

Department of the Environment

Mission Statement

Work across County government to increase efficiency and effectiveness of projects with a variety of environmental concerns, provide a means for County departments to share information on environmental projects, provide technical assistance to County departments, help County departments characterize and address existing environmental needs, and prevent duplication of services. Work to improve the sustainability and lessen the environmental footprint of operations.

2017 Accomplishments

Ulster County Environmental Management Council (EMC) Support

- Provided administrative support to the EMC, including reserving meeting room at SUNY Ulster, sending out agendas, minutes and other relevant information to EMC members, posting minutes and agendas to the EMC website, maintaining and updating the website, assisting with annual report, and participating in meetings. The EMC website is part of County website:
<http://ulstercountyny.gov/environmental-management-council>.

Stormwater Program & Green Infrastructure Initiatives

- Coordinated the County's compliance with the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC) MS4 Stormwater Program including: submittal of the required annual report and monitoring of regulated outfalls.
- Provided technical support to regulated towns with MS4 stormwater permit and audit issues (there are 16 MS4 communities and 1 exempt municipality in Ulster County).
- Assisted UC Soil and Water with NYSDEC endorsed 4 Hour Erosion and Sediment Control Training.
- Maintained green infrastructure planting areas at County Office Building complex and continued to use the site for demonstration and outreach purposes. Worked with DPW to implement planting plans for the Main St. parking lot further reducing impervious surface area at the County Office Building complex and adding landscaping.

Culvert Assessment Project

- Continued field assessments in Ulster County as part of grant from the NYS DEC Hudson River Estuary for culvert assessments/prioritization program. Completed assessment of additional 109 culverts on Ulster County roads for a total of 218 assessed culverts.
- Sent two youth workers to North Atlantic Aquatic Connectively Collaborative (NAACC) culvert field assessment training with DEC for certification as a lead observer. One staff member became certified as a Coordinator, enabling verification, editing, and acceptance of downloaded data.
- County received updated cores habitat mapping and drainage area mapping produced by consulting firms through the culvert assessment grant. This work will allow better assessment and planning for culvert replacement as well as provide an extremely valuable natural resource mapping product.

Building and Transportation Energy

- Produced and delivered the 2016 Benchmarking report in accordance with UC Resolution No 447 of 2016. This works builds on the longstanding tracking of utility usage (electric, gas and heating oil). In 2017, the Department of the Environment began tracking all county managed properties using the EPA's [ENERGY STAR® Portfolio Manager](#) application, which benchmarks the performance of buildings against average values for U.S. commercial building space.
- Tracked and analyzed County fleet fuel and electricity usage for inclusion in the 2017 Green Fleet Report. Provided technical support for the implementation of the County's Green Fleet Policy Local Law.
- Applied for a rebate (\$5,000) from NYS DEC for one new battery electric vehicle purchased as part of the County fleet.
- Executed contracts and necessary documents for the installation an additional six EV charging stations funded through NYS DEC ZEV rebates. Oversaw installation of 4 new charging stations, totaling 13 stations and 26 charging ports county-wide.
- Hosted the 2nd Annual Ulster County National Drive Electric Week event located at the Ulster County Courthouse parking lot, which showcased local sustainability initiatives, featured an EV auto show, and EV test-drives by local dealerships.
- Submitted an application for four county properties to the NYSERDA Geothermal Clean Energy Challenge, a collaboration between NYSERDA and the New York Power Authority which seeks to accelerate the adoption of ground-source heat pump systems through feasibility and design assistance.

- Continued to work on the \$250,000 NYSERDA Clean Energy Communities grant awarded to Ulster County for energy improvements to the Ulster County Law Enforcement Center. Ulster County is moving ahead with a LED lighting replacement project, in conjunction with Central Hudson, which would save an estimated 745,000 kwh annually.

Renewable Energy Deployment

- Construction was started on the County's 1.9 MW solar installation at the closed UCRRRA Ulster landfill. The system is expected to be interconnected and energized early 2018. The 6,120 panel solar array will provide generate enough electricity to cover more than 20% of the County's annual usage.
- Recognized by the EPA Green Power Leadership Club (GPLC) for purchasing at least 100% of the electric power used in government operations from renewable sources. The County is currently ranked 27th on the EPA's "[Green Power Partners Top 30 Local Government](#)" list for green power use.

Natural Resources and Brownfields

- Identified, flagged, and used GPS and GIS to map more 224 ash trees for removal by UC DPW contractor in accordance with the "Ulster County EAB Action Plan" completed by the Department in 2014.
- Assisted Planning Department in marking trees for removal along proposed Ashokan Rail Trail.
- Convened the Non-Toxic Landscape Maintenance Committee to review a waiver request to Local Law 4 of 2009, the UC Non-Toxic Landscape Maintenance Act.
- Coordinate the environmental investigation of two foreclosure eligible properties.
- Continued work related to the County's Phase II environmental work of the former Cornell Street rail yard.
- Continue work on NYS DEC funded municipal composting expansion grant (\$252,000). Executed necessary subcontract and easement with UCRRA to allow use of grant funds by UCRRA for improvement of the composting operation. Worked with the UC Sheriff on a pilot for food waste diversion at the UCLEC.

Flood Hazard Mitigation & Watershed Planning

- Continued work related to a five year, \$549,508 grant agreement with Cornell Cooperative Extension of Ulster County to provide technical and other assistance related to flood hazard mitigation to the communities in the City of New York's

upstate watershed. These municipalities include Denning, Hardenburgh, Hurley, Olive, Shandaken, Wawarsing, and Woodstock.

- Continued work on behalf of municipalities in western Ulster County to access funding, conduct planning, provide technical assistance, and address other needs identified by communities in flood-prone areas. Examples in 2017 included critical facility, commercial, and residential relocations, assisting with a voluntary flood buyout program, implementing and conducting local flood analyses in hamlet areas, and other measures to reduce impacts from flooding in Phoenicia, Mount Tremper, Allaben, Shandaken, Boiceville, West Shokan, Denning, and Claryville.
- Continued involvement with the Ashokan Watershed Stream Management Program (AWSMP) Project Advisory Committee and other subcommittees, as well as those convened by the Rondout-Neversink Stream Program.
- Participated in over twenty-five (25) meetings for the municipal flood advisory committees in the Towns of Shandaken, Olive, and Denning.
- Continued to participate in the Greater Catskill Flood Remediation and Buyout Program Phase II Wawarsing, as well as the post-Irene, FEMA-funded program, including environmental reviews and GIS technical support.

Grants, Awards, Designations & Recognition

- Ulster County received the 2017 NYS DEC Environmental Excellence Award. The awards recognize outstanding organizations for their commitment to environmental sustainability, social responsibility, and economic viability. Ulster County's commitment to environmental stewardship in county government operations including our net carbon neutral county government operation was.
- In partnership with UC DPW, submitted and received a \$900,000 Local Flood Hazard Mitigation Implementation grant through the Catskill Watershed Corporation to remove the long-closed Mt Pleasant Bridge over the Esopus Creek in Mt Tremper. The bridge will be removed in summer 2018.
- In partnership with UC Soil & Water Conservation District and Cornell Cooperative Extension of UC, obtained a Stream Management Implementation Program grant in the amount of \$31,575, assess and prioritize (for future replacement) the poorly designed and/or under-sized culverts on public roadways in the Ashokan Reservoir watershed.
- In December of 2017, received notification that the County's proposal for the Ulster County Climate Change Adaptation Planning Project to the NYSDEC Climate Smart Communities grant program had been awarded. This grant of \$84,000 will allow the county to conduct characterization, assessment and planning around necessary

actions to mitigate and adapt to climate change in County government operations.

- Department Coordinator was recognized by the NYS Geographic Information System (NYSGIS) Association as a *GIS Champion* for work developing new GIS based tools for culvert mapping and modeling.

Outreach

- Participated in the planning and organization of the 2017 NYS Conference on the Environment including organization of the well-attended field trip sessions which highlighted local agriculture and the UCRRRA composting operation. Field trips were attended by municipal environmental commission members from across the state.
- Continued to support and update, along with UC Information Services, the Ulster County REConnect (www.UlsterCountyAlive.com/REConnect) website.
- Environmental Planner presented “Local Flood Analysis” at two conferences, the New York State Association of Conservation Councils Annual Meeting and the Ashokan Watershed Conference. Additionally, co-presented “Floodplain Management for Realtors” for the County Board of Realtors in both the spring and fall of 2017.
- Department Coordinated presented on various department initiatives at the NYS Association of Solid Waste Managers, at an internal staff development meeting of NYSDEC in Albany, at the NYS Conference on the Environment, at the NYSAR3 NYS Recycling Conference, at Mohonk Consultations Fall conference *Nature Across Boundaries*, and at the NYS Water Environment Association’s fall watershed

Key Statistics

- Ulster County hosted 2,072 electric vehicle charging sessions in 2017, supplying 17,768 kWh of electricity, avoiding 7,463 kg of greenhouse gases emissions to the atmosphere. This number includes a total of 570 sessions for UC fleet vehicles as well as charging sessions for county employees, local citizens, and drivers from throughout the region, including the Capital District, the metropolitan NYC area, Vermont, New Jersey, Maryland, and Pennsylvania.
- Secured three (3) grants, totaling more than \$1M, for County-level flood hazard mitigation implementation and climate change adaptation projects / planning.
- Facilitated, on behalf of Olive and Shandaken, and as per recommendation in the respective local flood analyses, the inclusion of nine (9) flood-prone properties into the voluntary New York City-Funded Flood Buyout Program.
- Received over 5,300 unique website visits for Ulster County REConnect.

- Continued to offset all carbon emissions from operations (transportation, buildings and employee commutes) to effectively conduct a net carbon neutral county government operations. Approximately 13,000 MT of CO₂e were offset through a combination of Renewable Energy Credits (RECs) and carbon credits.

Collaborations

- Initiated an engagement with NYSERDA Clean Energy Communities contractors (Hudson Valley Regional Council and Climate Action) for a project to develop a Climate Action Plan for Ulster County government operations, supporting GHG reduction goals and targeting continuous improvement within the NYS DEC Climate Smart Communities program framework.
- Collaborated with several departments and agencies on flood hazard mitigation programming for residences, businesses, and communities in the NYC Watershed. Collaborations included: UC Planning, County Attorney, Emergency Services, Cornell Cooperative Extension, Soil & Water Conservation District, the Catskill Watershed Corporation, Coalition of Watershed Towns, NYCDEP, NYS DEC, DOT, and DHSES, and the counties of Delaware, Sullivan, Greene, and Schoharie.
- Worked with Cornell Cooperative Extension of Ulster County and the Ulster County Board of Realtors to conduct two training sessions on *Floodplain Management for Realtors*. Sixty (60) local realtors attended.
- Serve, at the request of the Towns of Olive and Shandaken, as the Outreach & Assessment Lead for the voluntary New York City-Funded Flood Buyout Program.
- Worked with UC Emergency Management in finalizing the update to the Ulster County Multi-Jurisdictional Natural Hazard Mitigation Plan.
- Served on various grant review committees, including the Ashokan Watershed's "Stream Management Implementation Grants Program" and the Catskill Watershed Corporation's "Public Education Grants Program," that help direct funding to education, outreach, infrastructure, research, and recreational access projects that benefit residents of Ulster County.