Meeting Minutes

TIDAL RONDOUT WATERSHED MANAGEMENT PLAN
Public Information Meeting and Workshop
October 22, 2015

The third public information meeting and workshop for the Tidal Rondout Watershed Management Plan was held 7:00 PM on October 22, 2015 in the Kingston City Hall. Attendees included Gregg Swanzey and Ralph Swenson of the project advisory committee plus five members of the public. Of these five, one attendee was a reporter and one was a representative of the Esopus Waterfront Advisory Board.

A. Presentation

Mr. David Murphy presented a power point slide show to review the planning project and present findings and recommendations of the draft Watershed Management Plan.

B. Public Participation

The question & answer portion of the meeting addressed many topics. These are organized loosely by topic below:

General

- Ms. Hauser noted that there were aspects of the watershed management plan that could set an example for the remainder of the Rondout/Wallkill watershed. Attendees discussed the fact that Riverkeeper was recently awarded funding to update the Wallkill River Watershed Management Plan and the Lower Non-Tidal Rondout Creek Watershed Management Plan. This will present a great opportunity to coordinate all of the watershed management plans.

- Ms. Hauser asked whether the draft plan mentions the waterfront flood study. Mr. Murphy answered that the draft does mention the flood study, and the two have consistent recommendations.

- Ms. Hauser noted that the graphic from the "Climate Action Plan" is from the Kingston in Canada. Mr. Murphy apologized, assured the attendees that the content of the Kingston, *New York* Climate Action Plan was referenced in the watershed management plan, and promised to replace the graphic.

Impervious Surfaces and Green Infrastructure

- One of the attendees inquired at what percentage of imperviousness water quality impairment would be likely. Mr. Murphy explained that most authors use 15% to 25% as the range at which impairment increases significantly.

- During the discussion of the size of the Tidal Rondout Creek watershed relative to the entire Rondout/Wallkill watershed, Mr. Swenson noted that it might be informative to compare imperviousness throughout the larger watershed. This might help explain why a watershed management plan focused on the end of the watershed may or may not be prudent. Mr. Murphy noted that comparative imperviousness may be possible to evaluate quantitatively.

- Ms. Hauser asked if specific sites were identified for green infrastructure. Mr. Murphy explained that this was generally not done in the plan; specific sites were recommended only for a handful of actions.

- Route 9W was discussed. Although one of the topics in the initial meetings for this plan in 2013-2014 was the possibility of retiring lanes of the bypass in Kingston, the plan does not specifically mention this possibility. Instead, the plan more generally supports green infrastructure along 9W, and leaves open the possibilities for how this could be accomplished. One of the attendees from Esopus noted that there may be an impression (in Esopus) that a narrower Route 9W in Kingston could exacerbate traffic in Esopus. Mr. Murphy noted that this was one example why the issue of the highway width was not directly addressed in the plan.

Water Quality

- The implications of the creek being listed as an impaired watercourse vs. not being listed and being class B vs. class C were discussed. If Rondout Creek were listed as impaired, it could open up additional funding opportunities. However, an impaired status would require additional levels of regulatory approvals and elevated regulatory requirements for projects that generate stormwater. It is not clear that the costs to communities would be worth the benefits in funding from the creek being listed as impaired.

- An Esopus resident noted that one of the Riverkeeper's sites with persistent poor water quality data might be just upstream of Eddyville. She asked if that information, coupled with Riverkeeper and City water quality data collected downstream, could be used to determine how much the tributaries of the tidal section were influencing water quality. Mr. Murphy explained that this could not be done, as the type of data and sampling frequency plus the tidal nature of the creek make it challenging to conduct a quantitative analysis.

- Attendees asked if all of the recommended sampling sites should be subject to sampling and monitoring immediately. Mr. Murphy explained that this would likely be unnecessary and unrealistic to fund. It would be more important to focus on sampling in the subwatersheds where projects might be completed. The sample data could then be used to compare water quality before and after the project. He noted that some

subwatersheds may never need tributary sampling. Ms. Hauser asked what sample parameters would be recommended. Mr. Murphy theorized that nutrients, total suspended solids, and bacteria would likely be sufficient. However, the selection of parameters should be tailored to the work being proposed in the subwatershed and the specific data needs.

Miscellaneous

- The reporter explained that a documentary entitled "Garbage Gangsters and Greed[1]" exposed a situation involving disposal of toxic waste into a mine shaft in the Tidal Rondout Creek watershed. He also noted that there may be a scrap yard in Eddyville that is difficult to view, and that there may be little information about dumping on this yard.

- Ms. Hauser asked if the plan would be looking at in-water activities such as boating. Mr. Murphy explained that the watershed management plan, like most watershed management plans and local waterfront revitalization plans, was a plan focused on land use and the edge of water. This lead to a discussion about the ideal situation when a watershed management plan and a harbor management plan could dovetail.

- Ms. Hauser and Mr. Swenson explained that the loss of the USGS gauge in Rondout Creek is problematic and the plan could discuss and support reinstatement of this gauge.

- Mr. Swenson noted that the Town of Esopus sewer system experiences some infiltration and inflow (I&I) problems. Actions could be developed for projects that reduce the I&I.

- Ms. Hauser asked if the plan reviewed specific invasive species that are found in the watershed and what should be done with them. Mr. Murphy explained that the plan does not achieve this level of detail. Ms. Hauser noted that Japanese knotweed along the Twaalfskill does not resist erosion.

- Ms. Hauser asked if the plan could promote citizen science. For example, if a student or resident is interested in eels, he or she might be interested in the watershed. Microbeads could also be addressed through citizen science.

Project Funding and Remaining Funds

[1] In 1997, students of Middletown High School in upstate New York produced a 54 minute documentary about organized crime, political corruption, and the illegal dumping of hazardous waste in the region's landfills (ref. http://www.garbagegangstersandgreed.com/)

- Mr. Swanzey explained that roughly $100,000 may be remaining for implementation of projects recommended in the plan.

- The student in attendance asked how the remaining funding would be divided, and asked if all three communities would get some implementation funding at this point. Mr. Murphy and Mr. Swanzey explained the reasoning for starting with the three projects in Kingston and noted that the momentum of implementing the plan would lead to projects in the other communities.

- Ms. Hauser asked if the "Hudson Estuary Trees for Tribs" program could be tapped for some near-term projects.

Next Steps

- A 30-day comment period was suggested to allow attendees and other interested people to review the draft plan and provide comments.

- Mr. Murphy and Mr. Swanzey urged attendees to recommend specific water quality projects in all three communities if they happen to think of ideas after the meeting.