

ULSTER COUNTY

Pooled Resources = Success and Sustainability

Ulster County Government has implemented a Pooled Resources Plan that utilizes the resources of the County and its municipalities in a manner that takes advantage of the strengths of each.

The approach has proven very effective both in terms of meeting program objectives and in saving tax dollars for all involved. This plan arose from an extremely challenging situation. Early in 2007 the County conducted an independent forensic review of the agency charged with compliance with a program known as *MS4*. The review uncovered irregularities that were significant enough for the County to request a NYS Attorney General's Office investigation. The lack of confidence in the agency resulted in its dismantling. The County Administrator's Office was tasked with the agency's responsibilities while a permanent solution was sought. The Administrator's Office established an *MS4* Compliance Team with expertise from several county departments. The Team immediately reached out to municipalities to assess their needs and to NYS DEC for assistance. It was quickly learned that many communities were misinformed as to their responsibilities under the program and were relying on the County to ensure their compliance. It was also discovered that while the County had moved forward, it too faced significant compliance issues. From this challenging situation grew the innovative plan to pool the resources of the County and the municipalities, combining the strengths of each. What follows is an explanation of this approach that may well serve as a statewide model for future water quality programs. The framework is also applicable to issues associated with transportation, land use, economic development and the environment.

Ulster County Department of the Environment:

A new Department of the Environment will be established in 2008. The Department will coordinate the environmental efforts of the County to ensure compliance with federal and state environmental mandates. It will also initiate and respond to the County's own environmental needs. Its structure is based on the Pooled Resources framework, taking advantage of the environmental strengths of existing County Departments, coordinating those efforts, and recommending additional capacity as needed. We believe that this framework will increase environmental stewardship while reducing costs and offering greater accountability.



ULSTER COUNTY

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Municipal Separate Storm Sewer Systems (*MS4*) A Pooled Resource Approach

More than a decade ago the federal government created a program to limit the discharge of pollutants into the nation's waterbodies from construction sites and developed areas. The current *MS4* program requires that "urbanized areas," as defined by the US Census, must establish stormwater management programs whose components equal or exceed the federal requirements. These include the need to develop programs and regulations that address public education and outreach, public involvement/participation, construction site runoff control, illicit discharge detection and elimination, and pollution prevention/good housekeeping.

In Ulster County, the "urbanized area" and the *MS4* requirements apply to 12 municipalities, the City of Kingston, and the County itself. When the requirements were first announced Ulster County reached out to these communities to assist them. During this initial phase, the County worked with municipalities in developing and implementing public education and outreach programs, performing a gaps analysis on existing local statutes, gathering information on appropriate regulatory response and completing municipal compliance forms.

In examining the six minimum control measures, the County recognized that a key area for collaboration involved the Illicit Discharge Detection and Elimination (IDDE) control measure. IDDE requires outfalls associated with a municipally-owned drainage system to be located in the field and accurately mapped. Although local officials have extensive knowledge of their highways and drainage systems, many were not equipped to provide accurate mapping of outfalls or maintain the database over time. Ulster County proposed a pooled resources approach that would take advantage of local knowledge and county technical support to develop an integrated mapping program.

The term *MS4* includes both municipal and non-municipal systems of underground pipes, and also systems of streets and roads with drainage, catch basins, curbs, gutters, ditches, man-made channels or storm drains, whether or not the system is owned by a municipality. An *MS4* may be a city, town or village system, or one serving a large publicly-owned complex such as a military base, hospital, school or prison.

MS4 Pooled Resource Approach

Workflow

Preliminary Outfall Identification - Ulster County Public Works Department:

Maps showing waters of the US and boundaries of MS4 area prepared from available sources. These maps are the base to locate the outfalls by the municipality. Ulster County will work with municipalities to clarify mapping requirements. Mapping becomes the basis for field work.



Mapping Assignments – Ulster County Public Works Department Stormwater Specialist:

Acts as field coordinator and provides maps and forms for field work, coordinates all manpower and equipment needs, and using preliminary maps, assigns mapping areas to field team spreading workloads



Mapping -Field Teams - All Partners:

Using maps provided, each field team takes GPS readings at outfall locations and completes attribute table. Three teams work in separate municipalities according to an agreed schedule. Data is downloaded at UC Information Services at end of workday



Processing – Ulster County Information Services:

Processes end-of-day data and does quality control on the data. Confirms preliminary outfall IDs and reports to Field Coordinator if locations need to be revisited.

Support

Ulster County

Stormwater Specialist— Project Coordinator
3 people – GPS trained field work
3 people—summer intern—field support
3 GPS units sub-meter accuracy
1 GPS unit reserved
all post data collection mapping functions

Each Municipality

1 truck – from host/mapped
1 person from host/mapped—knows drainage and was involved in initial location of outfalls

Final Product

Outfall Maps

Ulster County

Provide digital form to each municipality.
Mapping will include overlays on air photos for easier field identification



The approach was designed to meet the initial requirements and to ensure compliance over time. A series of meetings were held with local officials to explain the pooled resource approach. These meetings also were used to establish a path for communities to follow to meet all compliance measures including adoption of necessary local laws.

Eleven municipalities agreed to participate in the pooled resources mapping approach. Support for the mapping effort came from the County's Public Works, Information Services, and Planning Departments, and the Soil and Water Conservation District. The County purchased three additional Trimble GPS units to locate outfalls in the field and high resolution air photos (Pictometry) to allow for initial outfall locations to be determined prior to field work.

Communities agreed to a schedule and assignment of manpower. Field work began in early July of 2007 and was completed in September well ahead of schedule. Database quality control is on-going. Additional fieldwork necessary for some direct to river outfalls will be completed later in the fall.

The County continues to support the *MS4* requirements regarding local laws to regulate pre and post construction runoff. Model statutes have been provided to all *MS4* municipalities. County Planning Board review of the model laws resulted in recommended changes. These changes would require new developments to submit GPS coordinates to the County for any new outfalls. This will ensure that mapping remains current as development occurs. The change has been incorporated into the NYS model law.

Municipalities are also being asked to include language in their statutes for development that abuts a county road. The County is requesting that Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plans (SWPPPs) be submitted by a licensed professional as meeting the federal requirements. This will ensure that the County's own *MS4* requirements are met. The County also is considering this requirement as part of its highway work permits for developments requesting access to county roads.

Finally, to ensure that communities can meet their educational requirements, Ulster County has established a Stormwater Lending Library that includes books and training films. Communities have already begun using the training films for their employees.

The Pooled Resource Approach -
a benefit to all participants and a model for the future