



Kingston Conservation Advisory Council
www.kingstoncac.org

2013 Annual Report

General Background

This volunteer board is an advisory body that works to ensure the sustainable use of Kingston's natural resources and the enhancement and protection of its environment. The City of Kingston is one of 16 other Ulster County Conservation Councils. The Kingston CAC was created under Resolution 180 of 2008, in November, 2008.

This advisory board, consisting of Kingston residents, advises the Planning Board and Common Council on matters pertaining to the natural environment of the city; conducts public programs to inform the public of local and regional environmental issues, such as storm water management, climate change and biodiversity; and coordinates with local groups which have an impact on the local environment.

The Kingston Conservation Advisory Council meets the first Thursday of each month at 6:30pm in Kingston City Hall Conference Room 2. The meetings are open to the general public. Since its inception, the CAC has held 58 general council meetings and 6 special meetings, in addition to sub-committee meetings. All meeting minutes and agendas are posted and archived at www.kingstoncac.org as well as on the Kingston CAC webpage of the City of Kingston website.

2013 Council Members (two year terms):

Julie Noble, Chair	1/2/2009-12/31/14	3 rd term
Diane Bonavita	1/1/13-12/31/14	1 st term
Lillian Childress	9/6/12-6/6/13	1 term, early resignation, college enrollment
Karen Corey	1/1/13-11/ 5/13	1 term, early resignation, residency change
Judith Deming	8/2009- 6/2013	2 nd term
Emilie Hauser	1/1/13-12/31/14	1 st term
Kevin McEvoy	8/21/13-12/31/14	1 st term
Casey Schwarz	2/28/11-12/31/14	2 nd term
Gregg Swanzey	1/2/2009-12/31/14	3 rd term

2013 Highlights

1) Climate Action Planning

Since 2009, the Kingston CAC has been integral in local Climate Action initiatives, with the adoption of the Climate Smart and Green Jobs Community Pledge in 2009, the formation of the Climate Smart and Green Jobs Task Force, and the creation of the Kingston Climate Action Plan in 2012. The Climate Smart and Green Jobs Task Force was later renamed the Climate Action Task Force and is now Climate Smart Kingston and is tasked with implementing the recommendations of the Climate Action Plan. The Kingston CAC has continued to foster this initiative. The City of Kingston is a Climate Smart Community, along with hundreds of others throughout the state. Climate Smart Kingston convenes about 6 times per year to strategize, plan, and implement the goals of Kingston's Climate Action Plan. Marketing and outreach was a major effort of 2013.

In January 2013, the CAC Chair participated in "A Recommended Approach to Climate Action Planning: A CSC Webinar", which outlined a recommended approach for creating a climate action plan, including the stakeholders that should be involved, outreach techniques, sample outlines and how to put it into action.

In the Spring of 2013 with the help of Vanesse Hangen Brustlin, Inc (VHB), funded through the State CSC, Climate Smart Kingston was able to execute a prioritization exercise in order to begin to implement the Climate Action Plan. VHB also completed a profile of the City of Kingston, demonstrating Kingston's execution of each element of the 10 point commitment to the Climate Smart Communities Pledge to date.

In the Spring and Summer of 2013, Kingston participated in the Climate Smart Communities Certification Program Pilot. As one of 8 communities throughout the state participating, Kingston was able to conduct a self-guided evaluation of local climate actions as a means towards measuring and ranking Kingston's efforts towards sustainability among it's peer communities. The results of this program will be announced in Winter 2014.

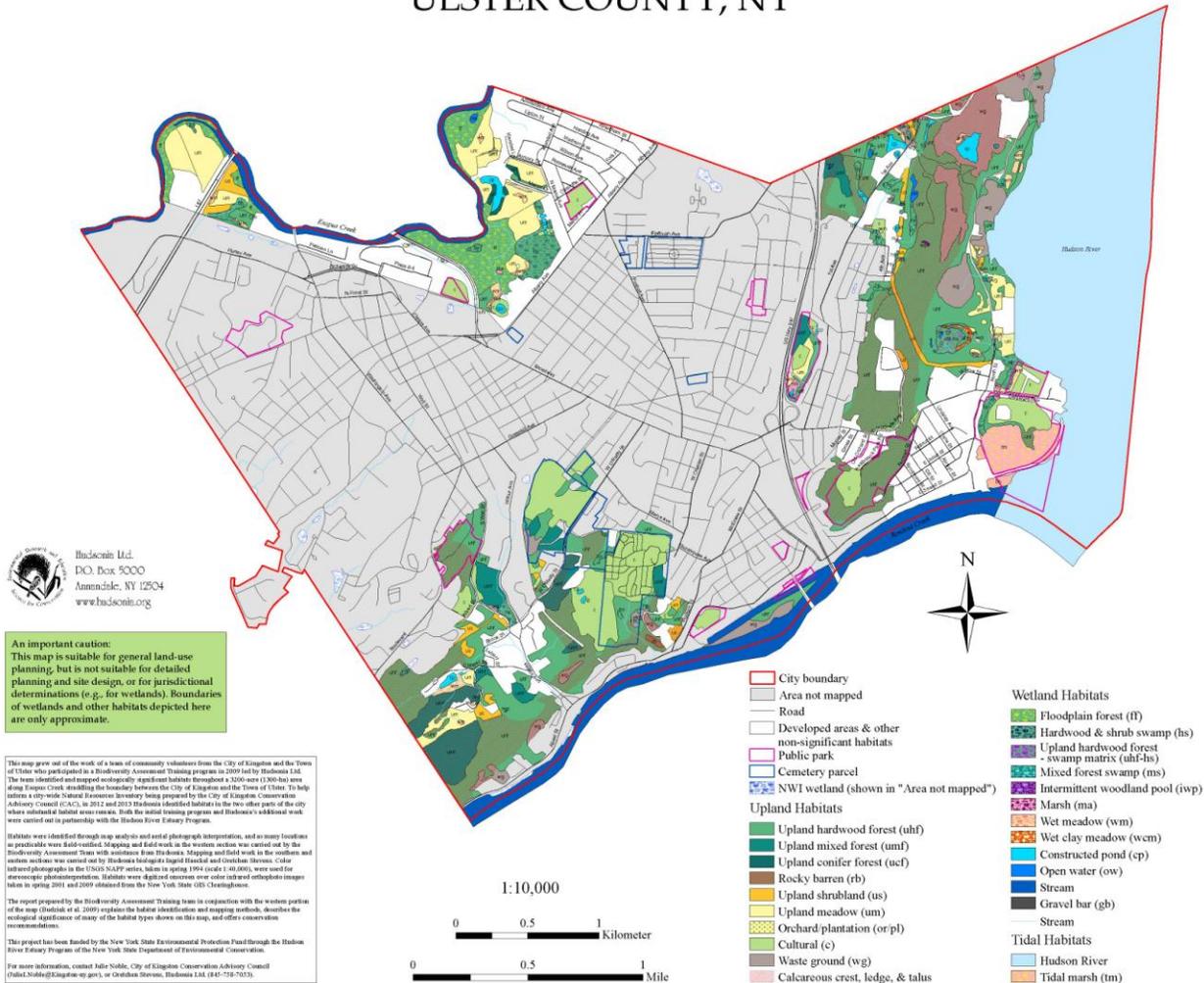
2) Natural Resources Inventory

With an ultimate goal of creating an Open Space Plan for Kingston, the Natural Resources Inventory (NRI) process continued in 2013 with support from a number of outside agencies:

- a) Technical assistance was made available to the Kingston CAC through Hudsonia with funding from the NYSDEC Hudson River Estuary Program. Beginning in the summer of 2012, Hudsonia conducted remote and on-the-ground habitat mapping of the remaining open space in Kingston, concentrating on the northwestern, southern and eastern sections of the City, which contain the most concentrated open areas (see map below).
- b) Technical assistance directly from the Hudson River Estuary Program to create a Habitat Summary for Kingston. This is an overview of significant ecological systems present in our community. This summary will be presented in the early Spring of 2014.
- c) Technical assistance directly from Ulster County Information Services to compile existing data into map layers, such as Surface waters, Geology, Flood zones, Soils , Agricultural Lands, Vegetated Lands, Forests, Ecologically Sensitive Areas, Parks and Recreational Areas, and Developed Areas

All of this information will be compiled into an NRI, which is a survey of the natural resources in a community, with the goal of informing the planning board, common council and decision makers on land use decisions. The next step will be for the CAC to work with the Planning Department to create recommendations for an Open Space Plan. The CAC recognizes that the NRI and Open Space Plan will be extremely valuable to contribute to the Comprehensive Plan so submitted to the City Planner on 12/4/13: *Preliminary Review of Open Space and Natural Resources for the City of Kingston, NY.*

SIGNIFICANT HABITATS IN THE CITY OF KINGSTON, ULSTER COUNTY, NY



3) Tidal Waterfront Flooding Task Force (portions excerpted from Planning for Rising Waters: Final Report of the City of Kingston Tidal Waterfront Flooding Task Force)

In the fall of 2012, Mayor Shayne Gallo appointed the Kingston Waterfront Flooding Task Force. Mayor Gallo charged the Task Force with evaluating the present and future vulnerability to flooding, storm surge, and sea-level rise along the Rondout-Hudson waterfront. He asked the Task Force to recommend strategies for a resilient waterfront. The Task Force included waterfront and business property owners, representatives of cultural institutions, neighborhood residents, elected officials, and City and County staff. The Kingston Conservation Advisory Council (CAC),

Office for Economic Development, and Planning Department convened the Task Force. A planning team consisting of staff from the City of Kingston, the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation Hudson River Estuary Program, Hudson River National Estuarine Research Reserve and Office of Climate Change, the New York State Department of State, and Scenic Hudson guided the efforts of the Task Force. The Consensus Building Institute and Catalysis Adaptation Partners provided facilitation and modeling services for the effort.

The Task Force met seven times between December 2012 and July 2013. Participants at the large public kick-off meeting described their visions of a flood-resilient Kingston waterfront. The Task Force selected the following key themes from that vision to guide the process and ultimately the selection of final recommendations:

- Recognize waterfront history and preserve a sense of community and a “sense of place.”
- Promote a waterfront economy and economic revitalization.
- Prioritize health and safety.
- Use natural systems to reduce flood risk.
- Secure infrastructure.
- Promote the implementation of Kingston’s Climate Action Plan, including reduction of greenhouse gas emissions through green architecture.

The Task Force identified and mapped waterfront assets and assessed vulnerability of the assets under a variety of sea-level rise and storm scenarios, and they evaluated flood adaptation strategies for the waterfront and for shoreline neighborhoods. In addition, three site-specific strategies for the Strand and Ponckhockie neighborhoods were evaluated with a cost-benefit analysis under future sea-level rise and flood scenarios.

The Task Force developed 24 general recommendations for the City, and many site-specific recommendations for shoreline neighborhoods which, along with all meeting proceedings, tools and resources can be found at www.kingstoncac.org. The Common Council adopted the recommendations in October 2013 and the Mayor signed the resolution.

4) Planning Board Review

Kingston CAC members regularly attend the Kingston Planning Board monthly meetings to stay abreast of local proposals and items of interest in Kingston. Additionally, beginning in the Fall of 2012, the Kingston CAC began the informal process of general reviews of proposed developments that came before the Kingston Planning Board. This process includes a general review of each new proposal or action that comes before the Planning Board, for environmental impact. The scope of review has included concerns such as storm water runoff, habitat conservation, open space preservation, walkability and bikeability, and in-fill development. Concerns and recommendations are submitted to the Planning Department, for review by the Planning Board, in advance of the Planning Board meeting and a CAC member attends each Planning Board meeting to be available for further comments or questions.

In 2013, two formal recommendations were submitted to the Planning Board, from the CAC, as a review of the following proposals:

- 1) Hudson Landing Promenade Phase 1 Improvement Plan
- 2) Input to Comprehensive Plan 2025

In addition, on July 15, 2013, the Comprehensive Plan Committee hosted an evening where community organizations and municipal committees could give presentations and provide written recommendations to the Comprehensive Plan Committee. Members of the CAC presented on the CAC, Tidal Waterfront Flooding Task Force and the Climate Action Task Force.

5) Letters of Support for Municipal Initiatives

The Kingston CAC values the work of the municipal staff in regards to relevant environmental issues and often provides letters of support to municipal applications for funding directed toward environmental initiatives. In 2013, the Kingston CAC supported through formal letters the following grant applications:

- a) Parks and Recreation: NYS DEC Hudson River Estuary Program Watershed Resiliency Grant Program: May 2013, *City subsequently was awarded \$50,400*
- b) Economic Development: Regional Economic Development Council/Consolidated Funding Application Kingston Connectivity Project: August 2013, *City subsequently awarded \$4.3M*

6) CAC Budget

In 2013, the CAC requested a budget line item in the City's 2014 municipal budget, of \$500. This is the first time the Kingston CAC has received access to funding through the municipal budget. This budget, which was approved and is now under the Planning Department, will be used for

- Conservation Advisory Council website
- NYSACC Membership dues
- Communication and marketing
- Community events and programs
- Meetings, webinars, conference fees

7) Environmental Issue Referrals/Review

Frequently, the Kingston CAC will receive formal requests from either a community member, city staff, the legislative body or the executive body to review, research or weigh in on local environmental issues. The CAC then independently decides what action to take on each proposal. In 2013, the Kingston CAC participated in the following reviews (read: issue, *referral*, action taken):

- a) Green Infrastructure as an alternative to gray infrastructure, *Kevin Pagini*, student at SUNY ESF informational, no action to date
- b) Commercial Pesticide Application/Non-toxic Landscape Management, *John Burroughs Natural History Society*, reviewed Ulster County legislation, no action to date
- c) Urban Farm Code, *Urban Agriculture Committee*, engaged, shepherding
- d) Fortis, Inc. Merger/Municipal Consortium, *Jennifer Metzger*, submitted letter to Common Council urging opposition, Resolution in Opposition adopted in June 2013
- e) Uptown Flooding Issues, *Alderman Matt Dunn*, referred back to Common Council

8) Outreach/Engagement

It is very important to the Kingston CAC to maintain a transparent and open relationship with the citizens of Kingston regarding environmental happenings in Kingston. All meeting minutes and agendas are posted in a timely manner on the CAC page, as are pertinent documents that the CAC has adopted, resource links and tools used for projects and initiatives.

Additionally, a member of the Kingston CAC attends each Public Safety/General Government/Auditing Committee meeting of the Common Council in order to keep the city government abreast of Kingston CAC initiatives as well as to maintain an open line of communication with decision makers.

Furthermore, the Kingston CAC as a body hosts or participates in events, seminars, workshops, and public programs throughout the year to engage the community with relevant environmental issues. In 2013, the CAC hosted or attended:

- a) Island President, Movie Screening, Kingston Library, 4/17/13
- b) Energize Kingston, Energy Fair, YMCA, 4/20/13
- c) National Flood Insurance Program/Community Rating System Workshop, City Hall, 12/4/13

9) Special Guests/Presentations

The Kingston CAC often hosts organizations or individuals to monthly meetings for relevant topic based presentations. These may either be pertinent to ongoing CAC initiatives or for strictly informational. In 2013, the Kingston CAC hosted the following special presentations:

- a) Hudson River Estuary Program, Laura Heady: Kingston Habitat Summary
- b) Riverkeeper, Tracy Brown: Water Quality Data
- c) Milone and McBroom, Inc: Tidal Rondout Creek Watershed Management Program's Public Presentation (*CAC Attended*)
- d) Kingston Urban Agriculture Initiative, Jeff LeJava, Jennifer Schwartz-Berky, Rebecca Martin: Farm Code update
- e) Jennifer Metzger and Susan Gillespie: Fortis, Inc Merger and Municipal Consortium
- f) Kevin Pagini: Green Infrastructure
- g) Hudsonia, Gretchen Stevens: Kingston Habitat Map
- h) Carmel Winwater Works, Nancy Cozean: LED lighting technologies

10) Professional Development

Kingston CAC members regularly attend meetings, workshops and conferences to further their professional development and to keep up to date on currently, relevant environmental issues regionally and locally. In 2013, CAC council members participated in:

- a) NYS Conference on the Environment
- b) Mid Hudson Regional Economic Development Council (REDC) Workshops
- c) US Green Building Council presentations on LEED programs and related building, energy, landscaping, and water conservation techniques
- d) Land Trust Alliance Roundtables
- e) CFA Workshops

- f) Woods in Your Backyard Webinar
- g) Climate Action Planning Webinar
- h) A Watershed Moment: Changing Climate and the Future of Our Water Resources
- i) Changes to the National Flood Insurance Program
- j) Regional Dialogue to Advance Sustainable Shorelines along Sheltered Coasts
- k) The State of the Hudson River Science
- l) Communicating Climate Change
- m) SEQRA seminar on new Environmental Assessment Forms
- n) Habitat Assessment Guidelines Workshop
- o) Biodiversity Assessment Workshop

11) Organizational Liaisons/Appointees

Kingston CAC council members hold positions on local environmentally related boards, and regularly acted as liaisons to:

- a) Ulster County Environmental Management Council
- b) Ulster County Trails Advisory Committee
- c) Ulster County Transportation Council
- d) Kingston Land Trust and Rail Trail Committee
- e) City of Kingston Comprehensive Plan Committee
- f) City of Kingston Complete Streets Advisory Council
- g) City of Kingston Climate Action Task Force/Climate Smart Kingston
- h) Friends of Forsyth Nature Center
- i) NYS Association of Conservation Commissions
- j) NYS Association of Environmental Management Councils
- k) American Solar Energy Society
- l) Public Safety/General Government/Auditing Committee liaison
- m) Kingston Planning Board meeting liaison
- n) Healthy Kingston for Kids Project and Garden Committee
- o) Kingston Tidal Waterfront Flooding Task Force
- p) Kingston Library Committee
- q) Ulster County Planning Board
- r) NYS Climate Smart Communities Certification Committee
- s) Waterfront Advisory Council
- t) Kingston Historic Landmarks
- u) Public Transportation Task Force (UCPD)
- v) New York Council of Non-profits
- w) Heritage Area Commission
- x) Hudson River Environmental Society
- y) Scenic Hudson
- z) Friends of Historic Kingston
- aa) Kingston Urban Agriculture Committee
- bb) Kingston Land Trust & Rail Trail Committee

12) Organizational Membership

The Kingston CAC is proud to be a member of the New York State Association of Conservation Commissions, since 2010. **The New York State Association of Conservation Commissions (NYSACC)** was formed in 1971 to coordinate and support the work of municipal conservation commissions, conservation advisory councils and conservation boards and to stimulate the formation of additional commissions throughout the state.

In partnership with the New York State Association of Environmental Management Councils (NYSAEMC), NYSACC hosts an annual Conference on the Environment, which a member of the Kingston CAC attends each year. The location of this Conference varies regionally throughout the State. A newsletter, *NYSACC News*, is published three times a year. It includes conservation commission activities, initiatives, projects, conservation information, and highlighted environmental events.

NYSACC provides:

- Networking
- Newsletter
- Annual Conference
- Scholarships
- Awards
- Website
- Current Environmental Information