

# The Forum

NEW YORK STATE WETLANDS FORUM NEWSLETTER

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## A REFLECTION – THE FORUM AND WETLANDS SCIENCE

*Joseph M. McMullen, Terrestrial Environmental Specialists, Inc.*

With my recent retirement after over 38 years in the environmental consulting business, I find myself in a reflective mood. As I was cleaning out my office, I discovered that I have all of The Forum newsletters back to the Premier Volume 1, Number 1 issue. It is dated Fall 1994, eighteen years ago.

The Welcome from the Chair in this issue indicates that the NYS Wetlands Forum was less than a year old at that time. It was presented as a non-advocacy organization, whose purpose is to:

- improve communication among people interested in wetlands;
- call attention to and objectively discuss local, statewide, regional, national and global wetland issues as they relate to New York State;
- improve its members’ knowledge and understanding of wetlands; and
- make available information about wetlands to its members and general public.

These stated purposes stand true today.

This premier issue of The Forum announced a fall meeting, which I happened to attend. The meeting was titled “Wetland Regulation: Current Implementation and Policy in Transition.” Ironically, this is probably a title that could be the subject of a meeting today.

It was a one-day meeting, with a registration fee including lunch of \$18, with students charged \$5 - somewhat less than our conference fee today. However, membership in the Forum at that time was \$25, so the \$35 we charge today (18 years later) is a deal.

I have been involved with wetlands work from the beginning. The New York Freshwater Wetlands Act (Article 24 of the NYS Environmental Conservation Law) went into effect in September 1975, a year after I started working in the environmental consulting field. The Clean Water Act, which provides federal protection for wetlands, was enacted in 1977.

Although both these Acts were passed in the mid 1970s, wetlands work as we know it today really didn’t start until the mid to late 1980s. There are basically two reasons for this. First, most of the state freshwater wetlands maps, which were prepared county by county, were not promulgated until the mid 1980s. Second, it wasn’t until the 1987 Corps wetland delineation manual that we had an established method for defining wetlands on a federal level.

In the “old days” of wetlands work, our wetlands maps were sketches of the wetland cover types presented on a map or an aerial photograph similar to the production of a vegetation/habitat cover map. One of the first times I was asked to mark the edges of a wetland in the field was around 1988. At that time I thought it was a rather overboard request, being performed because the site was a contested landfill. How could anyone require that we field mark all the wetlands on a project site? This would be an expensive and onerous process for an applicant. The process evolved into a much more complex procedure than I could have ever imagined at that time. Looking back, I realize it helped put my children through college.

Wetlands science has only been recognized as a discrete natural resource field for about 25 or 30 years. It is an infant, especially when compared to something like botany, which can trace its roots back over 500 years. This raw infancy is one of the things that always excited me about working in the wetlands science field. There was so much new going on all the time. There were new methods, definitions, regulations, procedures, protocols, approaches, etc. that could be learned, evaluated, discussed and, of course, critically questioned. I was good at the critically questioning part, but I have always tried to do it in a constructive manner to get to the heart of what we still struggle with today. The truth. The truth of what defines a wetland and what does not. The truth of what is important for our regulations to protect and what just really doesn’t matter.

*Continued on page 3*

## **New York State Wetlands Forum**

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### ***Mission***

The New York State Wetlands Forum is a non-advocacy corporation comprised of individuals and groups with diverse backgrounds, interests and viewpoints regarding wetlands and their science, use and management. Incorporated in 1994, the Forum is a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization. Its purpose is to improve communication among people interested in wetlands; call attention to and objectively discuss local, statewide, regional, national and global wetland issues as they relate to New York State; improve its members' knowledge and understanding of wetlands; and, make available information about wetlands to its members and the general public.

## **MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR**

Hello everyone! Our Board of Directors is hard at work planning our Annual Conference, to be held on April 23rd and 24th at the Fort William Henry Hotel and Conference Center in Lake George Village. We look forward to a great event at this lovely Adirondack location.

Please see the agenda included in this newsletter for speakers and topics. We will have a diverse conference with topics focusing on wildlife ecology, post disaster responses, climate change considerations, restoration of disturbed sites, invasive species, endangered species updates, and we have some great speakers on recent legislative actions.

We are encouraging students to attend the Annual Conference. We are offering a waived registration fee for students who submit a poster for the Student Poster Session.

The "Naturalist Contest" will be typically difficult, with good luck offered to all. The contest is a reminder to me every year to get up from behind my mostly desk-job, and get outside. The field trips will be great – there will be a focus on cutting edge projects within the Lake George area, and local stream restoration examples.

As always, we will be featuring an evening festive activity, to take place in Lake George Village. We will fill you in with details as the conference gets closer. These events are great networking opportunities and tend to be remembered for several years.

We are also featuring an early morning bird walk led by Kurt Weiskotten, which will be a very nice way to start Day 2 of the conference.

New this year, we are offering three door prizes for folks that complete the evaluation forms. The prizes will be science-themed and the winners will be drawn on the second day of the conference.

I am speaking for the entire Board in saying that we are excited to host another great conference this year, and we look forward to seeing you in Lake George!

Melissa Toni, Chair



*Melissa Toni*

## **WANT TO SERVE ON THE NYSWF BOARD OF DIRECTORS?**

The Board of Directors of the NYS Wetlands Forum is anticipating an opening on the Board starting after the 2013 Annual Conference (April 23 and 24, 2013). If you are interested in serving the NYSWF in this capacity, or would like to nominate someone (make sure they are interested first), please let Joe McMullen know prior to the Annual Conference. He can be reached at [joymcmullen2@msn.com](mailto:joymcmullen2@msn.com). Please submit contact information for yourself and the nominated individual (if different), and provide a paragraph of why the nominated candidate would make a good addition to the Board.

A slate of candidates will be proposed to the membership during the NYSWF Business Meeting by the Nominating Committee (represented by current Directors whose terms are not expiring this year). The membership will vote on the slate of candidates at the Business Meeting. Directors are elected to hold office for a term of three years. For additional details, please visit the NYSWF Bylaws at <http://www.wetlandsforum.org/bylaws.pdf>.

## **NEW SOIL MAPPING WEB APP AVAILABLE FOR SMARTPHONES, TABLETS AND COMPUTERS**

*Frances Reese, Certified Professional Soil Scientist*

Most of us have been using the Internet-based Web Soil Survey application available through the Natural Resources Conservation Service website (<http://websoilsurvey.nrcs.usda.gov/app/HomePage.htm>) for some time now. This site is readily accessible from your desktop or laptop computer, and gives you seamless access to published soil survey data.

The app can help you figure out the most efficient sampling methods, and can link you to all sorts of physical, chemical and geomorphic data. You can print out maps and take them along in the field. You can also access much of the soil physical and chemical data as well as land use capability information.

A relatively new app entitled "Soilweb" is also available for your smartphone. This second generation app was just released in November 2012 and is available free on <http://casoilresource.lawr.ucdavis.edu/soilweb> or from Google Play.

It's available in either iPhone or Android versions, and accesses the soil information directly from the web. The app was jointly developed by USDA – NRCS and the Soil Resource Lab at the University of California, Davis.

The app takes advantage of the suite of native apps for smartphones (GPS) and Google Earth. It displays soil information over a Google Earth air photo base.

I beta-tested this app using my 2 yr. old Samsung Fascinate Verizon Android phone in my yard. The GPS must be enabled on the phone for the app to obtain your physical location. My phone is 3G capable, and the app runs slowly. It may also be of limited use in areas without cell phone service or where 3G access is spotty.

I was able to access soil information for my home area. Once the app has your location, it will display a soil profile with the name or names of soil mapping units on the soil map. You can click on the soil series name at the top of the profile to be taken to the Official Soil Series Description of that series. There is also a link to the map page that requires Macromedia Flash Player. My phone did not play well with this link. Therefore, I was unable to link to the soil map page. I was disappointed in this regard.

I also beta-tested the app on my computer. It works well from the web page and loads much faster than the Web Soil Survey app from NRCS. If you get the opportunity or would like to further test this app, check it out on Google Play or the UC-Davis link above. I would be interested to hear how well this app works and whether your experience is device-specific. I can see where this could be very useful as a tablet app. The screen is a little cramped as a phone-based app.

## **DEC FUNDING AVAILABLE FOR GRASSLAND PROTECTION PROGRAM**

Private landowners interested in enhancing and restoring critical grassland habitat could be eligible for grants totaling approximately \$1 million. With grasslands declining in New York and nationwide, DEC's Landowner Incentive Program (LIP) for Grassland Protection and Management directs funding to projects on private property that will help at-risk species that depend on unique grassland ecosystems to survive.

Grasslands provide important habitat for a variety of wildlife and are especially significant for birds. In New York, the endangered short-eared owl, the threatened Henslow's sparrow, and the threatened upland sandpiper need grasslands to avoid further declines in their populations. Grassland acreage in the state has decreased drastically over the last three decades primarily due to a reduction in pasture and hayfields, reversion of abandoned farmland to forests, and development of farmland. Between 1965 and 2006, pastures and hayfields in New York decreased by approximately 33 percent in area and, during that time, grassland bird populations decreased at a fairly steady average rate of 6.5 percent per year.

To help address the loss of grasslands and associated at-risk species, the LIP was created as a partnership between DEC and private landowners since the vast majority of grasslands are privately owned. Under LIP, enrolled landowners that engage in stewardship activities that are beneficial for breeding grassland birds are compensated for their efforts. The program is funded by a grant from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service through State Wildlife Grants. This grant program was created and is funded by Congress to help rare and declining species before they require listing under the Federal Endangered Species Act.

Eligible private landowners interested in offsetting the decline in grassland bird habitat and populations will be able to apply for technical advice and financial incentives of \$110 or \$113 per acre per year to conduct the prescribed site management. The higher rate will be applied for parcels of land located within 25 miles of large urban areas, reflecting higher soil rental rates near population centers. To be eligible to apply, an applicant must own at least 25 acres of contiguous grassland located within one of the grassland focus areas across the state, which include (among others) portions of Madison, Oneida and Onondaga Counties.

To learn more about the program and obtain an application form visit the Landowner Incentive Program page at <http://www.dec.ny.gov/animals/32722.html> on DEC's website. For questions or comments regarding the program send an email to [F&WLIP@gw.dec.state.ny.us](mailto:F&WLIP@gw.dec.state.ny.us) or call (518) 402-8943. The deadline for submitting a pre-application was January 15, 2013.

## **A REFLECTION**

*Continued from page 1*

The most exciting part of being involved with an infant field is the tremendous opportunity to make contributions. Contributions to further the knowledge of the field, or further the knowledge of individuals working in the field and the public. Opportunities existed to further the knowledge of the parameters used to define wetlands, for me especially the vegetation component. I think I have made my share of contributions over the years. It has been a rewarding, although at times a rather frustrating process. (Plant indicator status rankings do come to mind.) Even today, there are great opportunities for any interested student to make a contribution to the field. There is so much we have to learn.

My reflection ends with this thought. We have come a long way in the wetlands science field, but at times I see this infant still crawling around, still trying to learn to walk.

## NYSWF ANNOUNCES DEVELOPMENT OF STUDENT GRANT PROGRAM

Charlotte Brett

The Forum's Board of Governors is excited to announce the development of a grant program to support students pursuing wetlands-related higher education. There are two components to the program, each of which provides a different opportunity for students to earn a \$500 grant as well as recognition for their work. Full-time and part-time undergraduate and graduate students are encouraged to apply to either or both competitions; however, the same student will not be awarded both grants in the same year. This program is in development and will be in place in 2014. Additional information will be provided at the annual conference, in subsequent newsletters, and on the Forum's web site.

**Annual Conference Presentation Competition** – The student presentation competition will take place each year at the Forum's annual conference. Applications will be solicited in the Call for Papers published in advance of each year's conference as well as on the Forum's website. A panel of judges will select the top three applicants for participation in the presentation contest. (Additional student abstracts may be accepted for other conference sessions.) At the conference, a student session will be held for student presenters participating in the contest. The panel of judges will vote on the best presentation, and the winner will be awarded a \$500 cash prize at the conference. Conference and lodging fees will be waived for all participants.

**Grant Program Competition** – This grant is intended for support of wetlands/waters related research being performed in New York State. It will consist of an online application process administered through the Forum's website in the fall of each year. Follow-up telephone interviews may be conducted as a second step in the selection process. The winner of this competition will be awarded a \$500 cash prize at the following year's annual spring conference, and will also be expected to give a presentation on their research at the conference. All conference and lodging fees will be waived.

For questions or to share ideas about program development, email Charlotte Brett at [charlotte.e.brett@gmail.com](mailto:charlotte.e.brett@gmail.com).

## NYSWF WEBSITE MONTHLY HIGHLIGHT

The Forum would like to express its gratitude for the time and energy that Melissa Yearick (Upper Susquehanna Coalition) and Andy Lowell (USFWS) have expended in giving the website a new look and in its upkeep-Thank you.

And, yes, if you haven't visited the web site in a while, it has a new look. The Board has formed a committee to redesign and develop the web site with the goal of maintaining frequent – use by active members and the general public. One such measure that achieves this goal, and that has already been added to the site, is the addition of an events calendar. So, check the calendar frequently for local and regional events you can attend. Also, if you know of an event that you would like others to know about, let the Forum know, so that it can be added to the calendar (contact information posted on the web site).

Another measure being developed, and officially announced here, is a hyperlink on the web site to a "Monthly Highlight" page. The intent of the "Monthly Highlight" is to present brief yet specific information covering a broad range of topics related to wetlands in New York State. Not only does this measure provide an opportunity for you to participate, but it is a way for the Forum to fulfill its purpose, which is to provide education, share knowledge, improve communication, and discuss issues relative to wetlands in New York State. So, if you have a topic that you'd like to make into a "Monthly Highlight," you can submit it via e-mail to Donald Lockwood (contact info below). Submissions for the Monthly Highlight must meet the following criteria: (1) must be relative to wetlands in New York State and (2) must be prepared in MS Word containing a maximum of two pages, including photos. Suggested topics include, but are not limited to: projects – past, present and future; policy; a specific species of wetland plant or animal; wetland classification; history of wetlands in New York; wetland creation/mitigation; stories about experiences in the field; or special wetlands you've visited. All submissions are subject to review prior to being accepted. Only one highlight will be posted per month. You can submit your Monthly Highlight to Kevin Bliss at [kbwetlands@gmail.com](mailto:kbwetlands@gmail.com).



## MEMBERSHIP FORM

### New York State Wetlands Forum, Inc. Please Join Us!

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

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Annual Dues Enclosed  \$35 Individual Membership  \$15 Student Membership  \$100 Corporate Membership  
(Corporate Membership allows membership for up to 4 people from a single organization.)

**Please Mail to:** NYSWF, P.O. Box 1351, Latham, NY 12110      EIN 14-1723859



# ***New York State Wetlands Forum, Inc. Annual Conference and Meeting***

Fort William Henry Hotel and Conference Center, Lake George, NY

April 23 - 24, 2013

## ***Keeping Wetlands Current: Science Matters***

Tuesday, April 23

6:30 - 7:30 Exhibitor/Poster Setup

7:30 - 5:00 Registration and Review of Exhibits and Posters

7:30 - 9:00 Continental Breakfast

8:20 - 8:30 Opening Remarks: *Ms. Melissa Toni, Chair, New York State Wetlands Forum*

8:30 - 9:00 Keynote Address: *Kathleen Moser, Assistant Commissioner, Natural Resources, NYS Department of Environmental Conservation*

9:00 - 9:15 Lake George Introduction

9:15 - 9:30 Break and Review of Exhibits/Posters

9:30 - 10:50 CONCURRENT SESSION A

**1. Wildlife Ecology** [Moderator: Mr. Michael Fishman, Barton & Loguidice, P.C.]

Utilizing Geophysics and Biology to Identify Bat Habitat on a Proposed Right of Way (ROW)

*Speaker: David Tompkins, Kleinfelder*

Design Considerations and Effectiveness of Fencing for Turtles: Three Case Studies Along Northeastern New York State Highways

*Speaker: Tom Langen, Clarkson University*

Behavioral Aversion of Northern Gray Treefrogs (*Hyla versicolor*) to Road Salts

*Speaker: Kevin Jamieson, Maser Consulting P.A.*

**2. Watershed Planning and Water Quality Considerations** [Moderator: Ms. Charlotte Brett, Conservation Connects]

Watershed Management Planning From the Ground Up

*Speaker: Jim Lieberum, Warren County Soil and Water Conservation District*

Evaluation of Biodiversity and Water Quality Indicators of Beneficial Use Impairments and Ecosystem Services in Wetlands of the Massena (New York) Area of Concern

*Speaker: Kinga Stryszowska, Ph.D. Candidate, Clarkson University*

Thinking Outside the Box

*Speaker: James Curatolo, The Wetland Trust*

**3. Post Disaster Emergency Response** [Moderator: Mr. Peter Gibbs, USDA – NRCS]

Post-Sandy Shoreline Structures Status

*Speaker: Michael Bontje, B. Laing Associates, Inc.*

Transportation Emergency Response to Hurricane Driven River Corridor Impacts

*Speaker: John Falge, NYS Department of Transportation, Region 7*

Protecting Wetlands During Oil Spill Response Activities: The Roll of Shoreline Cleanup Assessment Team (SCAT) and Resource Advisors (READS/NRAs)

*Speakers: Ron Chiarello and Abby Morton, O'Brien & Gere Engineers, Inc.*

10:50 - 11:10 Break and Review of Exhibits/Posters

11:10 - 12:30 CONCURRENT SESSION B

**1. Climate Change Considerations** [Moderator: Mr. Kurt Weiskotten, Greenman-Pedersen, Inc. Consultants]

Fen Plant Communities Buffered from Climate Change: Microsite Soil Temperatures Only Partially Linked to Atmospheric Patterns

*Speaker: Patrick Raney, SUNY ESF and Upper Susquehanna Coalition*

Building a Monitoring Framework for Detecting Wetlands Response to Climate Change in the Adirondack Park: Conceptual Foundation and Monitoring Framework

*Speaker: Stephen Langdon, NYS Adirondack Park Agency*

**2. Ecological Restoration at Disturbed Sites** [Moderator: Ms. Aimee Rutledge, Sterling Environmental Engineering, P.C.]

Application of Highly Unique Natural Plant Communities to the Restoration of an Industrial Waste Site

*Speaker: Molly Farrell, SUNY College of Environmental Science & Forestry*

Wetland Restoration Design Considerations at Two Hazardous Waste Sites in Central New York

*Speaker: Steve Mooney, O'Brien & Gere Engineers, Inc.*

Reconstruction of Submerged Aquatic Vegetation and Riverine Fringing Wetland Habitat at the Hudson River PCB Superfund Site

*Speaker: Michael Traynor, The Louis Berger Group, Inc.*

**3. Water World** [Moderator: Mr. Brad Sherwood, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers]

Overview of the State DEC Protection of Waters Program – Emphasis on Excavation and Fill in Navigable Waters

*Speaker: Kevin Bliss, NYS Department of Environmental Conservation*

Post-Flood Emergency Stream Intervention Concepts

*Speaker: Larry Day, Delaware County Soil and Water Conservation District*

Tappan Zee Bridge – A Walk Through Sturgeon Impact Assessment

*Speaker: Melissa Toni, Federal Highway Administration*

12:30 – 2:00 **Lunch and Membership Meeting**

2:00 – 3:20 **CONCURRENT SESSION C**

**1. Lake George Local Issues** [Moderator: Mr. Ed Frantz, NYS Department of Transportation]

Low Impact Development and Do-It-Yourself Water Quality – Educating Landowners for Water Quality Improvements in the Lake George Basin

*Speaker: Chris Navitsky, P.E., Lake George Waterkeeper*

Beach Road, Porous Pavement and then Some . . .

*Speaker: Tom Baird, P.E., Barton & Loguidice, P.C.*

Lake George Watershed

*Speaker: Dave Decker, Lake George Watershed Coalition*

**2. Invasive Species Management** [Moderator: Ms. Fran Reese, Reese Environmental Consulting]

Field Management Strategies and Techniques: Common Reed (*Phragmites australis*), Knotweed (*Polygonum cuspidatum*, *P. sachalinense*)

*Speakers: Nathan Carlton and Ben Zimmerman, Applied Ecological Services, Inc.*

Invasive Plant Management in the Upper Connecticut River Basin

*Speaker: Christopher Scheiner, Independent GIS Specialist*

Utilizing a Terrestrial Invasive Species Response Team for Landscape Level Management in the Adirondack Park; The First Year of Results

*Speaker: Brendan Quirion, Adirondack Chapter of The Nature Conservancy*

**3. Green Infrastructure and Processes** [Moderator: Mr. Don Lockwood, Shumaker Consulting Engineering & Land Surveying, P.C.]

Updating Local Codes and Ordinances to Promote Green Infrastructure

*Speaker: Jayme Breschard Thomann, Genesee/Finger Lakes Regional Planning Council*

Green Infrastructure Mapping in Ulster County: A Case Study for New York State

*Speaker: Amanda LaValle, Ulster County Department of the Environment*

A Centralized Approach for Treating E&P (Extraction and Production) Wastewater & Residuals

*Speaker: Jerry Leone, Casella Waste Systems, Inc.*

3:20 – 3:40 **Break and Review of Poster/Exhibits**

3:40 – 5:00 **CONCURRENT SESSION D**

**1. Wetland Restoration Tactics and Strategies** [Moderator: Mr. Chris Einstein, Clough Harbour & Associates, Inc.]

Wildlife Deterrence System: Lessons From Little Beaver Island

*Speaker: Erin Redding, Gomez and Sullivan Engineers, P.C.*

Influence of Landscape and Restoration Attributes on Biological Communities at U.S. Fish and Wildlife and Natural Resource Conservation Service Wetland Restorations

*Speaker: Catherine Benson, Ph.D. Candidate, Clarkson University*

Principles of Wetland Creation and Restoration: 30 Years and Lessons Learned

*Speaker: Mallory Gilbert, Wetland Consultant*

**2. Vegetation Identification** [Moderator: Mr. Kevin Bliss, NYS Department of Environmental Conservation]

Wetland Grasses – An Overview of Common Species in New York

*Speaker: Bernie Carr, Terrestrial Environmental Specialists, Inc.*

Plant Identification Field Tour (*outside session – dress appropriately, approximately 50 minutes*)

*Speaker: Joseph McMullen, Environmental Consultant*

5:00 – 6:30 **Cocktail Hour and Review of Poster/Exhibits**

6:30 **Dinner on Your Own**

**Wednesday, April 24**

6:30 – 8:00 **Spring Bird Walk** with Mr. Kurt Weiskotten, Greenman-Pedersen, Inc. Consultants

7:30 – 8:30 **Registration and Continental Breakfast**

8:30 – 8:40 **Announcements:** Ms. Melissa Toni, Chair, New York State Wetlands Forum

8:40 – 9:50 **Hot Topics in Wetlands Law, Regulations and Enforcement** [Moderator: Ms. Kathleen Bennett, Esq., Bond, Schoeneck and King, PLLC]

*Speakers: Terresa Bakner, Esq., Whiteman Osterman & Hanna LLP and*

*Dominic Cordisco, Drake, Loeb, Heller, Kennedy, Gogerty, Gaba & Rodd, PLLC*

9:50 – 10:10 **Break and Review of Poster/Exhibits**

10:10 – 11:45 **Legislative and Regulatory Updates** [Moderator: Ms. Melissa Toni, Federal Highway Administration]

Regulatory Update – New Adjacent Area General Permit

*Speaker: Tim Post, NYS Department of Environmental Conservation, Central Office*

Federal/State Consistency Policies for Coastal Zone Management

*Speaker: Jeff Zappieri, NYS Department of State*

Overview of Indiana Bat Survey Protocol

*Speaker: Michael Fishman, Barton & Loguidice, P.C.*

Federal Wetland Regulations

*Speaker: U.S. Army Corps of Engineers*

SEQRA Revisions

*Speaker: NYS Department of Environmental Conservation*

11:50 – 12:00 **Closing Remarks:** Ms. Melissa Toni, Chair, New York State Wetlands Forum

12:00 – 1:00 **Lunch** (On Your Own)

1:00 – 4:00 **Field Trips** [Mr. Kurt Weiskotten, Greenman-Pedersen, Inc. Consultants]

Cutting Edge Projects in Lake George – *Dave Decker, Lake George Watershed Coalition*

Clifton Park Stream Restorations – *Kevin Verweire, HDR*

**Posters**

Habitat Suitability: Comparing Extant, Historic, & Potential Bog Turtle (*Glyptemys muhlenbergii*) Sites in Columbia, Dutchess and Otsego Counties of New York

*Presented by David MacDougall, Kleinfelder*

Assessment of Wetland Quantity and Quality in the Rochester Embayment Area of Concern

*Presented by Emily Van Wyk, Dan Gefell and Anne Secord, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service*



# A THREE COMPONENT MITIGATION APPROACH FOR ST. LAWRENCE TRIBUTARIES: FISH BARRIER, IN-STREAM HABITAT, AND FISH COMMUNITY ASSESSMENTS

Justin Ecret, USFWS

The spring and summer of 2012 marked the third year for the continuing FEMRF (Fish Enhancement Mitigation Research Fund) funded stream assessment project, A Three Component Mitigation Approach for St. Lawrence Tributaries: Fish Barrier, In-stream Habitat, and Fish Community Assessments. The project is designed to gather fisheries and stream habitat information in tributaries to Lake Ontario and the St. Lawrence River with the ultimate goal to restore access to vital stream habitats for migratory fish species in Jefferson and St. Lawrence Counties (Fig.1). Successful fish barrier removal and mitigation within these streams has already shown success for migratory species, including northern pike (*Esox Lucius*) and walleye (*Sander vitreus*) by providing access to spawning habitat. During the 2012 field season, both migratory fish species were observed utilizing newly accessible stream habitat following a fish barrier removal project in 2010. The original stream culvert restricted fish passage upstream; by replacing it with a bottomless arch culvert, it facilitated upstream and downstream movement for both migratory fish species (Fig.2 & 3).

This project also aims to incorporate multiple integrated assessment components, including fish barrier, stream habitat, and fish community assessments in order to efficiently prioritize stream restoration and enhancement efforts. Each year, migratory fish are assessed by deploying a series of modified fish trap nets within several streams at potential fish passage sites (Fig.4). This arrangement allows for both upstream and downstream movement patterns for a variety of migratory fish species to be observed, and will also assist in determining which fish barrier(s) demonstrate the highest impediment for individual fish species.

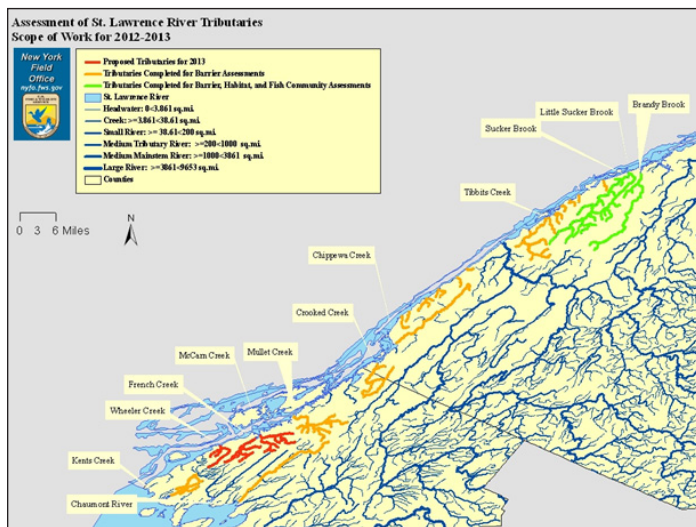


Figure 1. Map displaying streams that have been completed for assessment criteria, as well as future streams to be assessed in Jefferson and St. Lawrence County.

In addition to the fish passage and migratory assessment components, in-stream habitat conditions as well as residential fish communities are assessed each year within these streams in order to provide a more comprehensive knowledge of the current habitat conditions that are necessary for riverine fish species (Fig.4). Mitigation of fish barriers and future stream enhancement and restoration efforts in these tributaries will increase riverine fish species access to vital habitats needed throughout their life history, such as: spawning; foraging; and nursery areas. This project will aid in identifying and prioritizing barriers, and assist in the determination of barrier mitigation success and facilitate future mitigation and restoration efforts in the tributaries to Lake Ontario and the St. Lawrence River.



Figure 2. Original pipe culvert (left) that was replaced in 2010 with a bottomless arch culvert (right) in order to facilitate fish passage for migrant fish species from the St. Lawrence River.



Figure 3. Successfully tagged northern pike (left) and walleye (right) within two streams in St. Lawrence County.

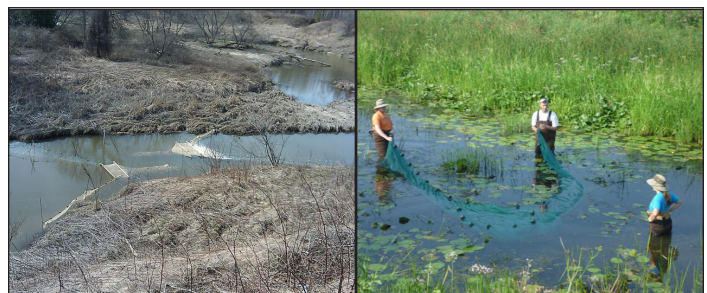


Figure 4. The trap net arrangement within project streams (left) and assessing residential fish community via seining (right) within streams to the St. Lawrence River.



## STATUS AND TRENDS OF ROCHESTER WETLANDS

Dan Gefell and Emily VanWyk, US Fish and Wildlife Service

Under the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) New York Field Office (NYFO) is assessing current status and trends in wetland extent and condition associated with bays, ponds, rivers, and streams contiguous with the Rochester Embayment Area of Concern (REAOC). The REAOC is one of the 30 Areas of Concern on the United States side of the Great Lakes, designated due to environmental degradation. Our objective is to evaluate the condition of fish and wildlife habitat in the REAOC – specifically the current quality and extent of wetland habitat compared with historic data that indicated habitat impairment.

During the fall of 2012, the NYFO collected water quality data and applied the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Rapid Assessment Method (USA RAM) for characterizing wetland habitat and stressors at over 70 sites across the study area. Field work will continue in the spring and summer of 2013, with continued USA RAM and water quality assessments, and monitoring of bird and amphibian calls. Additional field efforts may include reptile surveys as well as macroinvertebrate and fish community assessments.

In the meantime, the NYFO is compiling historical information from a number of organizations to use in assessing extent and condition trends. These resources include mapped wetlands from the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC) and the USFWS's National Wetlands Inventory, archived aerial photos from 1930 through 1999 from Cornell University and the Monroe County Department of Environmental Health, bird and amphibian call count data from Bird Studies Canada's Marsh Monitoring Program, macroinvertebrate survey data from NYSDEC, and water quality data from SUNY Brockport and U.S. Geological Survey. The goal is to complete field work and analyses by October 2013.



Submergent and emergent wetlands in Braddock Bay, Rochester Embayment Area of Concern.



## 2013 ANNUAL CONFERENCE AND MEETING

FORT WILLIAM HENRY HOTEL AND CONFERENCE CENTER, LAKE GEORGE, NEW YORK • APRIL 23 & 24, 2013

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Registration fee includes: continental breakfast, breaks, lunch and mixer (Tuesday, April 23), workshop materials, and field trips.

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