

Quassaick Creek Watershed Alliance Monthly Meeting

MSMC, Aquinas Hall, Room 252

Monday, November 25, 2019, 5:00 PM

<http://waterauthority.orangecountygov.com/quassaick.html>

Present: Marcel Barrick, Jack Caldwell, Tony Fern, Bill Fetter, John Gebhards, Lance Haug, Ted Kohlmann

Meeting Notes – 12/10/19

Reports

1. HRWA Roundtable Report: Lance

Lance filled us in on a number of topics talked about at the Roundtable. The meeting was held at Bard College to a moderate gathering of attendees.

The Saw Kill Alliance talked about their collaboration with the science lab there at Bard measuring some basic stream index parameters on a routine basis to establish some historical baseline trends. Bard hopes to expand their community water science efforts into other organizations.

[During the first agenda item of our meeting, John Gebhards paused the discussion to introduce a new attendee Tony Fern from Newburgh and briefly familiarize him with some of the activities we are involved with. Subsequent presenters also provided a brief description of the activity they were discussing.]

Lance said that both Erin Roth and Marcel were able to speak well to the issues going on at Stewart Airport and provide an update from the recent meeting about the advent of the Restoration Advisory Committee selection.

There was some discussion at the Roundtable meeting according to Lance about some of the citizen science efforts being carried out in the region. It is going to be incumbent upon the individual watershed groups to learn the statutes as well as the state agency Rules and Regulations to pursue water quality complaints against permit holders and other suspected violators. Hopefully this will be addressed at Water Quality Sampling seminar described in Item #8 of these notes.

At the end of the Roundtable, Lance and some of the other attendees went on a brief tour of the environmental lab discussed above.

2. Stewart ANG and RAC Application Update: Marcel & Jack

To open this item, Marcel was excited to inform us of some potential legal avenues being investigated by Riverkeeper to circumvent or at least temper the power of NY State's Home Rule Laws. Specifically, NYSDOH Watershed Rules and Regulations (Public Health Law Sect. 1100) allow for sovereign communities to submit new/updated watershed Rules & Regulations to the DOH for the Department's consideration regarding updating the protection of a watershed despite its location outside the municipal boundaries and enforcement of said updated rules. Cayuga County in the Finger Lakes region of NY is currently attempting this process for Lake

_____ which is the drinking water supply for many of the communities in the area. A caveat however is that the Health Department is not mandated to act on these “requests for updates”. To broadcast widespread community support for the Cayuga County initiative, Riverkeeper has posed the idea of incorporated municipalities drafting a Memorializing Resolution of Support for the Cayuga Count application and submit the resolution to the Health Department and perhaps the State Legislative bodies to prevent the effort from disappearing.

Also, there is verbal indication from the ANG that the QCWA will be selected for an organization seat on the Restoration Advisory Committee for the PFAS investigation and remediation. Jack will be the standing QCWA liaison to this committee. If he is unable to attend, an alternate member of the QCWA BOD will attend the meeting.

The first RAC meeting will be in early 2020 (Jan/Feb). These meetings are open to the general public as well.

Marcel discussed the increasing focus on overwhelmed combined wastewater/stormwater treatment plants discharging untreated brown water directly into the Hudson and this being a suspected source of high methane emissions into the atmosphere. This is a topic the Newburgh Clean Water Project (NCWP) is interested in. Contact Marcel if you want to help.

Marcel also announced a NCWP community outreach dinner on Dec. 7th at Calvary Church, 120 South Street to update the people of Clean Water developments. (Bill & Jack were able to attend.)

During a discussion about cycling between the NYC aqueduct and Brown’s Pond, John asked if anyone knew how often the City of Newburgh analyzes its water for PFOAS currently. Marcel said he would inquire with the Water Department.

Bill handed out a few copies of “Brief History of Newburgh Water Supply” which is a typed synopsis of significant changes in the system and the year performed dating from 1853 to 1965. This was a handout at the NCWP water salon held at the Newburgh Library the day prior to this meeting. There is no identification on the summary as to who wrote it nor when it was actually compiled. John said he would try to find out some relevant history of the document.

3. Lower Quassaick Creek Trail-Jack Caldwell & John Gebhards

John informed us that Kelly Morris of the Orange County Planning Depart and others were able to schedule and complete a site visit and discussion about the recent Lower Quassaick Creek trail initiative. Both County and City Planning were able to attend as well as Scenic Hudson, QCWA and Orange County Land Trust were able to chart a course of action after the site visit. All parties will develop ideas relevant to issues raised and plan to attend a yet to be scheduled development meeting in the early part of 2020.

At the recent visit, John also expressed the QCWA’s interest in participating in the Lake Street Bridge area redevelopment. It was noted that the new bridge will have sufficient width on the underside to allow for pedestrian traffic adjacent to the stream.

It is the continued hope of the QCWA to participate in this/these visits to assist in logistics, history and planning.

4. Orange Lake and Upper Bushfield Creek: Bill Fetter

Bill has drafted a letter to the NYSDEC requesting a review of the SPDES permit holders in the Upper Bushfield believe to be possibly in contravention of their permit. The letter will be reviewed by Board members and mailed by the end of 2019.

5. Algonquin Park Improvements – John Gebhards

John informed the group that Ted, Jack and he met with the Orange County Parks Commissioner – Jim Cahill. The QCWA offered our help wherever it might be useful. FEMA funded repairs on the upper and lower dams continue.

The debris that has been exposed will be removed while the Lakes are drained for dam repair in Algonquin Park according to the Commissioner.

Mr. Cahill is weighing the possibility of leaving the dams' control gates open for an extended period of time to reduce the viability of the water chestnut. John recommended the County contact Partnerships for Regional Invasive Species Management (PRISMs) for information regarding water chestnut removal prior to contracting with an outside firm to do the research. Agreement has been reached for the sharing of space on the QCWA kiosk in Algonquin Park with Preserve Algonquin Park (PAP) to include information regarding the black powder mill remains in the park.

Also, the Commissioner requested feedback from the community about potential improvements in the park that might draw more people to visit.

There is consideration within the Department of permanently bypassing the dam leaving the lake drained and allowing to area to become a reed filled meadow and having a boardwalk like path through the meadow for educational and recreational uses.

Ted will contact Les Cornell to get input from PAP on their potential improvement ideas.

6. Scenic Hudson Greenspace Committee: Jack Caldwell

Jack announce that the Greenspace Committee will hold their end-of-the-year potluck on a date yet TBD. The goal is to talk about progress to date regarding Outreach & Engagement for the Proposed Danskammer modifications

7. Columbia University School of Architecture: Bill Fetter

Naomi Hersson-Ringskog of the Dept. of Small Interventions is working with the Newburgh Library, Columbia and QCWA to hopefully have the students display their projects about the Quassaick in the Library's lobby during the latter part of January and all of February. Currently, student interest and availability is the most pressing issue.

Supplemental to the student exhibition, there is thought of the QCWA erecting a small display of ideas developed over the years for a Lower Quassaick Trail which encompasses the area of study for the architectural students.

8. HRWA Watershed Workshop: John

John reiterated that the HRWA will be hosting an all-day watershed workshop on December 5th at SUNY New Paltz. Agenda and registration on line at HRWA website. Bill & John will be attending.

9. NFA Science Program: Jack Caldwell

Jack talked about meeting with Biology teacher Kristen Oberle of NFA regarding the school's three year research program. Kristen has a student that is possibly interested in studying micro-plastics in water. Jack put the student in touch with the Marist College Environmental Studies Group which has an active micro-plastics study program.

10. Trees for Tribs: Ted Kohlmann

Ted reported a second successful T-F-T maintenance outing in Cronomer Park on November 7th after some weather delays. Photos are posted on the QCWA Facebook page.

BASED ON DISCUSSION SINCE THE NOVEMBER MEETING, THERE WILL BE NO MONTHLY MEETING IN DECEMBER.

SEASON'S GREETINGS TO ALL!

THE NEXT QCWA MONTHLY MEETING WILL BE MONDAY JANUARY 27TH, 2020 AT 5:00 PM IN RM. 252, AQUINAS HALL, MT. ST. MARY COLLEGE, NEWBURGH

PLEASE JOIN US!