Conservation Advisory Councils in the Hudson Valley

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The Hudson River Estuary Program

Core Mission

- Ensure **clean water**
- Protect and restore fish, wildlife, and their **habitats**
- Provide **river access**
- Help communities adapt to **climate change**
- Conserve **natural scenery**
Conservation Advisory Councils (CACs)

conduct research, educate the public, and advise local agencies on issues relating to the conservation and management of the environment, including:

- Natural resource inventories and open space plans
- Assistance with project reviews
- Policy research and planning
- Public education and outreach
- Environmental stewardship

(General Municipal Law § 239-x)
Environmental Management Councils (EMCs)

advise the county on land-use planning and local environmental issues and promote the coordination of related activities. EMCs provide a liaison between municipal and county governments and are directed to:

- Maintain a natural areas and open space index
- Develop a county environmental protection plan
- Conduct policy research and public outreach

(Environmental Conservation Law Article 47)
CACs/EMCs in Albany and Schenectady counties

Current:
- Berne
- Colonie
- Glenville
- Guilderland
- Knox
- Niskayuna
- Princetown
- Rotterdam
- Voorheesville

Past:
- Bethlehem
- Coeymans
- City of Schenectady
- Albany County
Albany-Schenectady CAC/EMC survey

Activities

• Inventories
• Project review
• Comp plan update
• Scenic vista study
• Open space planning
• Stream monitoring
• Stormwater issues
• Aquifer protection
• Renewable energy
• Conservation day
• Emerald ash borer task force
• Recycling
• Household hazardous waste collection
• Nature preserve maintenance

Photos: Laura Heady
CAC/EMC Challenges

Challenges

• Recruiting members
• Limited expertise
• Limited time of volunteers/support staff
• Communicating with decision-makers
• Need training/guidance to improve reviews
• Lack of focus/too many projects
• Lack of funding

Photo: Laura Heady
Why hold a Roundtable?

- Encourage communication, networking, and peer learning
- Connect to other programs, organizations, and initiatives
- Provide forum for relevant training to meet needs

Experience from Columbia County CAC Roundtable since 2011:

- 4 new CACs established
- 1 re-activated
- 2 on the way
- EMC re-energized
Examples of Hudson Valley CACs in action
City of Kingston Natural Resources Inventory

A compilation and description of natural resources and related assets (e.g., recreation areas) to inform land-use decisions. The completed NRI will include a database of maps and a report with recommendations.

New data being collected:
- Green infrastructure opportunities
- Renewable energy potential
- Walking/biking routes
- Potential gardens/park space
Project Review in the Town of Rhinebeck

- Provide maps and project-specific conservation recommendations to the planning board
- Participate in site visits
- Established pre-application process and site resource assessment checklist to bring applicants on the same page
CAC/EMC Contributions to Planning & Research

• Town-wide planning
  • Comprehensive planning
  • Open space planning
• Municipal laws and ordinances
  • Wetlands & watercourse laws
  • Aquifer protection
  • Overlay zoning
• Site plan and subdivision regulations
• Climate Smart Communities implementation
Designating Critical Environmental Areas in the Town of Hyde Park

A specific geographic area designated by a state or local agency as having exceptional or unique environmental or cultural characteristics.

The CAC proposed 4 CEAs based on a conservation analysis of significant natural resource areas in the town.
Outreach and Stewardship Activities

- Public events
  - tree plantings
  - community days
  - presentations
- Citizen science
  - stream monitoring
  - amphibian monitoring
- School programs
- Website, Social media
A series to educate residents about the benefits of biodiversity and discuss the value of a local habitat mapping and assessment effort.

- What is biodiversity?
- Habitat mapping
- Biodiversity and health
- Water quality/quantity
- Agriculture
#1 Tip from Effective CACs

Establish good working relationships with local decision-makers
Resources
- Publications, web map
- Data sharing
- Training, assistance

Estuary Grants:
- Stewardship planning (Dec. 16)
- River access and education (Dec. 16)
- Tributary restoration and resiliency (Nov. 13)
Contact:

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