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**Cornell Cooperative Extension Ulster County Expands Stream Management Work in the Ashokan Watershed**

On Thursday evening, Cornell Cooperative Extension of Ulster County held a public meeting in Phoenicia to announce the expansion of its stream management program from the upper Esopus Creek to include all streams in the Ashokan Watershed through a new five year contract with New York City Department of Environmental Protection (DEP). After several years of developing stream management plans, the program will now begin implementing recommendations from the plans over the next five years of the grant. With the expanded effort, additional resources will be available, including technical staff from Ulster County Soil and Water Conservation District, a larger office in the watershed, and a \$2 million implementation fund. As the program moves to this broader scope, Cooperative Extension will engage a watershed-wide set of streamside landowners and interested groups in the process.

Michael Courtney, Interim Project Coordinator for Cooperative Extension, gave a brief history of the Stream Management Program development to date and a discussion of the current vision for the Programs future. Questions and answers and discussion followed.

Since 1997, DEP has contracted with Soil and Water Conservation Districts in Ulster and Greene Counties as well as the US Army Engineer Research and Development Center and other contractors to develop management plans for streams in the Ashokan Reservoir Watershed. Three Stream Management Plans have been completed thus far for the Broadstreet Hollow, Stony Clove, and Esopus Creeks. Project Advisory Councils, consisting of representatives of the myriad agencies and interests in the streams, did a great deal of work providing broad input into the individual stream management plans.

Because of the relationships built and the effective work done with the Esopus Advisory Council in particular, it makes sense to retain the involvement of these representatives in some manner as we move forward with organizing at the watershed scale, stated Courtney referring to plans by the project management team to develop a new Watershed Advisory council for the Ashokan Basin.

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Work remains for prioritizing the recommended actions in those plans for implementation on the watershed scale. It is also likely that funds could be matched with other sources to multiply the resource. How to involve the many people interested in a structure and process for prioritizing actions is still being worked out by members of the previous Esopus Creek Project Advisory Council. As this process is further developed, additional feedback will be sought from interested groups and landowners in the watershed. The group plans to have a clear process for prioritizing and funding the many possible projects by the end of 2008 so that projects can be considered for funding in 2009.

For more information about the Ashokan Basin Stream Management Program, contact Michael Courtney at 845-340-3990 or by email at [info@esopuscreek.org](mailto:info@esopuscreek.org).