

How Watershed Plans Help Municipalities

Act on issues that are high priority for voters

A 2018 poll by the Values of Water Campaign found that 83% of Americans say reducing water pollution should be a “high” priority for local water utilities. Locally, Riverkeeper and our partners support dozens of community scientists who volunteer time to sample water quality in the Saw Mill River, Pocantico River and at Ossining Beach. Every sample is a vote for clean water.

Support the local outdoor recreational and tourism economy

The economic impact of outdoor recreation locally (in the 16th and 17th Congressional districts) is estimated at \$2.24 billion by the Outdoor Industry Association, supporting dozens of businesses. Water sports is among the Top 3 activities supporting that economic impact.

Establish common priorities and work with neighboring municipalities

NYS Intermunicipal Water Infrastructure Grants offer 40% matching funds up to \$10M, compared to 25% with a limit of \$5M for other water grants.

Improve competitiveness for state grants

Projects identified in a DOS-approved watershed plan are solely eligible for DOS Implementation Grants. Water projects in a DEC-approved plan score higher in state funding formulas. DOS and DEC have different criteria for plan approval.

Build climate resilience

Short-term drought and flooding are two of the Hudson Estuary region’s primary climate risks. A watershed plan should evaluate the anticipated local impacts of climate change and identify projects to mitigate these risks. A watershed plan earns Climate Smart Communities certification points, and implementation of projects that may be proposed in a watershed plan--like revegetating riparian buffers, right-sizing culverts, ecologically enhancing shorelines, and installing green infrastructure--also earns points.

Protect drinking water

Where public drinking water supplies are part of watersheds, management plans can help to raise public awareness, protect public health and reduce treatment costs, by preserving high quality water at its source.

Identify projects with multiple benefits

An early step in watershed planning is to compile and organize existing data, maps, and studies. Synthesizing this information can lead to projects that benefit residents and the environment in multiple ways.