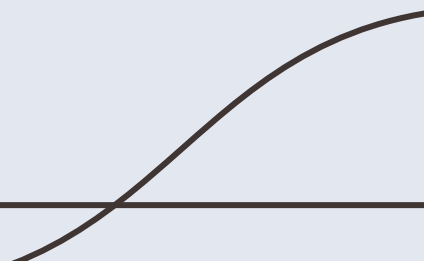




Neversink Watershed Management Plan

Vision Statement, Purpose Statement, Goals, Strategies, and Actions



Vision Statement

The Neversink Watershed will be full of vibrant communities with clean water for humans and wildlife. It will be resilient to flooding, with ample river access and open space for the public to enjoy, and high quality habitat for wildlife.

Purpose Statement

The Neversink Watershed Management Plan outlines the shared conservation goals of the Neversink community and will serve as a blueprint to be used by all stakeholders in future watershed resource management decisions. The plan promotes and supports clean and abundant water, healthy habitat, expanded recreation, infrastructure improvements, climate resilience, flood mitigation, and cultural and historic amenities.

Goals

1. Protect and Restore Water Quality
 2. Protect and Improve Habitat
 3. Strengthen Climate Resiliency and Flood Mitigation Measures
 4. Protect Important Open Space
 5. Maximize Recreational Opportunities
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Goal #1: Protect and Restore Water Quality

Clean and plentiful water is essential to sustain life and to ensure the healthy growth of our communities. Maintaining and restoring clean water will require a combination of collaborative and regulatory approaches that are fair and equitable, engage all watershed stakeholders, and result in multiple environmental and economic benefits for people and communities.

Strategies

Implement stream restoration projects that stabilize banks, reconnect floodplains, create aquatic habitat, and reduce erosion and sedimentation

Improve stormwater controls and green infrastructure

Evaluate the extent of sewage pollution from small package plants and private septic systems

Ensure effective implementation of the State Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (SPDES) program

Curb the spread of Invasive species (for example knotweed, water chestnut, ash borer, lanternfly)

Encourage best management practices for forested areas

Identify and protect land that is critical to protecting water quality and enhancing aquatic health

Develop understanding of emerging contaminants and salt

Support and encourage water conservation

Create stream buffers

Establish Critical Environmental Areas (CEAs)

Actions

Add riparian buffers for (insert percentage of miles here) miles/land

Explore the potential of multijurisdictional sewer management and identify potential sewage pollution mitigation pilot projects

Secure grants for source water protection (Port Jervis)

Identify and prioritize the protection of acres of headwaters, riparian land/areas and wetlands

Develop public education programs that address forest management, emerging contaminants, and invasive species

Identify and protect land in the headwaters, particularly to ensure healthy flows from privately held dams

Collect baseline water quality and habitat data

Goal #2: Protect and Improve Habitat

Healthy habitat means ensuring high functioning physical conditions both in the river, along the river, and throughout the watershed. These include natural stream bed composition, riparian buffers that filter and curb runoff, functioning floodplains, and protecting important natural areas throughout the watershed. Healthy habitat goals are integrally linked with other conservation objectives including water quality, recreation, wildlife conservation, and land protection.

Strategies

Curb the spread of Invasive species (for example knotweed, water chestnut, ash borer, lanternfly)

Provide stream connectivity throughout the watershed by replacing failing or undersized culverts, and removing other impediments to aquatic passage

Restore streams, create aquatic habitat, and reduce erosion and sedimentation by stabilizing banks and reconnecting floodplains to protect instream and riparian habitat

Identify and protect land that is critical to protecting habitat and enhancing aquatic health throughout the watershed

Ensure regulated flows as outlined in the Flexible Flow Management Plan (FFMP) are protective of habitat

Promote and establish healthy buffers along waterways

Explore the possibilities of establishing additional Critical Environmental Areas (CEAs)

Ensure effective stormwater controls on projects adjacent to streams

Actions

Develop public education programs that address forest management, emerging contaminants, and invasive species

Protect (insert number of acres here) acres of headwaters, riparian land and wetlands

Implement (insert number of projects here) stream restoration projects

Maintain communication with NYC Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) and the public about water releases from the Neversink reservoirs

Facilitate communication with Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) around the possibility of establishing additional Critical Environmental Areas (CEAs)

Increasing education with contractors about stormwater best management practices (BMPs)

Identify and protect land in the headwaters, particularly to ensure healthy flows from privately held dams

Goal #3: Strengthen Climate Resiliency and Flood Mitigation Measures

Climate change is altering our natural environment in significant ways. The increasing frequency and severity of storm events in New York is well documented and is contributing to harmful impacts on the landscape especially in our waterways. Climate change leads to warming water temperatures that are injurious to cold water species like trout. It also can result in increased flooding that threatens human life and places strain on community infrastructure including houses, roads, and bridges.

Strategies

Reconnect floodplains to store flood water during high water events

Create stream buffers to enhance flood resilience, stabilize stream banks, and cool the river during high air temperatures

Improve stormwater controls and green infrastructure

Ensure communication with NYC Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) and the public about reservoirs levels

Maintain forest cover to maximize absorption of storm water and to sequester carbon

Right size bridges and culverts to strengthen resilience to storm events

Maintain culverts and roadside ditches

Actions

Identify locations for stream buffer projects

Host meeting with departments of public works and highways to discuss culvert and roadside ditch maintenance

Implement seasonal voids in reservoirs per FFMP to minimize flood risk to downstream communities

Implement (insert number of projects here) stream projects to restore floodplains

Repair or right size (insert number of culverts here) culverts

Review and update county Hazard Mitigation Plan

Goal #4: Protect Important Open Space

Development leads to increased impervious surfaces which prevent rainwater from naturally infiltrating into the ground. Instead, it flows over these surfaces, picking up pollutants that end up in our rivers. The protection of open space reduces the amount of nitrogen, phosphorus and sediment in our waterways. Land use regulations can play a crucial role in protecting water quality as well as environmentally sensitive features like riparian buffers, steep slopes and wetlands.

Strategies

Identify open space priorities in the watershed

Support implementation of Orange County Open Space Plan

Protect land using conservation easements or purchase by state, county, municipal officials, land trusts

Encourage municipalities to consider land use regulations that protect the water quality and prevent degradation of waterways

Secure conservation easements and pursue land acquisition opportunities

Actions

Identify and prioritize the protection of land contiguous to existing protected land, including the Bashakill, the Neversink Gorge and the Neversink Unique Area.

Identify and prioritize where sensitive habitat is and prioritize those open spaces that provide that habitat

Identify and prioritize the protection of highly developable land to limit developments impact on water quality. Developability should be considered to ensure that public funds are being used effectively. For example, if the protection of a property only prevents two structures from being developed, the impact on water quality is not significantly different than what would have occurred without spending public funds.

Identify and prioritize the protection of acres of headwaters, riparian land/areas and wetlands

Provide guidance to municipalities that are considering land use regulations

Goal #5: Maximize Recreational Opportunities

Recreational opportunities in the watershed are important contributors to community health and local economies. The desire to “get outside” has dramatically increased in a post-Covid world as more and more people seek quality outdoor recreational experiences like fishing, hiking, biking, and boating. These goals can be accomplished through the expansion of trail systems, increasing public access to waterways, and enhancing municipal park systems.

Strategies

Improve and expand public access to waterways

Support implementation of the Sullivan County Park Plan

Support implementation of the Orange County Open Space Plan

Support continued development of the Sullivan O&W Rail Trail

Secure conservation easements and pursue land acquisition opportunities

Actions

Develop (insert number of miles here) miles of the Sullivan O&W Rail Trail

Identify possibilities of protecting more land around Basherkill

Expand Neversink Unique Area

Ensure adequate public information and amenities are provided at all public access sites (for example parking, restrooms, boaters safety)

Expand NYS Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) Public Fishing Rights (PFR) program and ensure public access is available

Expand and protect D&H Canal system

Create a new boat ramp in Port Jervis

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Thank You!