

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.

2018 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>.
- Supported EMC in planning, organizing and holding a workshop on waste management in Ulster County held at SUNY Ulster.

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, mapping and employee training to six 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 including 17 Pearl rain garden, bioretention gardens, and Main Street parking lot rain garden area and continued to use these sites for demonstration and outreach purposes. Replaced and maintained plants in green wall at Kingston Center SUNY Ulster.

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 culverts on all Ulster County roads and municipal roads in the Sawkill Basin for a total of 434 assessed culverts.
- Provided data and assistance to Towns of Woodstock and Esopus on culvert assessment. Produced and presented map of Sawkill Basin culvert assessment. Department Coordinator presented at a public meeting on the project and results in the Sawkill basin.
- Incorporated updated core habitat mapping with culvert assessments to determine potential areas of linkage for culvert replacement prioritization.
- Completed grant requirements and submitted all documentation to NYS DEC. Created webpage for Culvert Project.
- Convened a meeting with representatives from NYS DEC HREP, Cornell WRI, GroundPoint technologies, Ashokan Watershed Stream Management Program, and the UC Department of the Environment for a preliminary discussion on next steps of using the Sawkill data for further hydrologic and hydraulic analysis.

Building and Transportation Energy

- Produced and delivered the 2017 Benchmarking report in accordance with UC Resolution No 447 of 2016. This work builds on the longstanding tracking of utility usage (electric, gas and heating oil) and analyses UC building energy usage with respect to cost and greenhouse gas emissions.
- Tracked and analyzed County fleet fuel and electricity usage for inclusion in the 2018 Green Fleet Report. Provided technical support for the implementation of the County's Green Fleet Policy Local Law.
- Executed contracts and necessary documents for the installation of an additional two EV charging stations funded through NYS DEC ZEV rebates. The Ulster County charging station network now totals 15 stations and 30 charging ports.
- Hosted the 3rd Annual Ulster County National Drive Electric Week event located at the Ulster County Courthouse parking lot, adjacent to the Kingston Farmer's Market. The event featured a display of 17 privately owned electric vehicles, EV displays and test-drives by 4 local dealerships, and a display of electric bicycles.
- Received Stage 1 assessment reports from the Geothermal Clean Energy Challenge for four county properties, 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. Submitted Stage 2 applications for 3 of the 4 properties for additional no-cost assessment.

- Completed a LED lighting retrofit at the Ulster County Law Enforcement Center, a project 100% funded by a NYSERDA Clean Energy Communities grant and Central Hudson energy efficiency program, which is forecast to save an estimated 725,000 kwh annually.
- Initiated a NYSERDA Flextech Study to assess heating and cooling at two Ulster County properties: the Ulster County Office Building and the Ulster County Law Enforcement Center. The study will provide an assessment of conditions, a technology assessment and a heating and cooling master plan for each property. The results of the study will inform a course of action for impending boiler replacements at both properties. This project includes \$23,137 of cost share funding from NYSERDA for the completion of the study.
- Updated the Ulster County Government Operations Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Inventory for 2017 and the 2012 GHG Inventory baseline, providing insight into Ulster County's progress toward its GHG emissions reduction goals (25% by 2025 from the 2012 baseline)
- Participated in the 2018 NYS DEC aggregate minibid for EV and PHEV vehicles. Coordinated the purchase of 8 new green vehicles: 6 Chrysler Pacifica PHEV minivans and 2 Hyundai Ioniq PHEV sedans.

Renewable Energy Deployment

- Commissioned the County's 1.9 MW solar installation at the closed UCRRA Ulster landfill. The 6,120-panel solar array generates enough electricity to cover more than 20% of the County's annual usage.
- Initiated a long-term contract with Natural Power Group, Inc. to purchase locally produced hydroelectric power for select properties in the County building portfolio.
- 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 20th on the EPA's "[Green Power Partners Top 30 Local Government](#)" list for green power use.
- Developed and released an RFP for the installation of solar carport structures at 7 County-owned sites.

Natural Resources and Brownfields

- 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.

- Provided assistance regarding environmental assessments of select foreclosure eligible properties
- Continued work on NYS DEC funded municipal composting expansion grant (\$252,000).

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 2018 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 (20) meetings for the municipal flood advisory committees in the Towns of Shandaken and Olive.

Grants

- Continued work on NYS DEC funded municipal composting expansion grant (\$252,000).
- Continued work to implement the County's \$250,000 NYSERDA Clean Energy Communities grant by making energy efficiency upgrades to the UCLEC.
- Executed contracts with NYS DEC for the Ulster County Climate Change Adaptation Planning Project. 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.

Outreach

- Continued to support and update, along with UC Information Services, the Ulster County REConnect (www.UlsterCountyAlive.com/REConnect) website.

- Environmental Planner presented on the hamlet of Mount Tremper Local Flood Analysis results and implementation at the New York State Association of State Floodplain Managers Annual Conference. Additionally, co-presented "Floodplain Management for Realtors" for the County Board of Realtors in both the spring and fall of 2018, and co-presented on "Floodplain Management: Considerations for Community Planning" for the Ulster County Planning Board seminar at SUNY Ulster.
- Participated in the Climate Action Planning Institute series, a training program developed and executed by the Hudson Valley Regional Council. Ulster County sponsored the meeting site for numerous sessions as well as providing. Eight Ulster County municipalities are participating in the program.
- Hosted a workshop with the NYSERDA NY-Sun program titled: "Developing Solar on Municipal Land – Resources & Assistance for Local Governments." The workshop covered considerations for hosting solar on municipal lands, such as development and procurement guidelines, planning & zoning tools, and Payment-in-lieu-of-Tax (PILOT) payments relating to Real Property Tax Law 487 exemptions. The workshop concluded with a visit to the County's own 1.9 MW landfill solar site in the Town of Ulster. The 28 attendees consisted of municipal planners, commissioners, sustainability professionals and solar industry representatives from Ulster and adjoining Counties.

Key Statistics

- Ulster County hosted 3,967 electric vehicle charging sessions in 2018, supplying 38,034 kWh of electricity, avoiding nearly 10 metric tons of greenhouse gases emissions to the atmosphere. This consists of 802 sessions for UC fleet vehicles as well as 3,165 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.
- Assisted the Town of Woodstock Highway Department in obtaining two grants totaling more than \$800,000 to design and replace an under-sized critical bridge on a dead-end town road.
- Assisted the Olive Fire Department in identifying a parcel of land, and securing a grant of more than \$150,000 to purchase the property for the reconstruction of the Boiceville Fire House outside of the flood zone.
- Facilitated, on behalf of Olive and Shandaken, and as per recommendation in the respective local flood analyses, the inclusion of ten (10) flood-prone properties into the voluntary New York City-Funded Flood Buyout Program.
- Received over 3,197 unique website visits for Ulster County REConnect.
- Ulster County continued to offset all carbon emissions from operations (transportation, buildings and employee commutes) to effectively conduct net carbon neutral

county government operations. Approximately 11,200 MT of CO₂e were offset through a combination of Renewable Energy Credits (RECs) and carbon credits.

Collaborations

- Started process of drafting an updated Climate Action Plan for County Government Operations. Received technical support from Clean Energy Communities program and Climate Action Associated for the project. Met with various County departments to review their operations as well as potential for Climate Action Initiatives. Departments included: Public Works, Planning, UCAT, Information Services, Sheriff, Emergency Management, and Health.
- 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, and Greene.
- 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-two (62) local realtors attended.
- Worked with Cornell Cooperative Extension of Ulster County and the Ulster County Planning Department to offer a planning seminar titled "Floodplain Management: Considerations for Community Planning" in April where 70 local officials and planning board members attended.
- Serves, 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.
- 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.
- Signed the Climate Reality Project 100% Committed Campaign, a commitment to reach 100 percent renewable electricity by 2030.