Watershed Protection, Restoration, Planning, and Management in the Hudson River Estuary

Stream Assessment, Public Education, and Green Infrastructure in the Onesquethaw-Coeymans Watershed

Prepared by

Onesquethaw-Coeymans Watershed Council

www.ocwatershed.org

Partnering with:

Albany County Soil and Water Conservation District
Franciscan Ecology Center at Siena College
Trout Unlimited
Albany County Office of Natural Resource Conservation

The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation provided funding for this project from the Environmental Protection Fund through the Hudson River Estuary Program in partnership with the New England Interstate Water Pollution Control Commission

Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION

The Onesquethaw-Coeymans Watershed Council (OCWC) is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization formed in 2001 whose mission is to protect and improve the Onesquethaw-Coeymans Creek and its watershed for the benefit of people, wildlife, and the environment. The Council's goal is to cooperate and partner with governmental and non-governmental organizations, businesses, property owners, and concerned citizens to improve and protect the quality of the Onesquethaw-Coeymans Creek by: 1) gathering data and monitoring the Creek; 2) evaluating information about the Creek; 3) implementing improvement projects; and 4) conducting outreach and education about the creek and watershed. The Council has implemented and has on-going programs in all of these areas.

The Council recently completed a Watershed Management Plan to guide its efforts and established an inter-municipal working group to focus on implementing recommendations of that plan. The completed project focused on shared priorities of the Watershed Management Plan and Goal 4 of the Hudson River Estuary Action Agenda (HREAA) to protect and restore this important tributary of the Hudson River. The three project areas included; research and monitoring, public education and outreach, and green infrastructure to work toward HREAA's Target 1 actions to protect water quality in streams.

RESEARCH AND MONITORING

Water Quality Sampling and Analysis

The OCWC was awarded funding by the NEIWPCC/HREP for stream monitoring described in an approved QAPP.

The proposal included sampling and analysis with an objective to more fully provide baseline characteristics and seek the source of stream impacts to address the recommendations of the Watershed Study to evaluate the sources of toxics and other contaminants and the source of heavy turbidity in upper Coeymans Creek. It also addresses HREAA's initiative to identify stresses to natural resources. The objective of this work was to determine the source(s)/upper boundary of contamination in the Upper Coeymans Creek (UCC).

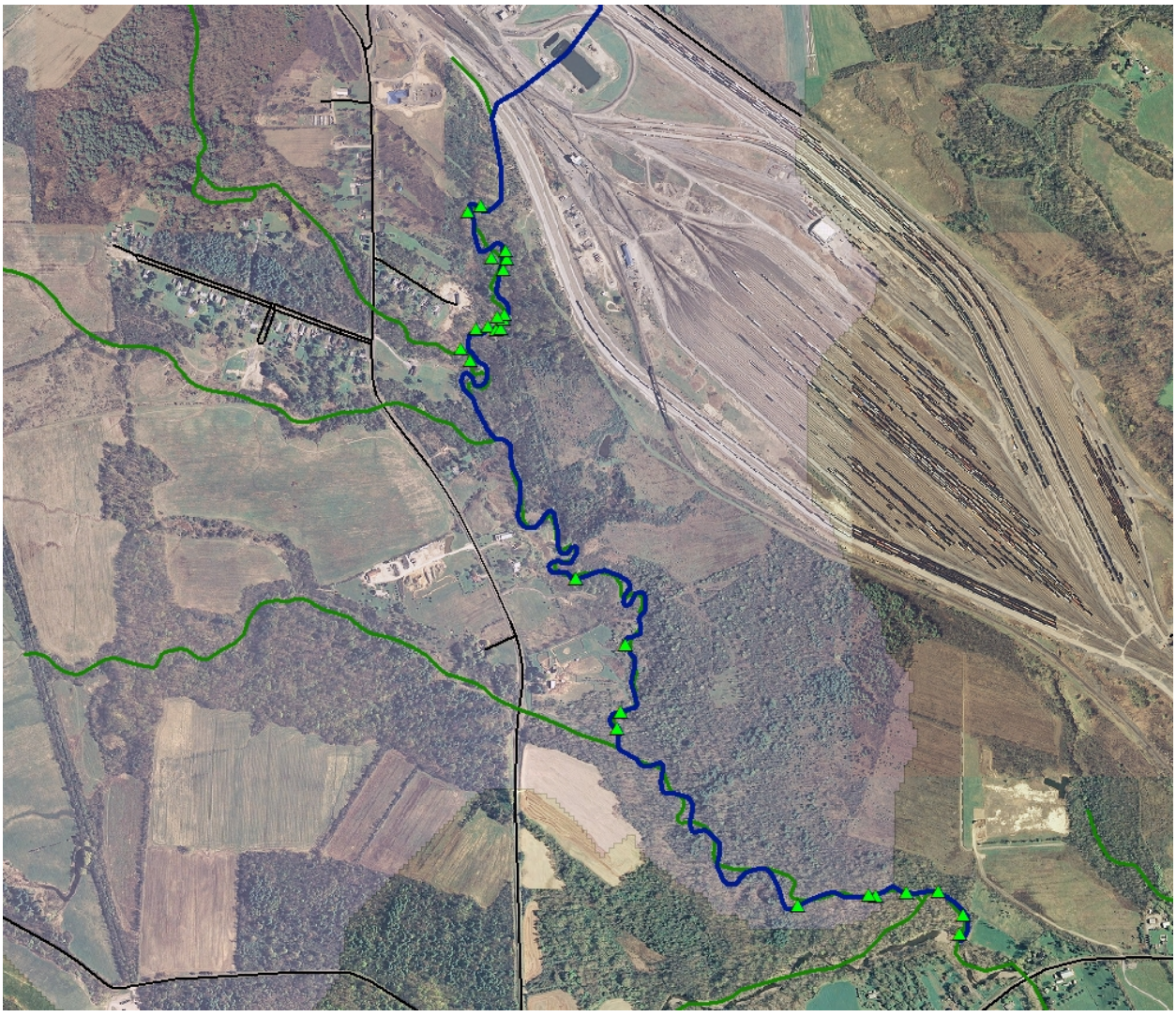
A full Water Quality Sampling and Analysis Report is included as Attachment A.

Stream Inventory

In collaboration with the Franciscan Ecology Center at Siena College, two Siena College student interns were recruited, trained and engaged to conduct an assessment of a portion of the creek. The objective was to identify areas in need for stream bank stabilization, potential sites for Trees-for - Tribs projects, and potential illicit discharges to Coeymans Creek.

A map of areas of concern has been created allowing the council to focus on collaborating with NYDEC's Trees-for-Tribs program and other partners to re-vegetate high priority areas and to work with other agency and municipal partners to address illicit discharges and erosion issues.

A complete report on the stream survey is included in Attachment B.



Public Education and Outreach

Remote Watershed Education

The OCWC created a website that is maintained by a volunteer. www.ocwatershed.org. It provides information about the watershed and Watershed Management Plan, council membership, and OCWC news and events. Through this grant, the OCWC extended its domain name and hosting agreement with GoDaddy. We continue to add information to the site, including this study when it is completed.

The Council also assembled a portable display that includes a table and chairs, tabletop display board, laptop for displaying a slide show of maps, pictures and other information, and a brochure holder with a supply of take-away color brochures on pollution prevention and stream stewardship. The objective is to convey information about the watershed and creek, the Council, and watershed protection strategies to a broader audience.

The Council's goal is to hold and/or attend at least 3 events a year to conduct education and outreach about the watershed. Since this grant commenced, OCWC participated in 3 public education and outreach events. A public forum was held November 30th at CSX auditorium for watershed residents to share their experiences with the effects of the summer storms and to learn about the role watershed dynamics play in flood control. In addition to the OCWC public outreach event, the Council participated in an event sponsored by the Environmental Consortium of Hudson Valley Colleges and Universities, "Collaboration Throughout the Hudson River Watershed".

Finally, related to the public fishing component, a presentation regarding the negotiated public fishing rights easement (PFR), was made to the Bethlehem Town Board at the request of the Town Supervisor. The first part of the presentation was made by Dennis Wischman of Region 4, NYS Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC). DEC's presentation described in detail the PFR process and how the easement purchase price was developed. The second part of the presentation was made by Roy Lamberton of the OCWC and Clearwater Chapter of Trout Unlimited. This presentation gave a brief description of the mission of the OCWC and TU, the watershed study and management plan developed by OCWC with a grant from the Hudson River Estuary Program, and how the PFR acquisition was consistent with one of the goals of the watershed management plan

The OCWC in partnership with Trout Unlimited (TU) has negotiated about one mile of Public Fishing Rights to be granted to NY State, to be funded jointly by DEC, local industries, the Town of Bethlehem and TU. A kiosk, funded by this grant, will be placed in the parking area to provide information about the watershed, creek, and fish and the partners that contributed to preserving the public fishing rights.

Green Infrastructure

OCWC partnered with Albany County Soil and Water Conservation District who took the lead on the rain garden project. In partnership with Cornell Cooperative Extension of Albany County and the Unitas Memorial VFW Post #9594, a rain garden was installed at the VFW Post located in Mosher Park in Ravena.

Soils were purchased from and delivered by local contractors. Plants were purchased from Project Native and included cardinal flower, blazing star, boneset, purple joe pye, mountain mint, purple coneflower, purple love grass, obedient plant, New England aster, green-eyed coneflower and New York ironweed. While the unusual stretch of warm weather allowed for the installation of the rain garden, the sign will be installed in the spring when digging for the posts will be easier.

The total cost for the rain garden including soils, plants and signage was $1166.28. The majority of in-kind contribution for this project was provided by Soil and Water Conservation District staff and Cornell Cooperative Extension Master Gardener at 51 ½ hours with some planning assistance from OCWC.

The purpose was to demonstrate how rain gardens treat storm water pollution from the roof of the building prior to it entering the ground water. The location is ideal in that it captures roof runoff from a downspout and is in a highly visible location. This will help increase the residents' awareness of rain gardens and demonstrate the garden's capability to control and treat storm water run-off.