

**NYS Department of State Monitoring of
the Town of Poughkeepsie's
Local Waterfront Revitalization Program
2011-2012**

Community Background

The Town of Poughkeepsie is located on the eastern shore of the Hudson River in Dutchess County, midway between Albany and New York City. The Town surrounds the City of Poughkeepsie, and it has more than eight miles of Hudson River waterfront and two miles on Wappinger Creek.

The Town adopted its Local Waterfront Revitalization Program (LWRP) in 1999, and at that time had virtually no physical access to the water's edge. The only exceptions were the ends of several local streets in the hamlet of New Hamburg which "dead end" at the river. Limited access was due to the private businesses and institutions located on its shoreline. These large landholders included the Hudson River Psychiatric Center, Marist College, Poughkeepsie Rural Cemetery, IBM, Dutton Lumber site, and Trap Rock Quarry.

LWRP Monitoring Process

The goal of the monitoring process is for the DOS to assess a community's consistency with its LWRP, and to understand implementation activities and decision-making procedures related to the LWRP. Secondly, this process provides a forum for a community to highlight successes and request technical and financial assistance. Participating in this process from the Town was Neil Wilson, Director of Municipal Development, and Eric Hollman and Brian Coons of the Town's planning staff.

DIVISION OF COASTAL RESOURCES FINDINGS

LWRP Implementation and DOS Collaboration

The Town has made great strides in increasing the public's enjoyment and access to the Hudson River and Wappinger Creek. This success has involved working cooperatively with the large Hudson River landholders, and various other partnerships formed among different levels of government, including New York State, Dutchess County, and the City of Poughkeepsie. Several of the key potential waterfront access sites identified in the LWRP are now open to the public.

Longview Park

Chief among the Town's efforts, is the creation of Longview Park at Marist College which was completed in 2007. This ambitious public/private venture between the college and the Town was fostered and brokered by the Department and involved the participation of the City of Poughkeepsie and various State, Federal and nonprofit entities. The park is located on six acres of Hudson Riverfront property, with four acres owned by Marist and the remaining two acres jointly owned by the City and Town as part of their joint water treatment plant facilities. The

Department provided extensive technical and financial assistance on behalf of several state agencies, and ensured that the legal instruments were in place to secure the public's right to access and utilize this Hudson River park. Amenities include floating docks for launching unmotorized boats, a designated fishing pier, walking trails, site furnishings, parking areas, landscaping and a scenic overlook. The Town was awarded two additional EPF grants for proposed projects at Longview Park, one for the design of a public restroom facility for the park, and another for installation of interpretive signage.

During the course of the monitoring session, two particular concerns of the Department related to Longview Park were discussed. The first is that the EPF grant for the public restroom facility has languished and expired December 2010. Even with numerous DOS reminders, the Town has not provided the Department with required Status Reports for several years. As a result, paperwork will be sent to the Town to close out the grant.

Also expressed during the monitoring session was the Department's concern that the Town was not promoting the use of Longview Park by the public. The park and its amenities, many of which were paid for with public funding, were not listed on the Town's website identifying recreation facilities, nor is its use by the public promoted by the Town in a formal manner. Following up on this matter, the Town has since added Longview Park to its website and promotes it as a public recreational facility in the Town.

Marist College

From 2000-present, Marist College has undertaken campus expansion and redevelopment through numerous projects in and adjacent to the Coastal Area. Under strong pressure from the Town Planning Board whose review and approval were required for such projects, Marist College developed a campus master plan that reoriented the College's visual and architectural relationship to the Hudson River. In accordance with that vision, Marist College created pedestrian crossings of a former railbed and of U.S. Route 9 that linked new residential facilities to the east with the academic campus to the west, and created a corresponding visual corridor toward the Hudson River. A large, new academic building was constructed inland but overlooking the River, with traditional academic architecture and "green" design. New Route 9 gateways, other building renovations and campus improvements are underway in keeping with such appearance and design.

Quiet Cove

Quiet Cove, a 27-acre county park along the Hudson River just north of Longview Park, is the result of a 2005 agreement between Dutchess county and New York State. The agreement centered on the County receiving the Hudson River waterfront portion of the former state owned Hudson River Psychiatric Center in exchange for making site and facility improvements. The park includes a boat launch area for canoes and kayaks, picnic tables, grills, fishing, walking trails and scenic overlooks.

New Hamburg Loop Trail

The LWRP also proposed a Waterfront Loop Trail to connect recreational facilities in New Hamburg. This loop is almost completed. In the early-mid 2000s, the Town cooperated with the Wappinger Greenway Trail Committee, Dutchess County and Scenic Hudson on developing a trail connection between preserved Audubon lands along the Wappinger Creek estuary and Dutchess County Bowdoin Park. A trailhead and public access to the Waterfront Loop trail was established on a private industrial property at the Town's boundary with the Village of Wappingers Falls. A National Recreation Trails grant connected the trailhead to the Loop Trail, improved a connection at the south end to the Town Park in New Hamburg, and funded educational trail brochures and three information kiosks at trail entries. A Hudson River Greenway Grant funded a trail relocation that provided direct access to the Wappinger Creek.

The Town was also awarded a grant from NYS Department of Transportation to establish sidewalks in the New Hamburg hamlet connecting the New Hamburg Train Station, the Town's Riverfront Park to the west, the Town's New Hamburg Park to the east, and Dutchess County Bowdoin Park to the north. Implementation is expected by 2014.

Wappinger Creek Improvements

With a NYS Department of Environmental Conservation grant, in 2007 the Town undertook a water quality and erosion remediation project for creek. A 1960's era subdivision had collected and discharged stormwater down a highly erodible steep slope to the creek for decades, resulting in gullies 30 feet deep, severing the Loop Trail, and increasing sedimentation to the Creek. The project replaced local storm drainage facilities with an improved collection system, redirected storm drainage to a properly designed basin that controlled outflows toward the creek, and restored the washed out gullies to a sustainable profile.

The Town has also been working with the DEC to plant trees and other landscaping at its two parks along the creek, Greenvale Park and Rochdale Park, in an effort to help prevent further erosion of the streambank.

Vassar College Community Boathouse

Vassar College, adjacent to Marist College, donated a parcel of land for the construction of a community boathouse for the Hudson River Rowing Association. The facility now serves as home to recreational and school rowing programs. Using the LWRP as a basis, the Town required that public access via a greenway trail, be incorporated into the design.

Municipal Open Space Fund

Around 2007-08, the Town partnered with Locust Grove to help it acquire and protect an adjacent parcel with historic carriage trails and lands, open to the public along with the institution's other lands. At the same time, the Town created an Open Space Fund to assist with future such projects. Municipal development fees are levied on new lots and square footage, and are deposited into the dedicated fund.

Former Dutton Lumber Yard

The former Dutton Lumber yard is now the site of a proposed redevelopment project. The parcel is situated in both the Town and City of Poughkeepsie. The Dutton site is zoned Waterfront District 2. This zone was established to advance implementation of the LWRP, and covers areas of the waterfront adjacent to intensive industrial and commercial activity. At the time of the LWRP, the site was actively used for lumber storage and distribution.

In consultation with the Town, the Department prepared comments on a Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the project. While our office supports the remediation of the site, and a redevelopment concept that calls for a mixed-use transit-oriented development that provides for public access, the project as proposed presented our office with a number of concerns. This project is highly visible from key vantage view points, including Walkway Over The Hudson, the western shoreline, and those traveling on the Hudson River, and as proposed, presents its own visual impacts on the scenic quality of the area. As a result, the Department believes the project as originally proposed has the potential to detract from the enjoyment of the visual landscape, and may diminish the waterfront revitalization efforts made in recent. The project is now in the process of being modified to address these concerns as well as others, and the Department will work closely with the Town as the project progresses.

LWRP Document Accessibility and Local Consistency Review Process

Overall, the Town's LWRP is well known, and is a well used document by local agencies, boards, commissions, and local officials. Copies of the LWRP are available with the Town Clerk, and are given to Planning Commission and Zoning Board of Appeal members. The Coastal Assessment Form (CAF) is included within the forms available on the Town's website pertaining to Planning Board approval. The CAF must be completed for actions located in, or affecting, the Town's LWRP area. The local consistency determination process is coordinated with the environmental review process set forth in the State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA) to the greatest extent possible. On each form is a space for the SEQRA lead agency to certify that the proposed activity is consistent with the LWRP. The form specifically notes that if this certification cannot be made, the proposed activity shall not be undertaken.

Approximately four to six projects are reviewed for local consistency each year. These are typically for projects not directly on the Town's waterfront, but along the busy Route 9 corridor. Because the LWRP boundary ranges from 700 feet to 7,000 feet inland from the water's edge, a question came up during the monitoring process as to whether there was a way the Town can exempt some specific minor actions from the requirements of the LWRP Consistency Law. The Department is aware of other community's who have incorporated such provisions into their local Consistency Law, and has provided the Town with these examples so that they can consider amending their law.

Need for LWRP Amendment

The Town should consider amending its LWRP to incorporate the planning efforts and local laws adopted as a result of preparing its Master Plan adopted in 2007, as well as the great progress made in gaining public access to its Hudson River and creek waterfronts. Although the Waterfront Development District 1 and the Waterfront Development District 2 zoning districts created to implement the LWRP remain in place, future zoning changes are likely given the Dutton redevelopment project. Updating and amending the LWRP is an eligible activity in the Department's current EPF solicitation, and the Town is encouraged to apply.

**DOS Environmental Protection Fund Grants
Awarded to the Town of Poughkeepsie**

Year	Amount of Grant	Project Description	Status
1997	\$175,000	New Public Access at Marist College	Completed
2003	\$100,000	Construction of Fishing and Mooring Pier at Longview Park at Marist College	Completed
2004	\$ 75,000	Design and Installation of Longview Park Amenities	Expired. Town to complete final paperwork.
2007	\$18,200	Longview Park Interpretive Signage	Underway