

Poor's Island



Black River Village

Black River Initiative

Protecting and Restoring the Beautiful Black River, One Project at a Time

Projects continue to be advanced by diverse stakeholders in the Black River watershed, achieving goals set forth in various plans including the Black River Watershed Management Plan, Black River Nine Element (9E) Plan, Blueway Trail Plan, and North Country Regional Economic Development Council Strategic Plan. Each stakeholder effort is commendable and helps achieve broader goals of protecting and

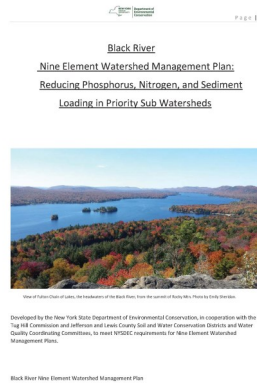


Fulton Chain of Lakes. Photo by Emily Sheridan

restoring our beautiful Black River watershed. By being proactive, stakeholders in the Black River watershed have sustained important water and natural resources that contributes to the quality of life for North Country residents. As the year comes to a close, we can celebrate these successes and continue looking to the future of the Black River and how it will be used and enjoyed for generations to come.

Three Communities Upgrade Wastewater Treatment Facilities

Funding for the City of Watertown, Port Leyden and Village of Carthage to upgrade their wastewater treatment facilities in 2017 advances important water quality targets identified in the Black River 9E Plan for reducing phosphorus, nitrogen, and sediment loading within the watershed, while also allowing these communities to



be compliant with state and federal water quality regulations. The funding provided by NYS Environmental Facilities Corporation will ease the economic burden to local residents for making necessary improvements. The 9E Plan can be used to prioritize and leverage funding for additional water quality improvement projects, and is available at: <http://www.dec.ny.gov/chemical/103264.html>

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Great Lakes Action Agenda Northeast Sub Basin Workgroup

Northeast sub basin work group meetings were held in May and December of 2017. NY's Northeast Great Lakes sub basin encompasses the St. Lawrence and Black River watersheds. The work group continues to develop strategic plans and implement actions within [NY's Great Lakes Action Agenda](#). These actions apply an ecosystem based management (EBM) approach to achieve water quality, natural resource, sustainability, resiliency, recreation and energy goals within the St. Lawrence and Black River watersheds. The actions identified within this newsletter, such as green infrastructure, agricultural best management practices, and improved wastewater management exemplify an EBM approach within the watershed. For more information and to get involved visit: <http://www.dec.ny.gov/lands/91881.html> or contact the



Eastern Great Lakes watershed coordinator by emailing greatlakes@dec.ny.gov.

The DEC Great Lakes Program works with NY Sea Grant to administer a small grants program that provides seed funding to implement or coordinate projects that apply an EBM approach. The program

typically requests proposals in the spring and more information is available at: <http://www.nyseagrant.org/gsmallgrants>

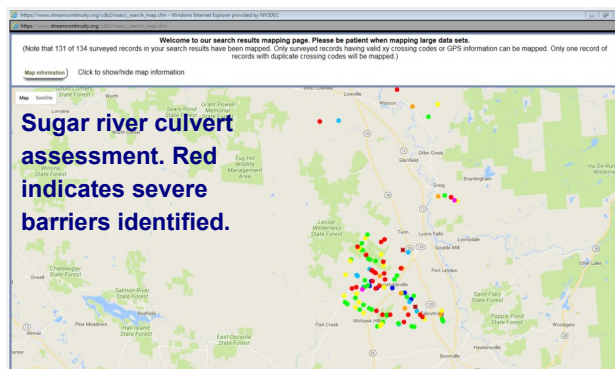
The Great Lakes Research Consortium, coordinated by DEC and the SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry, also provides small grants for research projects that seek to apply an EBM approach and inform decision making and management actions with science. For more information, visit: <http://www.esf.edu/glrc/>

Great Lakes Culvert Assessment Pilot Project

Many culverts currently in place were designed with the sole objective of moving water beneath a road. Little consideration was given to ecosystem process such as natural hydrology, sediment transport, fish and wildlife passage, or the movement of woody debris. Also, culvert designs did not consider increased precipitation caused by climate change, and the effects of resulting flooding on infrastructure and riverine systems. With hundreds of thousands of road stream crossings in NYS, it is unlikely all culvert issues can be corrected without efforts to identify and prioritize problematic sites. The Great Lakes culvert assessment pilot project, supported by NYSDEC and the NYS Dept. of Agriculture and Markets, seeks to identify severe barriers to aquatic life movement and flooding risk, using standardized protocols to assess culverts. To advance the

state of practice, NYSDEC provided training opportunities to build capacity of Soil and Water Conservation District staff in 18 counties to assess culverts and produce data within priority sub watersheds using protocols developed by the North Atlantic Aquatic Connectivity Collaborative (NAACC). The data is publicly available and can be used to inform local municipalities and transportation departments about priority culvert enhancement projects. The data can also be used to leverage funding from multiple sources, such as the US Fish and Wildlife Service, Great Lakes

Restoration Initiative, and DEC Water Quality Improvement Program. In the Black River watershed, Lewis County has used the capacity funding to assess road stream crossings and identified severe barriers in the Sugar River watershed. For more information and to view the database, visit: www.streamcontinuity.org



Annual Black River Trash Bash

In the eighth year of the Black River Trash Bash, an annual event to promote stewardship of the Black River, a record 74 participants from seven locations collected 500 pounds of trash and recyclables from the shore of the Black River. The seven groups across three counties were Lyons Falls Alive, the Adirondack Communities Advisory League, the Lewis County and Jefferson County Water Quality Coordinating Committees, the American Society of Civil Engineers Student Club (SUNY Poly), Jefferson Community College and the Haderondah 4H Club (Old Forge). In addition, two people from the Ocean Conservancy participated with the Haderondah 4H Club and several students from South Lewis School participated with Lyons Falls Alive.



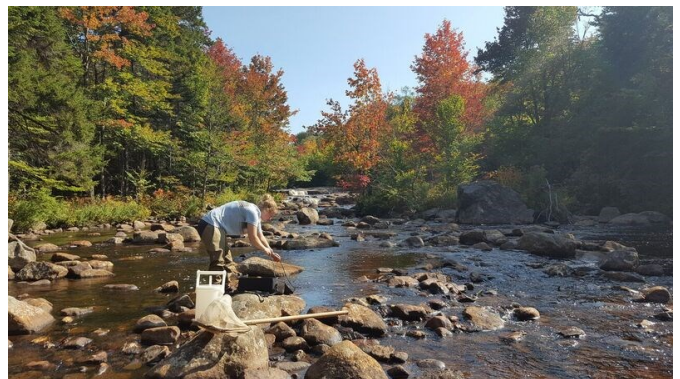
Students from Jefferson Community College helped clean up trash in October of 2017.

There were a few notable items of local concern reported this year. The Lewis County Water Quality Coordinating Committee reported a potentially dangerous meth lab to the authorities during their event. The Haderondah 4H Club was very concerned about the 150 balloons found at Arrowhead Park; as balloons have been shown to pollute, kill animals, cause power outages, and waste helium. The data collected has been compiled and sent to the American Littoral Society (ALS), who collects data from all over New York State to be included in the Ocean Conservancy's International Coastal

To join us in cleaning up next September, contact Jennifer Harvill at: jennifer@tughill.org.

Rotating Intensive Basin Studies Sampled Black River Watershed in 2017

This year, DEC's Rotating Intensive Basin Studies (RIBS) Program activities included water quality sampling in the Black River watershed. The program is coordinated with local Water Assessments by Volunteer Evaluators (WAVE) citizen scientists who were trained to help screen where there were potential water quality issues. RIBS staff also asked stakeholders to share locations where water quality improvement efforts have been underway, and sampling at these locations will evaluate their success. Sampling results from DEC professional monitoring as well as citizen science data, and Professional Evaluators of Rivers and Streams data will be used to inform statewide management actions, update NY's Priority Waterbodies List and the List of Impaired Waters, and inform DEC's Water Quality Improvement Program funding. To learn more about DEC's water quality monitoring programs, visit: <http://www.dec.ny.gov/chemical/8459.html>



Elizabeth Mosher conducts water quality sampling on Twitchell creek. Photo credit NYSDEC.

Partnering to Manage Invasive Species

The St. Lawrence–Eastern Lake Ontario Partnership for Regional Invasive Species Management is a collaboration among diverse organizations that is hosted by The Nature Conservancy in cooperation with the NYSDEC to manage invasive species that threaten our natural resources and water quality. The partnership maintains seven strategic goals: Prevention, Early Detection & Rapid Response, Invasive Species Control, Education & Outreach, Cooperation, Information Management & Site Restoration. SLELO efforts are focused on reducing the impacts caused by invasive species and



Partners at the recent SLELO PRISM meeting. Photo credit– The Nature Conservancy

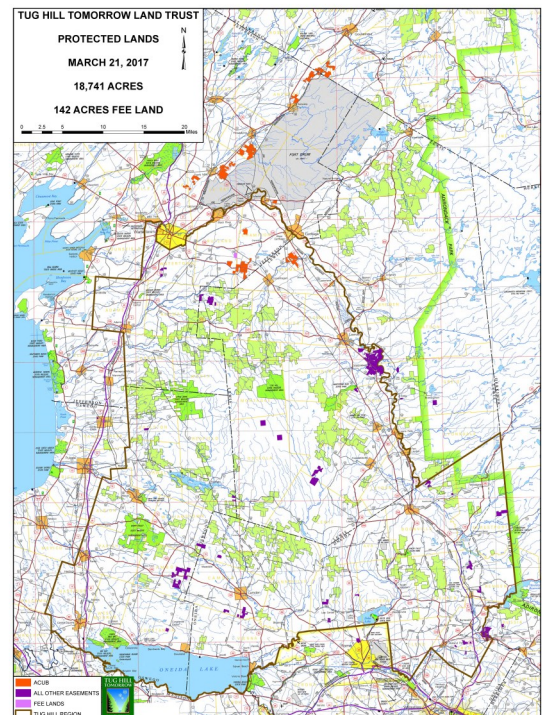
helping to prevent their introduction to and spread from the SLELO region. There are many aquatic and terrestrial plants and animals that the SLELO partnership aims to raise awareness of and encourage stewardship for, and in some cases actively manage within our

priority conservation areas. To learn more about invasive species and SLELO PRISM visit www.sleloinvasives.org.

Ongoing activities in the Black River watershed include engaging volunteers and stakeholders to monitor for invasive species, such as Hemlock Woolly Adelgid, Emerald Ash Borer, and Giant Hogweed. You can get involved by joining the SLELO PRISM Invasive Species Volunteer Surveillance Network <http://www.sleloinvasives.org/invasive-species-volunteer-surveillance-network> or contact the SLELO PRISM Education & Outreach Coordinator, Megan Pistolese, at 315-387-3600 x 7724, megan.pistolese@tnc.org.

Tug Hill Tomorrow Land Trust Updates

Tug Hill Tomorrow Land Trust works to protect the wildlands, working forests and farms of the Tug Hill region and surrounding areas, and to promote appreciation of the region's natural and cultural heritage, for present and future generations. Using primarily conservation easements, they have protected 18,741 acres as of March 2017. The organization has leveraged funding from the Army Compatible Use Buffer Program in the Environmental Protection Fund, NYS Conservation Partnership Program, Northern Border Regional Commission, the Fish and Wildlife Service and the NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets to protect diverse lands throughout the Tug Hill region and in the Black River Watershed. They also host field trips and educational programs throughout the year, and work to enhance wildlife connectivity between the Adirondacks and Tug Hill. For more information, visit their website at: http://tughilltomorrowlandtrust.org/?attachment_id=5009



Fort Drum Joint Land Use Study

In 2017, the Development Authority of the North Country (DANC) released the Fort Drum Joint Land Use Study Draft Report for public comment, and anticipates finalizing the study by the end of the year. Once complete, the JLUS will provide stakeholders within the Black River watershed and other surrounding areas with recommendations and strategies to promote compatible land use planning around Fort Drum, a land use assessment for surrounding potential growth areas, a listing of existing incompatible uses around the fort, and a plan to assist neighboring communities in making informed decisions around compatibility.



Funding for the study was provided by the U.S. Department of Defense Office of Economic Adjustment and is being conducted on behalf of Fort Drum. The study is being completed in coordination with a technical working group comprised of local planning officials and stakeholder organizations, and a steering committee that includes representatives from communities surrounding the base, as well as other interested organizations. Three public meetings have been held as well to gather input.

For more information, visit: <https://www.danc.org/fort-drum-joint-land-use-study>

Municipal Partners Plant Trees and Educate Public

All nine municipalities belonging to the Jefferson County Stormwater Coalition saw trees and/or rain gardens planted in the past two years, with funding from a US Forest Service Green Infrastructure grant. The grant, applied for by the Jefferson County Soil & Water Conservation District on behalf of the coalition, provided over \$175,000 to implement measures that help reduce stormwater runoff entering the Black River. Jefferson County; the city of Watertown; villages of Black River, Brownville, Carthage and West Carthage; and the towns of LeRay, Rutland and Watertown will perform ongoing



Tree plantings at the fairgrounds in Watertown.

maintenance of the trees and rain gardens. Educational signs will be installed to highlight the value of the plantings and rain gardens, such as improving aesthetics, improving water quality, providing habitat, and promoting community stewardship.

Community outreach and engagement this past year included the development of water quality and stormwater management

educational brochures and water bottles that have been handed out at local events. The brochures are available at municipal offices. The coalition also continues to update and improve their website. For more information visit

www.jcnystormwater.com/

Partners Improve and Expand Black River Trail Access and Promote Stewardship in Watertown

In May 2017, the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (NYS OPRHP) and the city of Watertown celebrated the completion of over one mile of trail, extending from the previous trailhead on Ridge Rd., into the city of Watertown at Walker Ave. In August 2017, a special cleanup event was coordinated to promote stewardship of the new trail extension. The city of Watertown, NYS OPRHP, Tug Hill Commission, Tug Hill Tomorrow Land Trust, and the Black River Chapter of the Adirondack Mountain Club helped to fill a truck with garbage picked up along the trail.

The city of Watertown and NYS OPRHP, with grant funding from the New York State Department of Transportation (NYSDOT) and the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program, are continuing to extend the trail. Design work is under way to connect the existing Walker Ave. trailhead with the Waterworks Park trail network along Huntington St., and connect new sidewalks on Huntington Street to the trail network. Once completed,

bicyclists, runners, walkers and dog walkers will be able to enjoy 5.5 miles of paved trails that meander along the river and through wooded wetlands. The city of Watertown anticipates the project to be complete within two years.



NYS Parks and City of Watertown staff cleanup trash at new trail extension off Walker Ave.

Town of Wilna and Crown Cleaners Update

This year, the Town of Wilna saw the successful completion of remedial actions for the superfund site at Crown Cleaners.

The 9-acre site was placed on the EPA Superfund list in 1991 because of ground and water contamination from the former dry cleaning facility.

Groundwater treatment to remove contamination is completed and the area was covered in topsoil and winter ryegrass to restore the site. The town worked with the Tug Hill Commission and successfully leveraged

funding from the NYS Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation for planning and design for the redevelopment of the site into a park. The town is working on finalizing contracts and anticipates requesting proposals for planning and



Brookfield power dam in Wilna. Photo by Tug Hill Commission

design in the coming year. The Superfund cleanup improves water quality in the Black River and redevelopment of the site into a park will provide a local recreational amenity and fishing opportunities in connection with the Brookfield power dam portage.

2017 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. The conference is organized by the Tug Hill Commission, NYS DEC Region 6 and the Jefferson and Lewis County Soil and Water Conservation Districts. Sponsorship for the 2017 conference and boat tour of the Historic Fulton Chain of Lakes was

provided by the Black River Advisory Council and five exhibitors. The exhibitors included Siewert Equipment, Barton and Loguidice, Bergmann Associates, Everett J. Prescott Inc., and Water Resource Technologies. We hope to see them exhibiting in 2018!

The conference was held at The View in Old Forge. This year's training and information topics included updates on projects in the Black River

watershed including green infrastructure, invasive species management, early flood prediction, a presentation on research of how much

road salt gets into Black River waterways within the Adirondack Park, and watershed inspections to promote improved septic management. The conference concluded with a boat tour featuring the history and resource management trends for the Fulton Chain of Lakes. Conference presentations are available at: <http://www.tughill.org/projects/black-river-projects/black-river-watershed-conference/>



2017 Fulton Chain of Lakes boat tour sponsored by Beaver River Advisory Committee

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

Planning for the 2018 Black River Watershed Conference is underway with tentative plans to hold the conference in Oneida County in June. Contact jennifer@tughill.org for more information and keep an eye out for the invitation. Hope to see you there!

Lewis County Early Flood Prediction System

The Lewis County Water Quality Coordinating Committee continues to monitor and maintain stream gauges along the Black River in order to be prepared and notify residents of potential flooding. There are now 5 stream gauges operating in Lewis County and plans are underway to install an additional gauge on the Deer River, with support from Assemblyman Ken Blankenbush. The United States Geologic Service and the National Weather Service also utilize the gauge data in monitoring and flood prediction. In addition to stream levels and flows, the gauges also collect water quality data including turbidity and conductivity.

Stream gauge data are available online at: http://208.125.212.114:8085/index.html#canvas_container



Interseeding and Agricultural Best Management Practices in Lewis County

In 2017, Lewis County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) was able to purchase an interseeder and demonstrate its use on 100 acres working with a private agricultural landowner. A Soil Health Workshop was held to share the success of the interseeder and promote its use on other farms. A lot of interest was expressed by agricultural landowners in Lewis County, and the interseeder will be available for rent on a first come first served basis. The use of the interseeder to install cover crops improves soil health and reduces runoff, which improves water quality.



Interseeder installs cover crops on Lewis County farm. Photo by Lewis County SWCD.

Cover crop implementation was also identified as an action to achieve water quality targets within the Black River 9E plan. Additional cover crop acreage will continue to achieve these targets.

Nutrient management planning and manure storage have also been identified as a best management practices to achieve water quality targets. Under the NYS Department of Agriculture’s new program for manure storage, Lewis County assisted 6 agricultural landowners with applications to install waste storage systems in accordance with the Natural Resources Conservation Service standards.

Lewis County Riverfest 2017

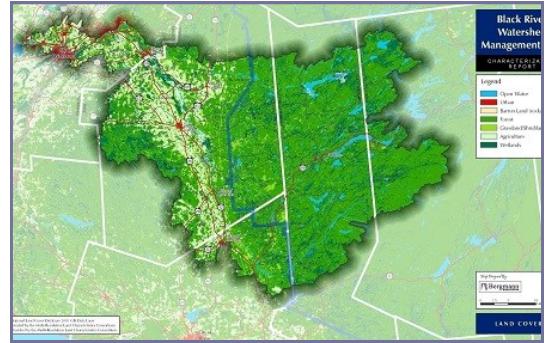
The 28th annual Lewis County Riverfest was held Saturday, August 5th. There were 43 paddlers that began their trip at the Beaches Bridge boat launch and ended at the launch in Castorland. Along the way, paddlers had an opportunity to participate in “river trivia” to test their knowledge about the Black River basin and win a prize donated by Lewis County businesses. The trivia, shuttle and festival were sponsored by Lewis County Soil and Water Conservation District, and the Lewis County Chamber of Commerce. Keep an eye out next year and like the Lewis County SWCD on Facebook to register for this fun and educational event!



Ronny raindrop at Lewis County Riverfest. Photo by Lewis County SWCD

Black River Initiative

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), Black River 9 Element Plan (2016) Black River Blueway Trail Plan (2007) and Black River Trail Scenic Byway Corridor Management Plan (2012) provide the foundation to advance existing efforts and new projects that enhance and improve all aspects of the Black River. This annual newsletter highlights recent developments in the Black River Initiative, connects with stakeholders, and promotes collaborative, ecosystem based management efforts to achieve goals. For more information, visit: <http://www.tughill.org/projects/black-river-projects/watershed-initiative/> Thank you to all of the organizations that contributed to this newsletter!



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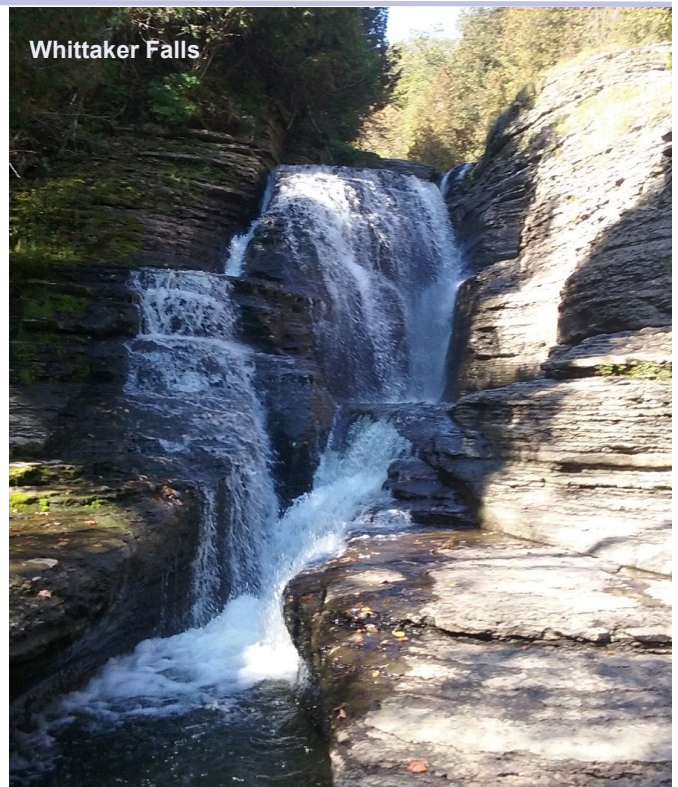


Department of
Environmental
Conservation

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Bald Mountain



Whittaker Falls

Information on recreation in the Black River is available at www.blackriverny.com