Ulster County Department of the Environment
2015 Annual Report

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.

2015 Accomplishments

Ulster County Environmental Management Council (EMC) Support

- Provided administrative support to the EMC, including posting minutes and agendas to the EMC website (http://ucenvironment.org) as well as maintaining and updating the website and attending meetings.

- Worked with the EMC to organize and coordinate the 6th annual Ulster County Creek Week. A total of seventeen separate events were held highlighting water resources and recreation across the County.

MS4 Stormwater Program

- Completed and filed the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYS DEC) Stormwater Annual Report for June 2014-May 2015.

- Completed the required stormwater outfall monitoring (100% of outfalls within five years) as per the NYS DEC MS4 stormwater permit. Updated outfall database.

- Coordinated with UC Soil and Water Conservation District to present the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation certified 4-hour training in erosion and sediment control for contractors to 47 participants.

- Conducted MS4 training for 22 Ulster County Health Department employees.

- Produced brochure for stormwater pollution prevention for the food service establishments. The Ulster County Health Department is including brochures with permit renewal form mailings.

- Assisted MS4 towns with MS4 stormwater permit and audit issues. Produced MS4 mapping for Village of New Paltz.

- Completed online North Atlantic Aquatic Connectively Collaborative culvert assessment training. Accompanied staff from NYS DEC in field to further gain proficiency in protocol.

Green Infrastructure

- Maintained green infrastructure planting areas at County Office Building and continued to use the site for demonstration and outreach purposes.

- Produced outreach materials detailing the NYS Environmental Facility Corporation funded green infrastructure elements of the STRIVE (Kingston Center of SUNY Ulster) campus. Grant funding ($439,000) allowed for installation of extensive pervious pavement area, permeable pavers, bioretention gardens as well as a green wall. Conducted building tours highlighting environmental features and green infrastructure elements for the UC Environmental Management Council, the Kingston Conservation Advisory Council, as well as SUNY Ulster staff and the public.

Energy Tracking and Fleet

- Continued to track utility usage (electric, gas and heating oil) in coordination with Department of Public Works (DPW) using a utility tracking software package.

- Tracked and performed analysis on Ulster County fleet unleaded fuel usage.

- Performed analysis of comparative greenhouse gas savings of various alternative and sustainable fuels if deployed in the Ulster County fleet.

- Provided research and technical support for the development of Ulster County's Green Fleet Policy Local Law.

- Worked with UC Department of Public Works to utilize a NYSERDA grant to install 9 Electric Vehicle Charging Stations at County facilities. Ulster County now hosts the largest network of municipally sponsored charging stations in New York State. Charging stations will be used by County fleet vehicles (as electric and plug-in hybrids are purchased) as well as by employees and the general public.

LED Lighting

- Ulster County continues to work with Lime Energy, a Central Hudson partner, to replace existing lights at County buildings with energy efficient LED lights. Parking lot lights at UC Probation were replaced and contracts were executed to do additional LED retrofits on lighting in the UCLEC warehouse and recreation yards.

- Worked with Greenleaf Energy, a Central Hudson partner, to complete interior LED lighting upgrades for 13 buildings. The project, which was valued $517,125, was provided at no cost to the County. The retrofit will produce an estimated annual savings of 632,754 KWH per year which will save the County taxpayers $82,231 annual in electricity costs.

Renewable Energy Deployment

- Ulster County was recognized by the US EPA Green Power Partnership as a recipient of a 2015 Green Power Leadership Award for its commitment to green power use covering 100% of electricity consumed. Ulster County is ranked by the EPA as one of the top municipal green power purchasers in the country.

- Continued to provide technical support for large scale solar installations at both SUNY Ulster (Stone Ridge campus) and the former Town of Ulster landfill. The installation at the former landfill will offset approximately 27% of the total electricity usage of County government operations.

Flood Hazard Mitigation & Watershed Planning

- Continued involvement in the Ashokan Release Working Group (ARWG) regarding NYCDEP's releases from the Ashokan Reservoir to the Lower Esopus Creek.

- Worked with the County Department of Emergency Services to finalize and collect information for the Ulster County Multi-Jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan update.

- 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.

- Remained very active in the City of New York watershed Flood Hazard Mitigation Working Group. This group worked to develop current and future opportunities for affected communities including: commercial, residential, and critical facility relocations, a voluntary flood buyout program, local flood analyses in hamlet areas, and other measures to reduce flooding in the Watershed.

- 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 Management Program.

- Continued to actively participate in the environmental aspects of the Greater Catskill Flood Remediation and Buyout Program Phase II Wawarsing, including an environmental review and also providing GIS technical support.

- Assisted the Town of Hardenburgh in preparing and submitting a successful grant application to repair and stabilize a failing hillslope along the Mill Brook that posed a threat to the critical road and downstream bridge.

Outreach, Grants and Awards

- Worked with 511NY Rideshare to develop Ulster County Greener Commuting, a rideshare program, for Ulster County employees.

- Worked with staff from the Ulster County Resource Recovery Agency to put forward a grant application to NYSERDA, Cleaner Greener Communities Program, which would significantly expand the composting facility operated by UCRRA at their Flatbush Avenue complex and lower the tipping fee for compostable materials.

- Created outreach material on *Ulster County's Food Service Waste Reduction Act, Local Law Number 12 of 2014- Regulating the Use of Polystyrene Foam Disposable Food Service Ware by Food Service Establishments in Ulster County*.

- Ulster County received the 2015 Achievement Award from the National Association of Counties (NACo) in the category of County Resiliency and Sustainability for the "Carbon Footprint Reduction Program." The program serves as an important model for other municipalities who wish to decrease energy consumption and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

- Continued to support and update, along with UC Information Services, the Ulster County REConnect (www.UlsterCountyAlive.com/REConnect) website. It is now mobile-friendly and includes dining and lodging opportunities. Outreach and marketing materials were also updated.

- Applied for and was awarded a grant by the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation, Hudson River Estuary Program to perform a comprehensive culvert assessment. Department of the Environment will work closely with UC Planning and UC Department of Public Works to create an assessment protocol and pilot the protocol in priority areas of Ulster County.

Key Statistics

- Received over 3,200 unique website visits for Ulster County REConnect.

- Two staff members serve on various grant review committees, including the Ashokan Watershed 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.

- Marked more than 400 ash trees for removal by UCDPW contractor along County roads in accordance with the "Ulster County EAB Action Plan" completed by the Department in 2014.

- Hosted a SUNY New Paltz Geography major as an intern for approximately 200 hours during the Spring 2015 semester.

- Ulster County hosted 328 electric vehicle charging sessions from July, when stations were operational, through December avoiding 878 kg of greenhouse gases emissions to the atmosphere.

- Joined the U.S. Department of Energy's Workplace Charging Challenge. Currently, 97% of Ulster County employees have access to electric vehicle charging at their workplace.

- The LED interior lighting retrofit, completed by GreenLeaf under contract with Central Hudson, will save an estimated 632, 752 kWh of electricity annually. This is approximately 5% of the total electricity consumed by County government operations and equivalent to the energy generated by a 500 kW (or 0.5 mW) solar array.

- Held twenty (20) meetings with five (5) municipalities in the NYC Watershed portion of Ulster County to assist local leaders in participating in the Ulster County Multi-Jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan.

- Five municipalities (Shandaken, Olive, Denning, Hardenburgh, and Woodstock), identified and submitted a total of one-hundred and seven (107) hazard mitigation projects for the Ulster County Multi-Jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan update. Ulster County submitted an additional thirty-five (35) projects for this effort.

Collaborations

By design, the Department of the Environment is charged with coordinating environmental projects and activities across County government. As such, staff are continuously collaborating with other County department and outside agencies. The preceding list of 2015 accomplishments highlights the regular collaboration across County government. Below are additional collaborations.

- Led an effort to remove barrels of hazardous materials on a foreclosure eligible property in Ellenville requiring involvement and collaboration with the US Environmental Protection Agency, NYS Department of Environmental Conservation, Village of Ellenville, UC Department of Public Works and the Ulster County Resource Recovery Agency.

- Worked with UC Information Services and UC Tourism to highlight recreational opportunities in Ulster County through the online REConnect web map.

- Collaborated regarding flood hazard mitigation. Departments and agencies included UC Planning, County Attorney, Emergency Services, Cornell Cooperative Extension, Soil & Water Conservation District, and non-County groups including the Catskill Watershed Corporation, Coalition of Watershed Towns, the NYCDEP, New York State DOS, DOH, and DEC, and the counties of Delaware, Sullivan, Greene, and Schoharie.

- Collaborated with UC Attorney and Department of Finance on foreclosure eligible properties with known environmental concerns.

- Provided support to UC Planning and UC Department of Public Works related to SEQR review of County sponsored projects.

- Coordinated with community energy campaigns and initiatives such as Solarize, LED municipal streetlight consortium, Citizens for Local Power, and the UC Climate Smart Communities committee.