

# Stewardship of the New York City Watersheds

USDA Forest Service  
Northeastern Area, State and Private Forestry



**Description:** The forested watersheds of upstate New York supply more than a billion gallons of naturally filtered water per day to New York City's 9 million consumers. While providing a dependable, clean water supply, these forests also provide additional environmental values including wildlife habitat, recreation, scenic beauty, and timber products. These critical watersheds are truly a working landscape that has supported a forest-based economy for local communities for decades.

Watersheds residents and New York City officials have long recognized the important link between water quality protection and traditional forest uses. In the mid 1990's, forestry representatives, including landowners, foresters, timber harvesters and forest industry, together with New York City and State agencies, formed the Watershed Agricultural Council's Forestry Program to guide conservation efforts designed to keep the forests healthy and the water clean. Since 1996, the Northeastern Area's Forest Stewardship Program has been assisting the non-profit Watershed Agricultural Council's Forestry Program to develop and implement strategies to ensure that forest lands continue to support the local economy while producing clean, high quality water. More information is available at [www.nycwatershed.org](http://www.nycwatershed.org)



## Key Issues:

- Healthy well-managed forests are the most beneficial land cover for water quality protection.
- Existing forest management activities are not a significant source of nonpoint pollution; however, aggressive use of Best Management Practices is needed to prevent sediment and nutrient loading from forest management activities.
- High property tax rates discourage the retention and stewardship of private forestland.
- Retention of primary and secondary forest products manufacturing is essential to a healthy forest-based economy, forest land retention, natural resource protection, and sound forest conservation and management.
- Private forestland owners need models of forest stewardship to better understand the principles of sound resource management.

## Accomplishments:

The following are key outcomes from projects supported by the Forest Service in 2006:

- Completed Watershed Stewardship plans for 100 landowners covering over 15,000 acres of private forest lands. Since 1996, 600 plans have been completed covering over 105,000 acres. Practicing sound forest management means cleaner water for downstream consumers.
- Training of forestry professionals in BMP monitoring (which evaluates the success of management actions to protect water resources).
- Funding for 25 projects which demonstrate Best Management Practices such as timber bridges, forest road remediation to prevent soil erosion, and riparian area protection.
- Worked with landowners to plan riparian forest buffers; increased the total to 3,700 acres with plans.
- Funded a Hudson Highlands Forester to work with landowners east of the Hudson River.
- Provided technical assistance and training to forestry consultants, loggers and landowners, held four landowner conferences, and hosted the 3<sup>rd</sup> annual Field Day at the Frost Valley Model Forest.

- Supported the Watershed Forestry Institute, providing training for over 140 teachers in forestry and water quality; including over 600 students and Teachers from 10 schools in New York City through “Green Connections” -- a partnership with the Catskill Center for Conservation and Development.
- Enabled over 37 New York City-based school groups to visit upstate reservoirs, timber harvesting operations, model forests, and other forest-oriented sites through a bus tour program geared toward educating urban populations about their water supply.
- Provided matching funding in excess of \$3.14 million to regional wood-based business to improve the competitiveness and efficiency of wood products business in the region.

## Budget History

<b>New York City Watersheds (\$ Thousands)</b>				
<b>Program</b>	<b>FY 2003</b>	<b>FY 2004</b>	<b>FY 2005</b>	<b>FY 2006</b>
Forest Health	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Forest Stewardship	700	494	493	493
Urban Forestry	15	0	0	0
Forest Legacy	0	0	0	0
Economic Action	589	0	0	394
<b>Totals</b>	<b>\$1304</b>	<b>\$494</b>	<b>\$493</b>	<b>\$887</b>

## Future Direction:

These activities are planned to continue the USDA Forest Service role:

- Maintain the Forest Stewardship planning efforts
- Communicate the environmental value of forested watersheds to landowners and citizens
- Continue the operation and maintenance of three Model Forests Demonstration Areas
- Expand the number of riparian forest buffers to protect water quality
- Continue the management of riparian zones
- Encourage the protection of critical forest lands from development
- Develop forest resources for economic growth and job creation
- Expand technical assistance and training to forestry consultants, loggers, and landowners to include invasive plant identification and treatment options

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