
UPPER SUSQUEHANNA
COALITION
2018 ANNUAL REPORT



Table of Contents

Coordinator's Note 3

Ag Team 2018 4

Buffer Team 2018 6

Stream Team 2018 8

Wetland Team 2018 10

Looking Ahead 12

WIP Overview 14

2018 USC Photo Album 15

UPPER SUSQUEHANNA COALITION



USC Board of Directors

2018 USC Board of Directors

Chair - Jeff Parker
Vice-Chair - Chip McElwee
Member at Large - Steve Lorraine
Member at Large - Amanda Barber
Member at Large - Wendy Walsh

USC Staff

Watershed Coordinator:
Wendy Walsh

Ag Team:
Emily Dekar

Buffer Team:
Lydia Brinkley
Laura Grant

Stream Team:
Mike Lovegreen

Wetland Team:
Chris Brogdale
Kevin Van Hine
Jeremy Waddell
Melissa Yearick

A Note from USC's Coordinator

How do we measure success? By the number of conservation Best Management Practices (BMPs) we implement, report and verify? Recognition from our peers? Grant funding secured and projects closed out?

I am sure everyone has a different idea of success, but if we measure the USC's success by any of the above, then 2018 was a very successful year! For the number of practices we helped plan, design, install, look through this report and see firsthand what the USC staff and our member counties worked on this past year. If recognition from our peers is the determining factor, the USC obtained that this year as well, receiving both the 2018 NYACD Diversity Award and 2018 Outstanding Conservationist Award from the NYS Wildlife Society. If securing grant funds for project implementation is a measure, we were successful in approvals for the following grants/ agreements in 2018.

- NFWF Small Watershed Grant that will "Support Sustainable Buffer Establishment" in the watershed ($200,000)
- USDA NRCS Chesapeake Bay Watershed Conservation Technical Assistance Agreement supporting engineering work in the watershed ($330,000)
- USDA NRCS Contribution Agreement to support the Conservation Reserve Program and the establishment of buffers in the watershed ($145,000)

So as I reflect on the above and look forward, it appears that the USC staff and our member counties will once again be very busy in 2019, striving to improve upon our conservation assistance provided, implementation numbers, along with the securing funding and skills to achieve these successes that ultimately aid in improving local watershed goals.

And as always, thank you to all of our partners and members who have helped every step of the way!

Wendy Walsh

USC Ag Team

The USC Ag Team consists of SWCD technical staff from multiple counties and our USC Ag Coordinator working together to support and assist agricultural operations within the coalition. Together we can better improve water quality both locally and ultimately in the Chesapeake Bay.

We also are responsible for tracking all of the nutrient and sediment reducing projects implemented across the New York part of the watershed, demonstrating our efforts to meet load reduction goals for the Chesapeake Bay.



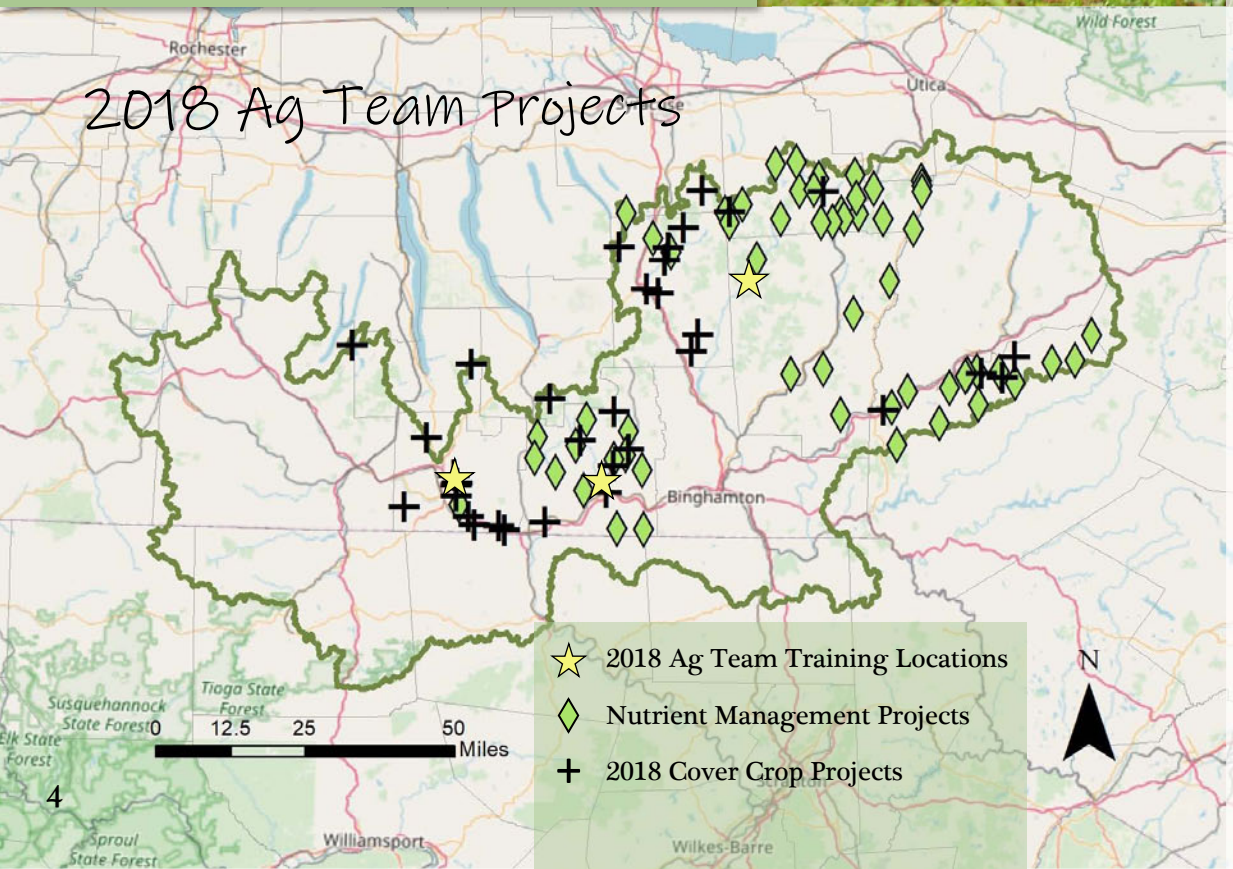
High Boy Inter-seeder

The USC, in partnership with the Bradford County Conservation District in Pennsylvania received funds to purchase a High Boy Cover Crop Inter-seeder. Using an air delivery system, seed is broadcast through drop tubes, covering 90 feet with one pass. Cover crops can be implemented during valuable, late-summer growing days before harvest, giving cover crops the jump they need. The inter-seeder was purchased with funding made available by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation.

Cover Cropping

Cover crop benefits include erosion prevention, nutrient management, improved soil moisture and weed control. A reduction in erosion means lower phosphorus runoff while retaining nitrogen in plant growth, making this practice one of very few that reduce both of the target nutrients of concern. Bay Scientists estimate that 6.2 pounds of nitrogen and nearly 1/4 pound of phosphorus are reduced per acre per year by cover crops.

With funding from NYS DEC, the USC and our partners implemented 1,812 acres of cover crops via traditional methods, and 824 acres with the high boy inter-seeder for a total Nitrogen reduction of more than 20,000 lbs. in 2018!



A Glance at New York's 2018 BMP Progress Reporting

- 156,107 Acres of Conservation Planning
- 16,050 Acres of Cover Crops
- 12,487 Acres of Conservation Tillage
- 1,772 Acres of Riparian Forest Buffer
- 31,773 Acres of Prescribed Grazing
- 198 Manure Storages
- 39 Farms in Precision Feed
- 907 Acres of Grass Buffer
- 71,119 Acres of Nutrient Management

Chesapeake Bay Data

The Chesapeake Bay Program generates reports on an annual basis to show the progress for every data submission.

The DRAFT 2018 nutrient reduction numbers for the Agricultural Sector tabulate New York reduced Nitrogen by 177,412 pounds per year, Phosphorus by 4,092.54 pounds per year, and Sediment by 9,638,890.09 pounds per year. Final reduction numbers will be released at a later date.

These numbers represent the reduction of nutrients reaching the tidal waters of the Chesapeake Bay Watershed on an annual basis.

2018 Ag Team Funding Partners

- NYS Department of Environmental Conservation
- National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF)
- USDA Regional Conservation Partnership Program

2018 Ag Team Trainings

- Pasture Condition Training - review of the Pasture Condition Scoresheet to identify grazing system needs.
- Field Evaluation Training - training on evaluate crop fields for slope length, percent slope and row grade.
- Chesapeake Assessment Scenario Tool (CAST) Training - training on using CAST to develop BMP scenarios for reducing nutrients.
- RCPP Grazing Requirement Training - training on all requirements of a grazing plan to meet NRCS standards.

2018 Ag Team Highlights



2,636

Acres of cover crops funded through the USC

4

Training events with a total of 52 people in attendance

$1.3 Million

Awarded through RCPP for farmstead practices

86

Farmsteads participated in BMP verifications

156,107

Acres of conservation planning reported to the Chesapeake Bay Program

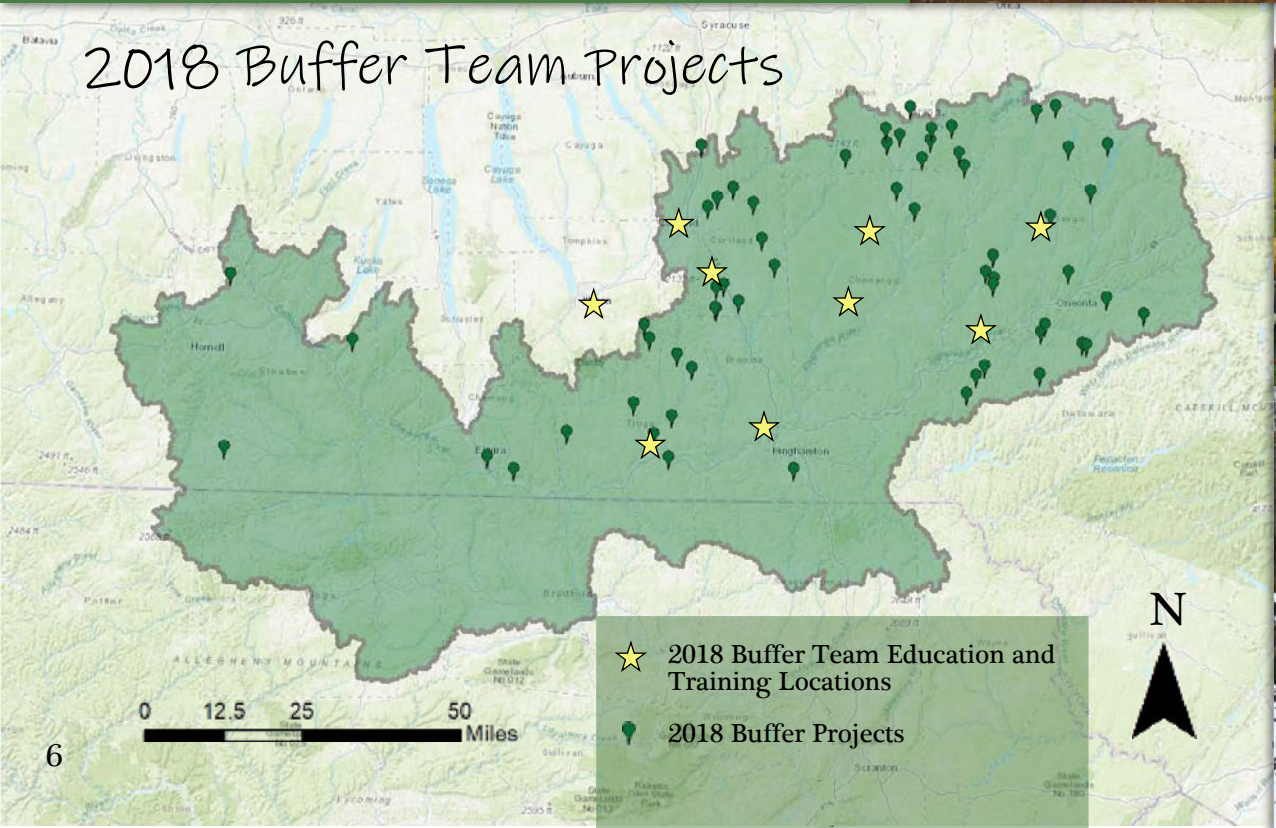
USC Buffer Team

The USC Buffer Team's goal is to promote the restoration and long-term functionality of riparian areas for water and habitat quality. Promotion, implementation, and long term functionality of riparian restoration projects is achieved through innovative programming.

The team is dedicated to ensuring practice functionality through education, outreach, and technical assistance. Data collection to better understand buffer functionality is also a priority as is proving technical support of buffer issues to USC members. We strive to engage partners and utilize partnerships to leverage additional work to promote the mission of the USC.



2018 Buffer Team Projects







2018 Buffer Team Outreach Events

- CCE Winter Crop Meeting
- Cortland SWCD Ag Luncheon
- Conservation Opportunities For You Land
- Landscape Wide Conservation Planning
- Cortland County Farmer Luncheon
- Chenango Open House
- Broome County Farm Luncheon
- Tioga County SWCD Open House
- Empire Farm Days
- Delaware County Farmer Luncheon

Through these outreach events the Buffer Team interacted with over 1,500 residents!

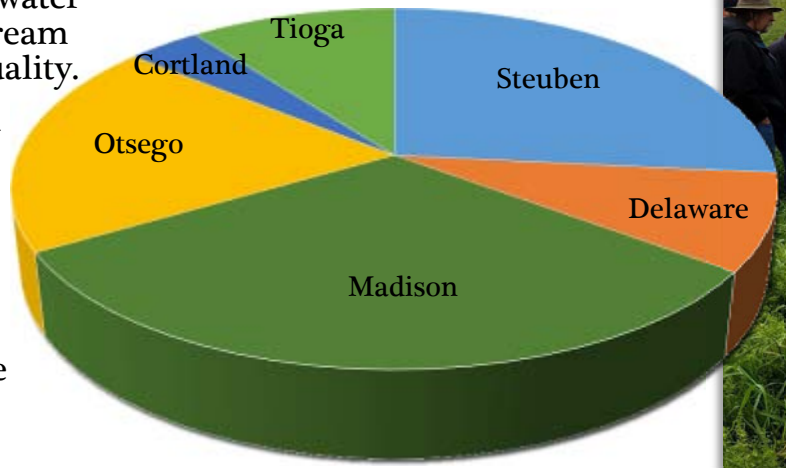
2018 Buffer Team Funding Partners

- NYS Department of Environmental Conservation
- National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF)
- United State Department of Agriculture
- United State Forest Service
- NYS Department of Ag and Markets
- Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay

Trees for Tribs

Since 2007, New York State's Trees for Tribs Program has been working to reforest New York's tributaries, or small creeks and streams, which flow into and feed larger rivers and lakes. The goal of the program is to plant young trees and shrubs along stream corridors, also known as riparian areas, in order to prevent erosion, increase flood water retention, improve wildlife and stream habitat, as well as protect water quality.

In 2018 the USC Buffer Team and member counties collaborated to install nearly 5,000 Trees for Tribs saplings on sites across the watershed. These trees were distributed across 6 counties and 20 projects with over 100+ hours of volunteer time helping to make it happen!



2018 Buffer Team Highlights



1,500+
Residents educated about the benefits of riparian buffers

10,000
Trees planted on permanently protected riparian area

581
Acres of riparian forest buffers monitored

479
Acres of prescribed grazing applied

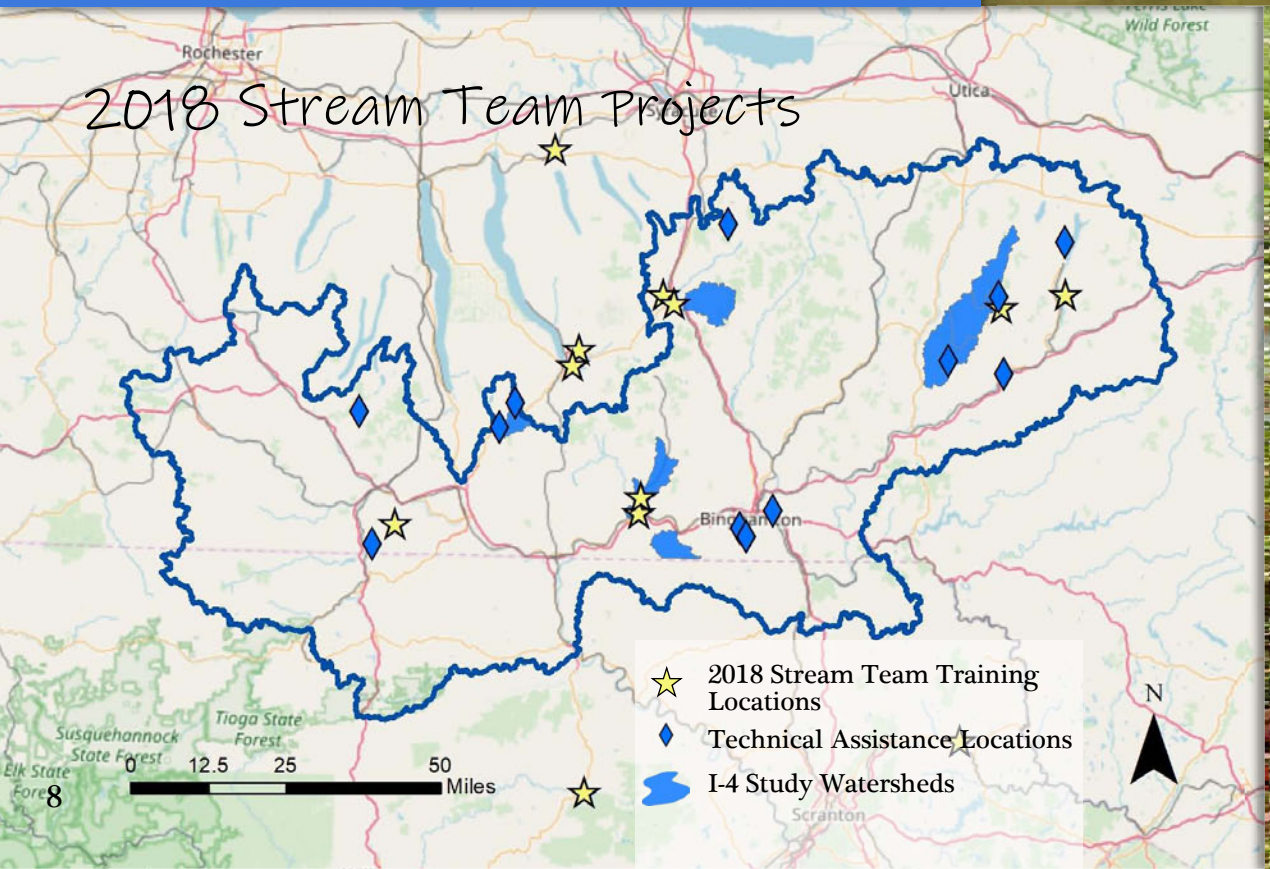
$51,000
Paid to New York landowners as incentive payments on CREP CP 22 projects totaling 120 acres enrolled.

USC Stream Team

The USC Stream Team strives to provide technical expertise and training to the USC members and the watershed community. Streams in the Southern Tier of New York and Northern Tier of Tioga PA, their condition and challenges, are a direct result of the unique interaction of geology, topography, climate and cultural impacts of the region.

Our goal is to be recognized as a source of quality, value driven technical assistance in addressing stream corridor rehabilitation and watershed assessment projects as well as offer valuable information to municipal officials, decision makers, communities and landowners in working with stream dynamics.





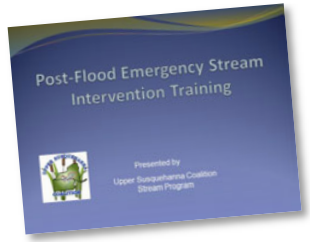


2018 Stream Team Training

- 3 Stream Corridor Assessment Guide training - this guide provides a template for those not intimately trained in stream channel evaluation with a step by step process to determine management need and level of technical expertise to make informal referrals.
- 4 North Atlantic Aquatic Connectivity Collaborative (NAACC) protocol trainings held on inventorying and evaluating stream crossings.
- 5 Post Flood Emergency Stream Intervention (ESI) trainings targeting first responders at the local level but also proving useful tools to local, state, and federal agency personnel.







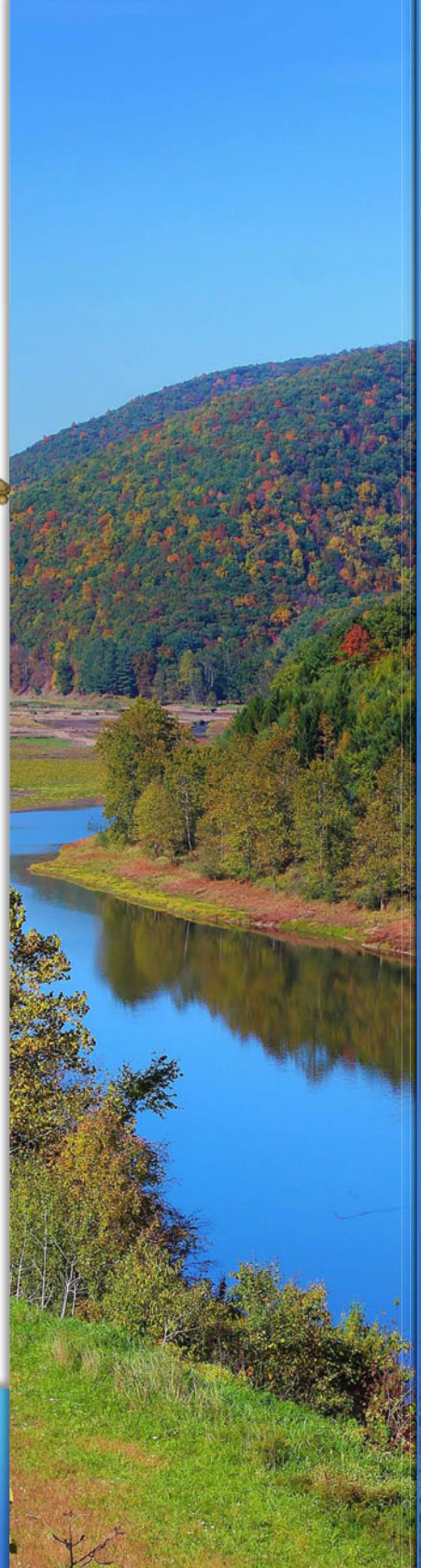
NFWF I4 Grant Wrap-up

The I-4 project funded by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation was completed in 2018. A total of 7 watersheds were assessed through four counties including Cortland, Otsego, Tioga, and Tompkins County. Districts developed a background report that included an exhaustive literature search of physical and social aspect of the watershed, conducted a physical assessment of the blue line streams in the watershed, identified potential projects and coordinated with watershed communities on restoration, management, and educational projects. Through this project, over a quarter of a million dollars were leveraged to begin addressing identified needs.

2018 Stream Team Funding Partners

- New York State Department of Environmental Conservation
- National Fish and Wildlife Foundation
- United States Fish and Wildlife Service

2018 Stream Team Highlights



7
Watersheds assessed

4,150
Stream sites inventoried and evaluated through the I-4 Project

10
Counties in the watershed received technical assistance visits

70
District staff and partners trained on Stream Corridor Assessment Guide

35
Studies or designs completed as a result of watershed assessments through NFWF I4

USC Wetland Team

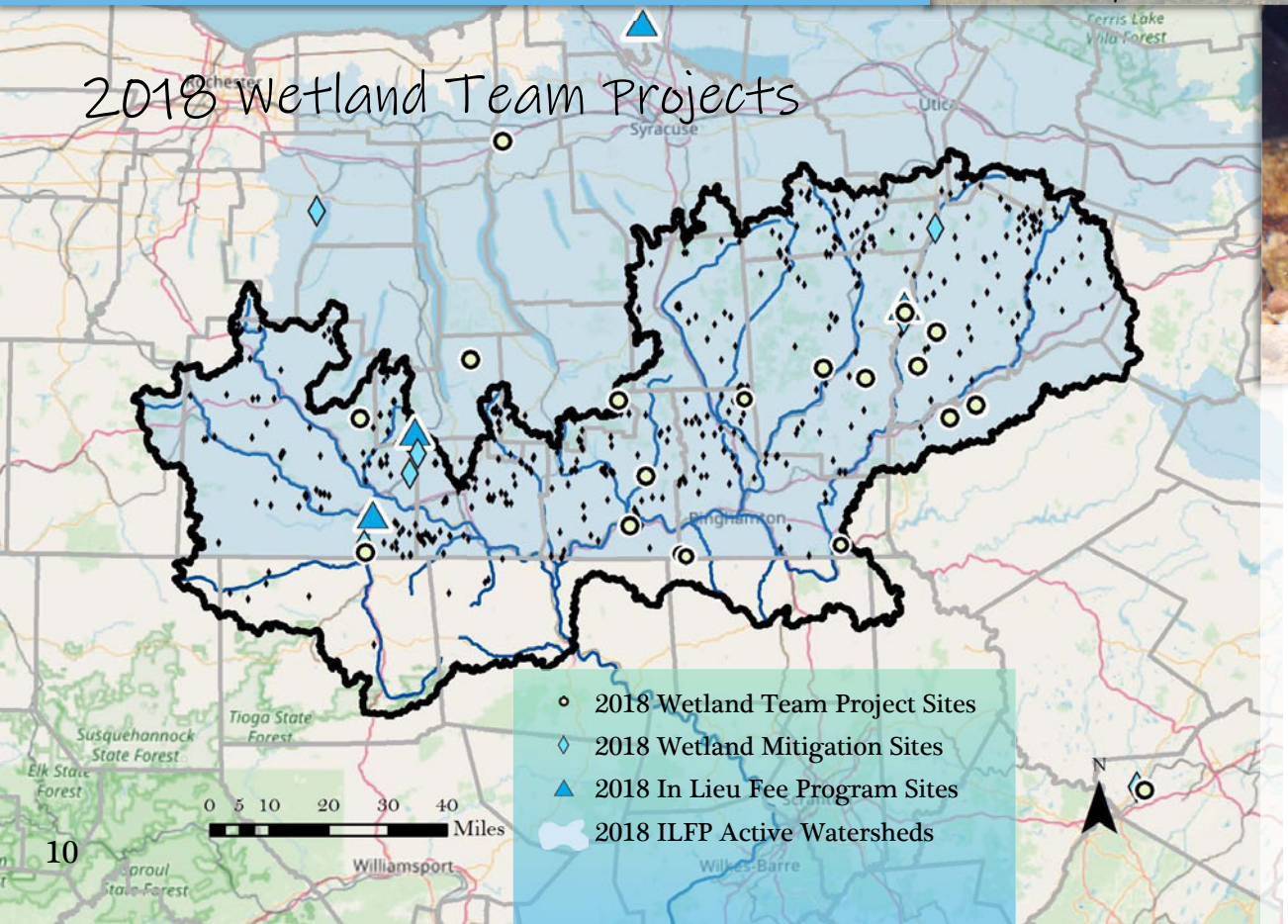
The USC Wetland Team is an example of an effective programmatic approach to delivering wetland conservation efforts at a watershed scale. We are dedicated to increasing wetland restoration, promoting and assisting existing wetland programs and expanding wetland education and understanding across our region.

We support wetland conservation efforts at a watershed scale with a wide variety of partners and programs, providing site review, design, construction and maintenance assistance both to partners and our other USC teams.



Empire Wetland Mitigation Site, Chemung County

2018 Wetland Team Projects





Eastern Hellbender Reintroduction

While a departure from our usual landscape-driven work, in 2018 the Wetland Team assisted a variety of partners in an Eastern Hellbender rearing and reintroduction project.

The Wetland team's role included planning, permitting, building and installing in-stream habitat and monitoring equipment, and the actual hellbender release which occurred in August. We were thrilled to be the recipient of the 2018 Outstanding Conservationist Award from the NYS Wildlife Society for our work on this project, and are looking forward to the research and follow up projects that result from it.



Site tour with 70 participants

Regional Wetland Conference

The USC Wetland team was asked to help facilitate the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic Wetland Workgroup's joint meeting this fall. We assisted with venue selection, setting up and leading a tour of a variety of USC projects, and presented to the group about the USC and our Wetland Program.

USC Wetland Mitigation

We continued our wetland mitigation monitoring and work on the Susquehanna and Adjacent Basins In Lieu Fee Program, providing quality wetland monitoring, site design and construction products. In 2018 we monitored 8 sites and wrote or started writing mitigation plans for 3 others.





Ongoing DEC WQIP Grant

2018 field work was heavily focused on implementing our DEC Water Quality Implementation Project, constructing isolated wetland areas on NY State Forest Property, and identifying and removing streamside berms to promote stream health.

2018 Wetland Team Funding Partners

- Finger Lakes National Forest
- Millennium Pipeline
- National Fish and Wildlife Foundation
- NYS Department of Environmental Conservation
- NYS Department of Transportation
- NRCS
- Susquehanna Headwaters In Lieu Fee Program
- The Nature Conservancy
- The Wetland Trust

2018 Wetland Team Highlights



30
Isolated wetlands constructed

1,480
Linear feet of streamside berm removed

575
Watershed residents educated about wetland issues

58
Acres of Wetland Mitigation Projects monitored

5,000+
Acres of wetland re-establishment projects reported to the Chesapeake Bay Program

Looking

Ag Team Goals

- Continue improvements to the AEM Database Online Tool
- Continue to seek additional funding opportunities
- Increase Best Management Practice Implementation to improve local water quality and the Chesapeake Bay
- Increase capacity within district offices through technical and engineering staff

Targeted 2019 Projects

- With partners, continue oversight of 5 farmstead Practice contracts through the Regional Conservation Partnership Program within 4 counties.
- With partners, complete planning and contracting work for grazing practice applications received through the Regional Conservation Partnership Program.
- Increase Cover Crop Implementation across the Watershed through the USC Cover Crop Implementation Project (funding provided by NYS Department of Environmental Conservation).
- Provide additional training on the AEM Database Online Tool and BMP verification protocols.
- Implement prescribed grazing systems through the NFWF Regional Delivery funding

Buffer Team Goals

- Continue to offer funding for stream corridor rehabilitation that includes prescribed grazing
- Develop targeted outreach material and disseminate that information at outreach events throughout the watershed
- Provide resources for the monitoring and maintenance of planted riparian areas to increase plant survival in riparian areas
- Seek funding opportunities to increase the rate at which we implemented riparian buffers and fill gaps throughout the watershed

Targeted 2019 Projects

- Continue implementation on permanently protected land via invasive species removal and riparian buffer plantings with funding from NYSDEC
- Begin work on our 2018 NRCS contribution agreement to support the Conservation Reserve Program and the establishment of buffers throughout the watershed
- Roll out the USC 's 2018 NFWF Support Sustainable Buffer Establishment Grant to member counties and partners
- Implement the planting of 5,000 plants through Trees for Tribs throughout the Chesapeake Bay Watershed
- Further buffer implementation through NFWF Regional Delivery funding in 7 SWCD member counties
- Monitor and maintain established buffers

Ahead

Stream Team Goals

- Engage in statewide initiative to develop road ditch maintenance program
- Conduct and facilitate trainings on Emergency Stream Intervention, Best Management Practice Implementation, and the USC Stream Corridor Assessment Guide to contractors, municipal officials and SWCD members.
- Secure funding for engineering technician for the Stream Team
- Development and secure funding for USC Stream Team Application that allows information to be collected and retained for both project assessment and implementation

Targeted 2019 Projects

- Continue implementation of stream BMPs and training with funding through NYS DEC WQIP program.
- Provide technical support to member SWCDs and communities
- Expand NAACC inventories with the development of an improved "culvert condition" assessment tool
- Further work under the NY Rising Communities Regional Susquehanna River Initiative Floodplain Management and Stream Restoration Projects in Broome and Tioga Counties.

Wetland Team Goals

- Work to increase wetland restoration across the watershed with emphasis on projects that will meet CBP model standards
- Expand wetland education efforts through increased participation in public outreach events and develop age -appropriate outreach materials for events

Targeted 2019 Projects

- Finalize Wetland construction and streamside berm removal for existing DEC WQIP project
- Begin work on 2018 DEC WQIP project "Expanding Wetland Work in the Watershed" - site identification in progress
- Develop wetland mitigation plans for the Oneida and Chemung River Service Areas for the In Lieu Fee Program; Continue to search for sites in active watersheds without current property identified
- Continue monitoring and performing maintenance at existing wetland mitigation sites in Tompkins, Chemung and Steuben Counties
- Implement 2 EQIP stream stabilization projects and NFWF Spencer Lake berm removal project
- Construct NFWF Regional Delivery wetland restoration projects - sites identified
- Continue assisting USC Program Teams and Partners with construction and maintenance needs

WIP Overview -
The Next Phase

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Chesapeake Bay Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) requires New York to reduce nutrient and sediment pollutant loads to the Chesapeake Bay (in New York, the Susquehanna and Chemung rivers flow south to the Chesapeake Bay). The Upper Susquehanna Coalition (USC) has been DEC's primary local partner since New York formally joined the effort to restore the Chesapeake Bay in 2000. New York's efforts to meet its Chesapeake Bay restoration goals rely heavily on the work of the USC to implement best management practices (BMP) to reduce pollutant loads and to collect data about BMPs that are implemented. As such, the USC along with other partners has been assisting NYSDEC with the drafting of NY's Phase III Watershed Implementation Plan. This plan focuses on strategies for all sectors to implement practices that will assist us in meeting our pollutant loads. The USC has hosted numerous meetings in fall/winter of 2018 to evaluate both agriculture and urban sector load reductions. While the focus is on agriculture, the USC is working with NYSDEC to make sure that all of the work we do within the watershed counts. Over the coming months, the USC plans to collaborate with NY Farm Bureau and NYSDEC and hold farmer outreach meetings where we will review what is in the plan and receive feedback from the agricultural community on what needs to be done.

WIP Timeline

January 2019
Complete draft WIP III by the end of the month

February/ March 2019
DEC internal review (at least 6 weeks)

April 12, 2019
Draft WIP III posted online for public review

August 9, 2019
Final draft posted online

2018 USC Photo Album



2018 Diversity Award
Presented by: NYACD



2018 Outstanding Conservationist
Presented by: NY Chapter
of the Wildlife Society

















UPPER SUSQUEHANNA COALITION

Photo Credits:

All photos courtesy of USC Teams and our Partners

Find us on: facebook

@UpperSusquehanna