

INTRODUCTION

In order to conserve the abundant and diverse water resources of Hamilton County, the Hamilton County Soil and Water Conservation District in conjunction with the New York State Soil and Water Conservation Committee, Cornell Cooperative Extension of Hamilton County, and the Natural Resources Conservation Service initiated the formation of a Water Quality Coordinating Committee. The Committee receives direction from, and is directly responsible to, the Hamilton County Soil and Water Conservation District Board. The following strategy was initially developed in 1992 and is updated periodically. The strategy guides the committee members in establishing and implementing a coordinated water quality program.

The strategy is divided into five major goals: Public Participation, Problem Assessment and Verification, Watershed Planning, Project Implementation, and Committee Evaluation and Reporting. Each goal then has a variety of objectives and work tasks to be completed in order to accomplish our goals. Each objective is then assigned an agency/person responsible for the task as well as a time frame for completion.

It is the Committee's overall objective to meet all of the goals set forth in the Hamilton County Water Quality Strategy. However, priorities will certainly change over time due to such factors as current environmental trends, staffing and funding. Therefore, the strategy has been designed to be a dynamic tool providing both guidance and direction as well as allowing flexibility for unforeseen changes. The Hamilton County Water Quality Coordinating Committee recognizes the importance of our water resources and through a cooperative effort has developed a locally effective water quality program.

MISSION

It will be the mission of the Hamilton County Water Quality Coordinating Committee to maintain and restore both the quality and quantity of the water resources of the county using a coordinated, comprehensive, educational and effective interagency approach.

DESCRIPTION

Hamilton County falls wholly within the perimeter of New York State's Adirondack Park, and is situated in the central region of the Adirondack Mountains. At 1,806 square miles, it is the third largest county in the State. It is also the least populated with a 2011 estimated population of 4,836 year round residents. That population increases five-fold during the summer months with the influx of seasonal residents. Approximately three-quarters of the county is state owned Forest Preserve land. This area is mandated by the State Constitution to be left unaltered by humans. Forested lands amount to approximately 89% of the county while over 5% is water including 500 ponds and lakes. The remaining 6% consists of open areas, hamlets, rivers, streams and ponds.

The present day soils were formed as a result of extensive alteration of pre-glacial soils, topography, and drainage by multiple glaciations. The soils are predominantly shallow, poorly drained, and highly acidic. Peat and muck are also prevalent. The county's low point is approximately 780 feet along the Sacandaga River while the highest point is Snowy Mountain at 3,899 feet.

The winter average temperature is 18.5 °F and the summer average temperature is 59.6 °F. Total annual precipitation is approximately 39 inches while average annual snowfall amounts to approximately 71 inches.

Natural resources drive Hamilton County's economy, and the main industries are tourism and forestry. Access to tourist opportunities is limited by infrastructure. Pulp and timber are harvested from privately owned forest lands. State owned lands are not available for harvesting.

WATER QUALITY STRATEGY

1. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION - Ensure that all sectors of the public are informed on water quality issues including, but not limited to, nonpoint source pollution problems and the actions needed to maintain and restore the water quality of Hamilton County.

Action Item	Who	When
Keep the public informed about the progress of the WQCC and provide information about water quality issues via CCE's and SWCD's newsletters.	CCE and SWCD	Ongoing
Write press releases addressing water quality, invasive species, natural resource conservation and stewardship in Hamilton County.	Committee	Ongoing
Update communities and municipalities about potential and current water resource problems.	SWCD	Ongoing
Update, prepare and distribute information in the form of written materials (brochures, fact sheets) about water quality and invasive species issues.	SWCD	Ongoing
Give presentations about water quality and invasive species issues.	SWCD	Ongoing
Develop and publicize a library that contains water quality and invasive species reference materials.	SWCD	2013
Offer educational outreach to municipalities concerning bleeders, or heated water lines that pour treated water from outdoor faucets.	SWCD	2013

2. PROBLEM ASSESSMENT AND VERIFICATION - Provide for the ongoing identification, assessment and reporting of water quality problems.

Action Item	Who	When
Develop and maintain a county map of NPS problem areas.	SWCD	Ongoing
Develop an ongoing method to identify and verify water quality problems and concerns throughout the county.	Committee	Ongoing
Identify and review priority water bodies that lack significant water quality data and utilize available technical expertise to gather and analyze needed data.	Committee	Ongoing
Make use of the State Nonpoint Source Assessment Report and available nonpoint assessment forms.	Committee	Ongoing
Assist with the evaluation of weed control and invasive species in the county.	Committee	Ongoing

3. WATERSHED PLANNING - Address watershed-specific and countywide water quality issues.

Action Item	Who	When
Assist with developing comprehensive water quality management plans for priority watersheds including Finger Lakes / Lake Ontario, St. Lawrence River, Mohawk River, and the Upper Hudson River watersheds	SWCD	Ongoing
Develop county wide water quality policies including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. stormwater management b. erosion and sediment control guidelines c. encouraging zoning officers to adopt ordinances for new development 	Committee	As needed
Continue the Lake and Stream Monitoring Programs. Develop and distribute reports and publications through various media outlets such as SWCD web site, newsletters and newspaper articles.	SWCD	Ongoing
Continue to offer the Volunteer Water Monitoring Program to interested lake associations who monitor their shorelines for pollution.	SWCD	Ongoing

4. PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION - Design and implement cost effective solutions for water quality problems.

Action Item	Who	When
Research and procure grants and funding sources to carry out water quality protection and management projects.	SWCD and NYSSWCC	Ongoing
Continue to develop liaisons with groups that impact water quality such as real estate agencies, planning boards, marinas, businesses, lake associations, municipalities, park and recreation departments, IDAs, developers, loggers, etc.	Committee	Ongoing
Review site plans for land use changes as requested by municipalities, private land owners, and contractors to determine soil suitability and the need for erosion control measures.	SWCD	As requested
Provide erosion information and education to contractors.	SWCD	As requested
Continue to provide educational materials about septic systems maintenance, alternative septic systems, shoreline management etc.	SWCD	Ongoing
Educate lakeshore owners, recreationists, and the general public about the impacts their activities have on water quality.	Committee	Ongoing
Encourage the involvement of local schools with the Hudson River Watch Program.	SWCD	Ongoing

5. COMMITTEE EVALUATION AND REPORTING - Ensure the evaluation of the Committee's functions and identify necessary changes in structure or operation in order to guarantee overall program and strategy effectiveness.

Action Item	Who	When
Prepare a report for submission to county Board of Supervisors, NYSSWCC, and NYSDEC as needed.	Committee	Annually
Develop a procedure for ensuring an ongoing evaluation of the effectiveness of the Water Quality Strategy including <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. An annual review of the strategy by the Committee. b. The removal of completed action items from the water quality strategy to reflect accomplishments. c. The addition of new action items to reflect current issues and concerns. 	Committee	Annually

6. COUNTY-WIDE ACTION ITEMS

Action Item	Who	When	Funds
Develop informational brochures about a. Septic system problems and solutions b. Invasive species	SWCD	2012	\$1,000
Develop a water quality outreach and informational program with pertinent handouts.	Committee	Ongoing	\$2,000
Continue to support Waterfest, an annual event that increases public awareness of the importance of clean water.	SWCD	Annual	\$1,500
Continue to educate contractors, zoning officers and landowners about the importance of septic system maintenance and proper installation.	Committee	Ongoing	\$2,000
Complete a paleolimnetic survey of study lakes using diatoms and/or chironomids to date pollution events and changes in nutrients.	SWCD	Ongoing	\$20,000
Survey, map, and study aquatic invasive species in county lakes. Develop invasive species educational materials including spread prevention and biology.	SWCD	Ongoing	\$30,000
Evaluate and assess weed control concerns. Develop priority sites for remediation.	Committee	Ongoing	\$5,000
Evaluate stream erosion sites in county and develop solutions.	Committee	Ongoing	\$5,000

7. WATERSHED SPECIFIC ACTION ITEMS

Action Item	Who	When	Funds
Develop land use characterizations for all high priority waterbodies (as per NYS PWP list).	SWCD	Ongoing	\$20,000
Develop a process to verify and determine where the most critical water quality problems exist. a. Compile existing water quality data for each county watershed, including: - physical, chemical, and hydrologic data - land use maps - septic system inventory - invasive species data b. Analyze existing data and identify needed information. c. Implement a program to collect and verify additional resource information.	Committee	Ongoing	\$10,000
Implement natural channel design project at Cave Banks, Town of Wells.	SWCD, Town of Wells, USFWS, landowners	2012	\$45,000
Participate in Watershed Protection Partnership and assist with management plans.	SWCD	Ongoing	\$15,000

HAMILTON COUNTY PRIORITY WATER PROBLEM (PWP) LIST

Hamilton County's prioritization of water problems will be based on both (a) stormwater runoff, which has been identified in our strategy as the primary source of nonpoint source pollution, and (b) current water monitoring data obtained through Hamilton County SWCD's Water Monitoring Program. The three priority classifications are defined as follows:

- HIGH** All waterbodies are directly affected by development and associated stormwater runoff, including contributions from highways.
- MEDIUM** All waterbodies are affected by some development and associated stormwater runoff, including contributions from highways.
- LOW** All waterbodies are affected by minimal or no affect from development and associated stormwater runoff, including contributions from highways.

*See **Appendix A** for a list of waterbodies.

It should be noted that although this appears to be a rather simplistic system for prioritizing our waterbodies, it is actually very appropriate for Hamilton County. This county is has an abundance of water which, when compared to the rest of the state, is of relatively good quality. However, our water is not without problems. Although Hamilton County is sparsely populated and many of our lakes have little development, the majority of the people are located on or adjacent to a waterbody. Stormwater runoff from these developed areas is posing a real threat to the quality of our water. Therefore, the committee felt that a prioritization system based almost entirely on stormwater runoff was important.

Appendix

Appendix A

Hamilton County Priority Water Problem List

High Priority Water Problems			
Water Body or River	Identification Number	State Basin	NRCS Hydrologic Unit Number
Blue Mountain Lake	21-020	09-03	04150305.010
Fourth Lake	21-022	08-01	04150101.060
Indian Lake	21-007	11-04	02020001.010
Lake Abanakee	21-009	11-04	02020001.010
Lake Adirondack	21-010	11-04	02020001.010
Lake Eaton		09-03	04150305.030
Lake Pleasant	21-006	11-04	02020002.010
Long Lake	21-015	09-03	04150305.030
Oxbow Lake	21-004	11-04	02020002.010
Piseco Lake	21-002	11-04	02020002.030
Raquette Lake	21-021	09-03	04150305.010
Sacandaga Lake	21-005	11-04	02020002.010
Sacandaga River	21-027	11-04	02020002.050
Seventh Lake	21-024	08-01	04150101.060

Medium Priority Water Problems			
Water Body or River	Identification Number	State Basin	NRCS Hydrologic Unit Number
Cedar River	21-011	11-04	02020001.020
Eagle Lake	21-019	09-03	04150305.010
Eighth Lake	21-023	08-01	04150101.060
Lake Durant	21-016	11-04	02020001.020
Lewey Lake	21-022	11-04	02020001.010
Sacandaga River, WB	21-012	11-04	02020002.050
Sacandaga River, EB	21-013	11-04	02020002.060
Shaw Brook	21-017	09-03	04150305.010

Low Priority Water Problems			
Water Body or River	Identification Number	State Basin	NRCS Hydrologic Unit Number
East Stony Creek	21-014	11-04	02020002.060
Indian River	21-008	11-04	02020001.010
Kettle Creek	21-003	11-04	02020001.010
Miami River	21-025	11-04	02020001.010
Utowana Lake	21-018	09-03	04150305.010
Vly Brook	21-001	12-01	02020004.110

Appendix B

Hamilton County Water Quality Coordinating Committee Partners

Chairperson: Elizabeth Mangle, District Manager, Hamilton County Soil and Water Conservation District

Partners: Tom Bielli, District Conservationist, Natural Resources Conservation Service
Alyce Branum, Piseco Lake Association
Leonard Croote, Conservation Technician Hamilton County Soil and Water Conservation District
Tracy Eldridge, Superintendent, Hamilton County Highway Department
Cliff Frasier, Regional Coordinator, New York State Soil and Water Conservation Committee
Beth Gilles, Environmental Planning Assistant, Lake Champlain-Lake George Regional Planning Board
Meghan Johnstone, Aquatic Invasive Species Project Coordinator, Adirondack Park Invasive Plant Program
Bill and Sue Kunzmann, Long Lake Association
Bill Landmesser, 6th and 7th Lake Association
Doreen Page, Educator, Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Prevention
Caitlin Stewart, Conservation Educator, Hamilton County Soil and Water Conservation District
Rob Streeter, Floodplain Management Coordinator, New York State Department of Environmental Conservation
Marty Trometter, Indian Lake
Nancy Welch, Director, Hamilton County Cornell Cooperative Extension
Kathleen Wiley, Associate Director FL-LOWPA, Watershed Stewardship Program