

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 1 billion gallons of naturally filtered water per day to New York City's 9 million consumers. Forests are the primary land cover in the watershed, which contains 19 reservoirs and three controlled lakes, and covers approximately 2,000 square miles of land in the Hudson Valley and Catskill Mountains. While providing a dependable, clean water supply, these forests also provide other environmental values including wildlife habitat, recreation, scenic beauty, and timber products. Truly a working landscape, these critical lands have supported local forest-based economies for decades.

Watersheds residents and New York City officials have long recognized the important link between water quality protection and traditional forest uses. To guide conservation efforts aimed at keeping forests healthy and water clean, forestry representatives, including landowners, foresters, timber harvesters, and forest industry, joined with New York City and State agencies to form the Watershed Agricultural Council's (WAC) Forestry Program in the mid 1990s. Since 1996, Northeastern Area State and Private Forestry's Forest Stewardship Program has been helping the nonprofit WAC Forestry Program 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.



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, thanks to the aggressive use of Best Management Practices needed to prevent sediment and nutrient loading from forest management activities.
- Retaining 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 forest landowners need forest stewardship models to better understand the relationships between watershed land uses, forest management, water quality protection, and rural economic viability.

2009 Accomplishments:

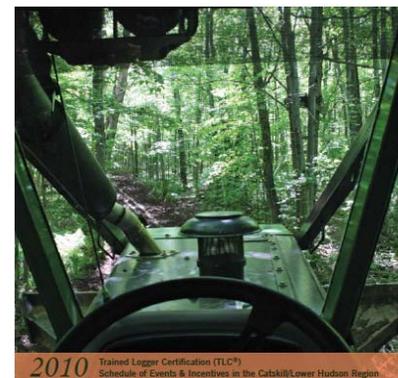
Some key outcomes of projects supported by the Forest Service in 2009:

- The **Watershed Forestry Institute for Teachers** provided training in the concepts of forest stewardship and water quality to 20 teachers from New York City and the Upstate watershed. To date, 259 teachers have returned to their classrooms and used the Institute's curriculum to share these valuable concepts with their students.
- The **Green Connections Program** established partnerships between New York City students and teachers and their counterparts in the Upstate watershed. More than 850 students from 12 schools have benefited from this collaborative approach to teaching the concepts of forest stewardship and water quality in the classroom. The program has introduced more than 2,600 students from 75 classrooms to the role forests play in protecting water quality.
- **Watershed Forestry Bus Tours** have enabled more than 865 people from 18 environmental, municipal, and school groups to travel to Upstate New York reservoirs, timber harvesting operations, model forests, and other forest-oriented sites. The program has funded 94 bus tours since its inception, allowing more than 4,200 people to visit the NYC watershed to learn about the link between forests and water quality.

- The **Logger and Forester Training** initiative organized more than 17 workshops attended by more than 180 watershed loggers and foresters. The workshops provide a place where forestry professionals can gain a better understanding of safety, silviculture, forest ecology, and water quality. The training initiative has provided 233 workshops attended by more than 2,000 loggers and foresters from the NYC watershed region since its inception.
- The **Watershed Forest Management Planning Program** resulted in the development of 69 new forest stewardship plans covering more than 9,600 acres of watershed forests. Since 1996, 819 plans have been completed for more than 141,000 acres, meaning cleaner water for downstream consumers.
- The **Best Management Practices (BMP) Implementation Program** has worked with loggers, landowners, and foresters to stabilize more than 40 miles of forest access trails with 2,000 water bars, 13,000 feet of regraded skid trail, 806 yards of gravel, and other BMPs. During 2009, the WAC Forestry Program's bridges were used to cross 10 streams on active logging jobs in the watershed. By promoting the use of BMPs, forest management activities will continue to be a negligible source of nonpoint source pollution.
- The **Model Forest Program** has established three model forests throughout the watershed region to demonstrate forest stewardship to landowners, loggers, foresters, and the general public. The model forests hosted 34 educational events attended by more than 900 people during 2009. An additional 4,500 youths participated in environmental education programs sponsored by model forest host organizations.
- The **Forest Products Utilization and Marketing** initiative cooperated with five institutions within the Catskill region to explore the potential for conversion of their facilities to woody biomass heating systems. Institutions ranging from schools to hospitals to local wood products manufacturers received prefeasibility studies that identified a total annual energy savings of \$304,000 for all facilities combined. In addition, the Catskill Woodnet Web site, including its Pure Catskills branding campaign and regional wood products directory, continued to support wood-based industries in the NYC watershed region.

Budget History

New York City Watersheds (\$ Thousands)			
PROGRAM	FY 2007	FY 2008	FY 2009
Forest Stewardship	500	450	405
Economic Action	0	0	0
Totals	\$500	\$450	\$405



The logger calendar, produced annually, promotes Trained Logger Certified (TLC) timber harvesters and lists TLC classes in the Catskill/Lower Hudson region.

Future Direction:

- Maintain Forest Stewardship planning efforts
- Communicate the environmental value of forested watersheds to landowners and citizens
- Continue the operation and maintenance of three model forest 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 markets for forest resources, such as woody biomass, 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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