

Tompkins County Stream Corridor Restoration & Flood Hazard Mitigation Program Overview (2011 Update)

Program Objectives

Both completed local Watershed Assessments and field-testing have identified the following important objectives for the program:

1. Ensure selected projects have been developed using a watershed/systems approach, rather than a site-by-site based approach, and consider the potential positive and negative, and downstream and upstream, impacts of the project.
2. Enhance the use of natural, sustainable flood mitigation strategies (such as floodplain protection and wetland restoration) over structural approaches, where possible, to help reduce the future cost of project maintenance and repair.
3. Ensure that selected projects support the goals identified in the *Flood Mitigation Needs Assessment Reports (Watershed Assessments)*, *Tompkins County Multi-Jurisdictional All-Hazards Mitigation Report* (as it relates to flooding), and the *Tompkins County Comprehensive Plan*.
4. Use program funding to leverage other sources of project funding from local, regional, state and federal levels.
5. Fund projects that support a long-term approach to the management of water resources in Tompkins County.
6. Undertake projects that support attaining and sustaining high levels of surface water and groundwater quality and support the important functions of waterways and riparian areas, as habitats for aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems.

Project Prioritization

Prioritization of projects will be based on the Watershed Assessment Reports for the Six Mile Creek, Fall Creek, Salmon Creek, Cayuga Inlet and Taughannock Creek watersheds as well as other technically competent studies or publications. This list may be augmented with other priority projects in the remaining watersheds of Tompkins County.

The program is available to fund three different types of projects:

1. Stream corridor revegetation and protection
2. Stream bank stabilization which may include minor instream structures
3. Stream corridor assessments or feasibility studies for larger scale projects where implementation will be funded through outside revenue sources

Experience has shown that projects typically range from \$5,000 - \$10,000.

Projects will be selected based on the list of prioritized projects within prepared *Watershed Assessments* as well as other factors including:

- Total project costs
- Property owner support
- Level of benefit to residents of Tompkins County
- Ability to leverage additional funding sources

Program funds may also be used to complete additional *Watershed Assessments* throughout Tompkins County.

A technical committee will assist with final prioritization of projects (including the integration of priority projects for each assessed watershed into one priority project list) and identification of supplementary sources of funding opportunities. Committee members will include representatives of the Tompkins County Planning Department (TCPD), Tompkins County Soil and Water Conservation District (TCSWCD), Tompkins County Health Department, United States Fish and Wildlife Service, and United States Geological Survey. This committee will meet annually to help monitor and evaluate projects funded by the TCFHMP; update the list of priority projects as needed (e.g., with priority projects from other assessed watersheds or in response to extreme localized weather events that may shift the list of existing priority projects); finalize project selection; and assist with project planning.

Program Implementation

Each year, one or more projects will be identified for approval. Depending on the availability of funding, project implementation may require supplementary funding from outside sources. TCPD and TCSWCD will work cooperatively on program oversight and implementation, with TCPD providing assistance with project planning and implementation and TCSWCD providing assistance with in-field project implementation and construction. Implementation of projects, including project construction may also include municipalities, landowners, and other organizations, agencies, and contractors as needed.

Opportunities will be provided for municipalities to identify projects for the technical committee to consider in addition to projects that are already included on the list of priority projects. This will foster local involvement in the program and ensure municipal approval of the proposed project. In these cases, project approval will be based on the same criteria as projects identified in the Watershed Assessments: demonstrated need, project cost, availability of supplementary funding, consideration of downstream and upstream impacts, and consistency with program goals. A strong case will need to be made for a newly identified project to be added to the project list of priority projects based on Watershed Assessments.

Program Timeline

The program will annually follow the timeline below:

January – March – Call to municipalities for project consideration.

May-June – Technical committee meeting/site visits to prioritize prospective projects.

July - Technical Committee project recommendations made to Planning, Development and Environmental Quality (PDEQ) Committee. PDEQ discusses projects and moves resolution authorizing a contract with TCSWCD and other contractors to Full Legislature.

July – Legislature authorizes by resolution a contract with TCSWCD and other contractors.

August – Contracts drafted, circulated and finalized with TCSWCD and other contractors and work is initiated.

October – Monitoring visit to sites of past and current projects. Photo documentation post implementation is conducted.

Program Monitoring and Evaluation

Monitoring of project performance is a critical element of the Stream Corridor Restoration & Flood Hazard Mitigation Program. Projects will be monitored regularly to determine whether they are achieving the intended results. If at all possible metrics will be utilized to track the success or failure of implemented projects. Each project will be evaluated as to its likelihood for long-term effectiveness.

Every three years TCPD will work with the technical committee to submit to the Planning, Development, and Environmental Quality Committee of the Tompkins County Legislature a report on the effectiveness of the program and its individual projects.