



# Black River Initiative

## Black River Initiative: Recreation, Transportation, Water Quality

The Black River, flowing from its headwaters in the western Adirondacks, through the Tug Hill region and into Lake Ontario, is one of the area's most important natural resources. The Black River Initiative is a multi-pronged approach to protect and improve the water quality, recreational opportunities and communities

along the Black River. The Black River Watershed Management Plan (2010),

the Black River Initiative Management Plan (2012) provide the foundation to advance existing efforts and

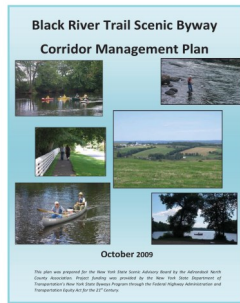


new projects that enhance and improve all aspects of the Black River. This newsletter highlights several recent developments in

the Black River Initiative. Black River Blueway Trail Plan (2007) and Black River Trail Scenic Byway Corri-

the Black River Initiative.

### Scenic Byway Legislation Passed



On July 12, 2013 the Black River Trail and Maple Traditions Scenic Byway legislation was signed into law, which capped off a

multiyear effort to reroute the Black River Trail to follow the Black River, and to create a new Maple Traditions route from Lowville to Ogdensburg and Canton. These two routes are now part of the state's Scenic Byways system that includes more than 2,000 miles of roads in New York that have par-

ticular scenic, recreational, cultural, natural or archaeological significance. The program is intended to help preserve unusual environments and promote tourism. Communities along the scenic byway are eligible for federal funds for enhancements through the state Department of Transportation.

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# Welcome Emily Sheridan! Great Lakes Watershed Coordinator

Emily Sheridan is the new Eastern Great Lakes Watershed Coordinator. Emily will work with NYSDEC's Great Lakes Program and the Tug Hill Commission to foster collaboration in the Great Lakes Basin. Greater collaboration among agencies, partners, and stakeholder will better meet shared water quality and natural resource goals and improve environmental, social and economic conditions within New York's Great Lakes Basin. Emily studied Natural Resources Management at the SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry. Since graduation, Emily has worked for the NYS Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation, The Ashokan Center in the Catskills, Natures Classroom in Silver Bay, NY at Lake George, and The Nature Conservancy of Central and Western New York. At the Nature Conservancy, Emily valued the opportunity to contribute to the restoration of Eastern Lake Ontario coastal wetlands, assess the presence of invasive species within the watershed, and work with partners and stakeholders within the Eastern Lake Ontario region. She is excited about the opportunity to continue to work with partners and stakeholders of the Lake Ontario watershed, as well as with stakeholders of the St. Lawrence River, and Black River watersheds.



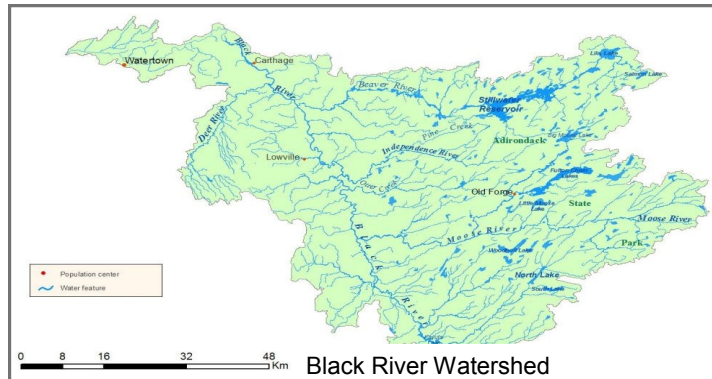
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## NYS Department of Environmental Conservation Great Lakes Program

The Black River Watershed spans 1.2 million acres of land from the central Adirondacks to the shoreline of Lake Ontario. As rain falls on the land surrounding the Black River, it flows into the Black River, which then flows into Lake Ontario, one of the five Great Lakes. The Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River basin consist of about 302,000 square miles of land, spanning international borders, 8 states, and many jurisdictions. As water flows into the river and lakes,



it carries with it the eroding soil, nutrients, and in some cases, pollutants that are on the land. In order to accomplish shared goals, including reducing pollution and runoff to the tributaries, rivers, and lakes of the Great Lakes watershed, the NYS Department

of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC) developed the Great Lakes Action Agenda (GLAA).

Much like the Black River Watershed Management Plan, the GLAA recognizes that in order to protect and sustain our water and natural resources, federal, state, and local organizations and stakeholders need to work together towards shared goals for sustaining water quality and natu-

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# DEC Great Lakes Program continued

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ral resources that are vital to the economic and social well being of communities within the Great Lakes watershed. The NYSDEC established the program to encourage collaboration towards sustaining New York's Great Lakes resources, such as drinking water, recreation, navigation, commercial, residential and agricultural land use, hydroelectric power generation, and fish and wildlife populations and habitat. The Great Lakes Program applies an Ecosystem Based Management approach to addressing natural resource and water quality issues in the Great Lakes watershed. This

approach considers the complex interactions that occur between people and their environment, seeks to balance social, economic, and environmental goals, recognizes that a watershed does not stop at county or state boundaries, and seeks to ensure that decisions are based on sound science, stakeholder involvement, and collabora-

tion among organizations. Support for Black River Watershed Coordination by the Eastern Great Lakes Watershed Coordinator will strengthen Black River Initiative efforts, and help identify how the goals of the Black River Initiative align with New York State's goals within the Great Lakes basin.



## Lewis County Programs Improve Water Quality

The majority of the Black River watershed (81%; 1,101 square miles) lies within the boundaries of Lewis County. Since the completion of the Black River Watershed Management Plan in 2010, Lewis County's Soil & Water Conservation District (SWCD) has worked with landowners and municipalities to apply and receive funding and implement projects that address natural resource and water quality problems in priority areas.

Activities underway by the SWCD include erosion and sediment control, storm water management, invasive species management, and reducing phosphorus and nutrient loadings to tributaries from agricultural land use. County-wide hydro-seeding, tree sales and Ag-



ricultural Environmental Management (AEM) plans and efforts with landowners aid in addressing these issues. The Lewis County SWCD has worked to update soil maps in the Black River valley and also works with U.S. Geological Survey to monitor water quality. Up-to-date soil mapping and water quality data will provide sound science to inform land use decisions and project successes.

Please visit [www.LewisCountysoilandwater.com](http://www.LewisCountysoilandwater.com) for more information.



# Preventing the Spread of Purple Loosestrife

In 2013, with funding from the Beaver River Advisory committee and Brookfield Power, Lewis County SWCD staff hand removed 150 large garbage bags of purple loosestrife from 13 sites along the Beaver River and parts of the Black River. This control effort aimed to prevent the further spread and potentially eradicate populations in these locations. Monitoring the effectiveness of the control project occurred in the summer of 2014, which determined that hand removal of the plant in those locations

was limited in controlling the spread of the plant. Lewis County SWCD worked with the NYSDEC to obtain and release *Galerucella* beetles to better control the plant. Monitoring will continue in 2015.

Purple loosestrife is a wetland plant from Europe that was introduced to the U.S. in the 1800's as

an ornamental. The plant can form dense stands that take over native vegetation and reduce plant diversity and habitat for native fish and wildlife. It thrives on disturbed moist soils, and has no predators in the U.S. A single Purple Loosestrife plant can disperse up to 2 million seeds, and new plants can grow

from broken fragments. European insects that prey only on purple loosestrife plants are being used to control purple loosestrife in locations with dense plant populations where hand removal is not an option.



## Aquatic Invasive Species Prevention

Aquatic invasive species (AIS) threaten the water quality and recreational use of the Black River Watershed. AIS can be spread when a boat on an infested waterway is not cleaned of these plants and then enters another waterway, such as the Black River. AIS include Eurasian watermilfoil, water chestnut, curly leaf pondweed, zebra mussels, and hydrilla.

The Adirondack Watershed Institute (AWI) Stewardship Program at Paul Smith's College is part of coordinated efforts at the local, regional and

statewide level to reduce the spread of AIS. In 2013, the AWI Watershed stewards conducted surveillance at boat launches in the upper Black River Watershed at Eighth, White, Fourth, Limekiln, and Seventh Lakes, and Stillwater Reservoir. Watershed Stewards inspected 3,658 boats for the presence of aquatic invasive species and educated 7,782 visitor's about watershed stewardship and invasive species prevention. Additionally, Lewis County Soil and Water is currently installing stations where AIS can be disposed of at boat

launches throughout Lewis County. New York State recently passed new Aquatic Invasive Species Control legislation prohibiting the transfer of AIS from one body of water to another.



For more information:

<http://www.adkwatershed.org/about>

# Village of Lyons Falls Moving Ahead with Mill Demolition

Lyons Falls is in the middle of a transformation, with partnerships and grant funding to help the Village realize its potential. The Village and its partners, including the Lewis County Development Corporation, Kruger (a hydroelectric company), the Development Authority of the North Country (DANC) and state agencies, including Department of State, NYSDEC, and Tug Hill Commission, held a press event on July 15th to mark the first demolition phase of the former Lyons Falls Pulp and Paper Mill.

Currently owned by the Lewis County Development Corporation, the mill site will have 12 buildings removed between now and the end of October. At the time of this newsletter, 5 structures have already come down, including the

Milk Bottle Plant.

Grant funding included \$330,000 for planning and \$1 million for this phase of demolition from the North Country Regional Economic Development Council. The planning and demolition is being overseen by DANC, in partnership with the Village. The demolition is also being funded by Kruger, which operates a power generating facility at the mill site. Kruger is in need of additional property to expand their hydro plant and to gain much needed access so that

repairs and expansion to their existing plant can be made.

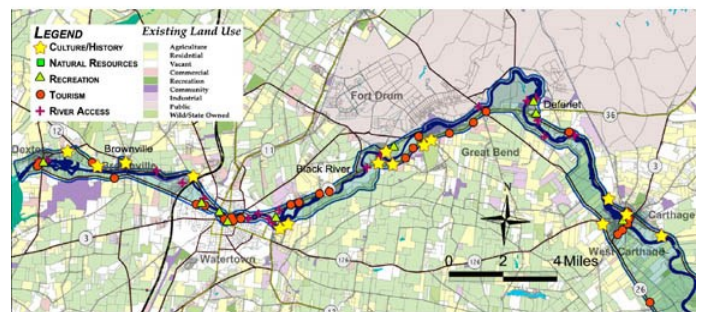
Mayor Katie Leindecker reports that a small portion of the materials from the torn down buildings (crushed bricks, for example) will likely be able to be used on site for fill, once all the buildings are removed, which may take additional phases and time to complete.

Mayor Leindecker was also happy to report that the NYS Department of State has approved the Village's Step III Brownfield Opportunity Area (BOA) grant. All of the Village, including the mill site, is included in the BOA program. Step III will, amongst other things, create a marketing strategy for the mill property and create a pro forma for a range of desired uses for the former mill site.



## Black River Website

A website was developed, using Environmental Protection Funds from the NYS Department of State to help promote tourism along the Black River Blueway. The website highlights recreational opportunities and amenities in the area, including whitewater rafting, kayaking, trails, restaurants, local businesses, accommodations, and other attractions. To learn more about what the Black River Blueway has to offer, please visit the website at [www.BlackRiverNY.com](http://www.BlackRiverNY.com)



Black River Blueway



# Navigation Improvements

The 40-mile flat water portion of the Black River from Lyons Falls to Carthage/West Carthage provides the longest, continuous water route on the river. Unfortunately, during low-flow summer conditions, safe navigation can be difficult due to a number of hazards that have been known to damage hulls, outboard motors, and even to injure paddlers or occupants. These hazards are dam remnants, timber piles, and submerged former jutting pieces from the river's former days as part of the canal system.

In 2003 and 2004, communities along this stretch of the river held meetings to discuss enhancing the use of the Black River for recreation and tourism. Improving navigation of the river was their highest priority. The US Army Corp of



Engineers completed a 2006 navigation study with recommendations and cost estimates for removing those hazards.

The Town of Martinsburg obtained a 2008 Blueway Trail Implementation grant for removing navigation hazards at four sites in that town's portion of the Black River. Those sites include dam remnants at Bush's Landing and Otter Creek, boulders near the Glenfield Bridge, and old pilings near Roaring Brook.

This fall, work has been underway to continue removing these

hazards in Martinsburg. The boulder near the Glenfield Bridge has been marked with buoys by the NYS Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation Marine Services Division. Sections of the old pilings have also been sawed away to allow for boats to traverse the river in the more dangerous sections. The plan moving forward will be to mark the openings of the piles so navigators will know where it is safe to pass. Plans to remove a 20 foot section of the old Otter Creek Dam are ongoing with a permit application for the US Army Corp of Engineers and DEC being developed. Finally, more studies are needed at Bush's Landing to find a way to keep the lock clear of debris and allow boaters to use the historic lock as a way around the dam remnants.

## Town of Wilna and Crown Cleaners

Located in the Town of Wilna and Village of Herrings, Crown Cleaners of Watertown, INC. has been under investigation since 1991 by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) due to the spill of tetrachloroethylene into the village's water supply. Also located within the Black River Watershed and along the Black River Blueway Corridor and



Black River & Olympic Scenic Byways, the town acquired the old industrial site to provide public access to waterfront rec-

reational opportunities.

After a series of soil and groundwater tests over the years, on March 2012 EPA presented the preferred action to address contamination issues. Concerns documented in the Record of Decision (ROD) include the decontamination and demolition of the main on-site building, removal of contami-

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## Town of Wilna continued

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nated wetland sediments and soils adjacent to the former cleaner property, excavation of contaminated soil at the source area, off-site treatment/disposal of sediments, soils, and building debris, in-situ treatment of the contaminated groundwater near the source

and down gradient using natural attenuation, as well as the development of the Site Management Plan and an environmental Easement.

In preparing to complete final groundwater design plans, ground wells were drilled in June 2014 by an

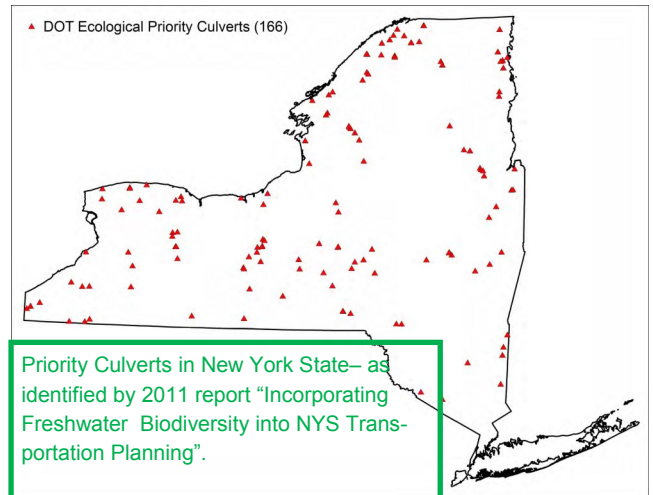
EPA Crew to collect additional information over the summer. According to the EPA, remediation efforts will cost approximately \$7 million.

For more information: <http://www.epa.gov/r02earth/superfund/npl/crowncleaners/index.html>

## Fish Passage in the Black River Watershed

Road culverts necessary for drainage sometimes do not allow fish and other aquatic organisms to pass through. Culverts that are too small or not well maintained can lead to flooding and headaches for highway departments. Looking at different culvert designs and being more careful of placement can help prevent problems.

Culverts designed with an arch shape, that consider the natural stream flow, transportation needs, as well as the ability for aquatic organisms to pass are being demonstrated as a better option. A study by the NYS Department of Transportation and The Nature Conservancy assessed culverts in consideration of habitat concerns for priority species, and identified priority culverts to replace in consideration of preserving these habitats. DOT/TNC assessed culverts in Keene Valley and have successfully leveraged \$800,000 in NYS Rising funding to replace failing culverts with culvert designs that allow for fish and aquatic organism passage, improved road use, and natural stream restoration. The DOT/TNC report identified 6 priority sites in the Black River watershed that could be improved with newly designed culverts.



For more information: <http://www.nature.org/ourinitiatives/regions/northamerica/unitedstates/newyork/explore/new-york-culvert-inventory.xml>





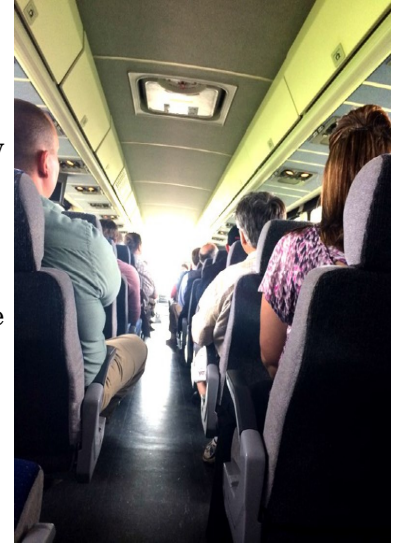
# Black River Watershed Conference

An annual Black River Watershed Conference is held in early June to provide a venue for training and information sharing on a variety of topics relating to the Black River. In 2014 over 60 people attended the event at the scenic Tug Hill Vineyards in Lowville, NY. The conference was organized by the Tug Hill Commission, NYS DEC Region 6 and the Lewis County Soil and Water Conservation District.



Speakers covered a range of topics including Stormwater Regulations, Cultural Heritage, Black River Flow Regulation and Fish Species Distribution. In addition, the group learned about Emergency Stream Response from a panel of local, state and federal experts. After lunch,

about 50 conference members participated in a bus tour of four project sites in the Watershed that exemplify how to work in partnerships to get large tasks accomplished. The bus tour was funded by the Beaver River Advisory Council.



# Jefferson County Stormwater Coalition

Population increases documented in the 2010 U.S. Census led to the designation of an urbanized area in Jefferson County in 2013. Several of the communities in the urbanized area are now being required to regulate municipal separate stormwater sewer systems (MS4's) differently. The Tug Hill Commission has helped bring the communities together and learn about what these new regulations mean. The Towns of LeRay, Rutland, and Watertown; Villages of Black River, Brownville, Carthage, Dexter and West Carthage; the City of Watertown; and Jefferson County; have signed an intermunicipal agreement to work together to meet the requirements of the new regulations. Progress towards complying have included securing a grant from the Black River Advisory Committee to support outreach and education activities, the appointment of the Jefferson County Soil & Water Conservation District as the stormwater program coordinator for most of the municipalities, and securing a grant to conduct outfall mapping. The coalition, through the Town of LeRay, also was recently awarded a DEC Water Quality Improvement Grant in order to develop and implement a Stormwater Management Plan. The new regulations aim to improve water quality by reducing storm runoff containing pollutants and nutrients in these communities.



For more information: <http://www.dec.ny.gov/chemical/8468.html>



## Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Discovery Reports available

Flooding has been a constant threat throughout the history of the Black River Watershed. Significant snowfall, and rain events in the Adirondacks and Tug Hill bring large amounts of water into the River at various times of the year. Flooding in the Black River usually occurs in the late winter and early spring, when the ground is still frozen and snow melt and increased rainfall produce high runoff. In addition to potential property damage, this increased runoff can also reduce water quality due to higher sediment loading and potential nutrient and pollutant load-

ings from land runoff flowing into waterways. The Black River Watershed Management Plan recommends improved storm water management and floodplain management to promote watershed health.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Risk Mapping, Assessment, and Planning, or Risk MAP program works with

state agencies and helps communities identify, assess, and reduce their flood risk. Through Risk MAP, FEMA provides information to enhance local mitigation plans, improve community outreach, and increase local resilience to floods. The program has developed discovery reports, which will aid in identifying community needs, including the need for digital flood insurance rate maps. By participating in the program's community rating system, communities can further reduce flood insurance costs and minimize risks.



Dexter, NY April 2014  
Photo by Emily Sheridan

For more information: <https://www.rampp-team.com/ny.htm>

## Riverfest

The Lewis County Chamber of Commerce's 25th annual RiverFest drew 116 paddlers for a leisurely ride down the Black River. Paddlers left from the Castorland boat launch and traveled to West Carthage with a rest stop at Carthage Rod and Gun Club. Each year, the event changes launch and destination locations. Last year's event was held from Lyons Falls boat launch to Beeches Bridge. A trivia contest, sponsored by Lewis County Soil & Water Conservation District, was held in conjunction with the event. Paddlers were asked to answer 10 questions about the Black River Watershed, which were chosen by the Lewis County Water Quality Coordinating Committee. Trivia participants turned their responses in for a chance to win a gift basket with items donated by various Lewis County businesses.



Castorland Boat Launch August 2, 2014  
Photo from Watertown Daily Times.

NYS Tug Hill Commission



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<http://www.tughill.org/projects/black-river-projects/watershed-initiative/>



Brookfield Power Black River Trail  
boat launch. Photo by Emily Sheridan