulster County

a. Cornell Cooperative Extension of Ulster County
b. Ulster County Soil and Water Conservation District
c. Ashokan Watershed Stream Management Program

8. Economic and demographic changes

The 2020 Census was released during the reporting year. Any analysis of water quality and infrastructure may include these data moving forward.

9. Assessment of water quality condition in the County

These entities and programs assess water quality conditions in Ulster County

a. NYSDEC Stream Classifications
b. Drinking Water Source Protection Program (DWSP2)

10. Quantification of needs to improve water quality management

No report at this time

11. Findings and recommendations for future programming

No report at this time

Appendix

Water Quality Strategy for Ulster County, 1998

The most recent comprehensive water quality strategy document was produced in 1998 by the Ulster County Water Supply Advisory Board. The following list is the Goals and Objectives as outlined in the Water Quality Strategy for Ulster County, 1998.

- Identify, delineate and create a data base of the watersheds and subsheds of Ulster County using a Geographic Information System.
- Identify the water bodies including lakes, ponds, rivers, streams, and wetlands, and designate them as watershed and/or subshed. Develop this data as a hydrography layer in a GIS. Target water bodies identified as at-risk for verification and/or updates of current NYS 305-B classifications.
- Identify and prioritize recharge zones which are linked to aquifers identified in the 1989 Steams & Wheler study. Prioritization should be based upon potential for contamination from nonpoint or other pollution. Assist in developing uniform policies and protection ordinances for recharge zones and wellheads. Research, design and implement watershed management plans which have built in flexibility and potential for adaptation to evolving issues and priorities.
- Develop a process to help identify new or unknown Nonpoint Pollution sources or concerns, including a written survey for circulation to all communities, agencies, organizations and/or individuals. Hold community information meetings to raise awareness of and receive feedback on water quality issues.
- Develop a data base of currently recognized or known Nonpoint Source issues or problems within the County. Organize these according to watershed/ subshed, and assign them to the relevant water body by geographic location.
- Identify all watershed stakeholders and non-governmental bodies, including businesses with interests or activities relating to water quality issues, and develop resource sharing partnerships.
- Prioritize watersheds for the development of holistic management plans.
- Encourage citizen and municipal participation in the development of watershed management plans, and provide opportunities for public participation in the implementation of quality control and remediation programs.
- Maintain and amend, as necessary, the current priority list. Develop an action plan which establishes realistic short and long term goals which are part of watershed based management plans, keeping in mind the goal of achieving and maintaining beneficial uses of water.
- Develop implementation strategies for education, regulation and promotion that will reduce Nonpoint Source Pollution and recognize the individual and overlapping responsibilities of local, county, state and federal agencies.
- Continue to provide assistance and involvement in the source water assessment program