

Village and Town of Morristown LWRP Monitoring Report

June 2017

Community Background:

The Village and Town of Morristown are located in Northern New York on the St. Lawrence River in southwestern St. Lawrence County. The village is located within the town on the town's western border, with the St. Lawrence River forming the western border of both the village and the town for a total of 9 ½ miles of shoreline. The town is bordered to the north by the Town of Oswegatchie, to the east by the Town of Macomb, and to the south by the Town of Hammond. According to the 2010 U.S. census, the village is .98 square miles in size (land area) with 395 residents and the town is 45.2 square miles in size (land area) with 1,974 residents. The waters of the St. Lawrence River adjacent to the village and town form the downstream, northern edge of the region known as the Thousand Islands.

Historically, the Village and Town's economic base was founded on shipping that took advantage of the strategic location of sheltered Morristown Bay, the only protected small harbor on the U.S. side of the St. Lawrence River between Chippewa Bay in the Town of Hammond and the Port of Ogdensburg, a distance of 25 miles. The harbor supported naval stores in the early 1800s to provide munitions for the War of 1812. Manufacture of Dr. Morris' Indian Root Pills was located in Morristown in the mid- and late-1800's. Cheese, lumber, fire extinguishers, graphite, boat engines, and skiffs were also manufactured in Morristown in the 1800's and 1900's. While these industries and the accompanying rail and ferry service supported a large hotel in prior centuries, all of the manufacturing operations had closed by the second half of the 20th century along with the hotel.

Today viable agricultural operations exist in the town, while a restaurant, marina, boating support services, lumberyard and fuel supply facilities remain in the village. Recreational activities are the dominant activity in Morristown Bay in the village, and in Jacques Cartier State Park in the town. There are a number of historic buildings in the village, with the Gateway Museum and the Stone Windmill highlighted as key attractions. The village and town include both year-round and seasonal residences



Chapman Park in Morristown

which swell the population in the summer months. The village retains a viable downtown commercial district and has undertaken waterfront renewal efforts focused on recreation and tourism to assure long-term commercial stability. Improvements at Bayside Park support fishing and power boating, while Chapman Park has been upgraded by installing tennis courts, a gazebo, and improvements to the Stone Windmill.

Collaborations with Department of State:



Bayside Park and Boat Launch on the St. Lawrence River - Morristown



Since completion and adoption of its Local Waterfront Revitalization Program (LWRP) in 1991, the village and town have worked to advance implementation of the Program. The village applied to the Department of State (DOS) Environmental Protection Fund Local Waterfront Revitalization Program (EPF LWRP) for grant funding in 1997 and 2004 to support Bayside Park waterfront improvements and renovation of the Gateway Museum. (See chart on Page 6: Grants Awarded - Title 11 Environmental Protection Fund Local Waterfront Revitalization Program).

The Village has also utilized funding from other state agencies for village infrastructure needs.

Gateway Museum - Morristown

LWRP Monitoring Process:

The goal of the monitoring process is for the Department of State (DOS) to assess a community's consistency with its approved LWRP, and to understand local implementation activities and decision-making procedures related to the LWRP. Additionally, this process provides a forum for a community to highlight successes and request technical and financial assistance for program implementation.

DOS began the monitoring process with a letter to the Mayor and Supervisor asking the village and town to participate, briefly describing the monitoring protocol, and including a list of survey questions. DOS followed up with a phone call to the village and town asking if they had any questions about the monitoring process or the survey. DOS also explained that they would like to have a conference call between DOS representatives and key municipal officials to answer the survey questions, followed by a site visit/meeting to review the responses provided in the survey. Following the site visit, DOS would prepare a written assessment of findings to identify areas of improvement, training, or need for LWRP amendments.

The conference call to discuss the Village’s answers to the survey questions was informative and provided much of the details necessary for the DOS to make its assessment. During the call, Cherie Shatraw, Village Mayor, and Chris Coffin, Town Supervisor, described the relevancy of its LWRP and its use.

As a follow-up, DOS staff traveled to Morristown to meet with Village and Town representatives. This meeting focused on the Village and Town’s procedures to review projects in the waterfront area, challenges that the Village and Town face, and future opportunities to collaborate with DOS on waterfront revitalization projects. The Mayor then provided DOS with the opportunity to tour the waterfront area including Bayside Park, the Northumberland Bridge, the proposed road around the south end of Morristown Bay, and Chapman Park in the village. In the town, the tour included viewing of sewer infrastructure issues along River Road/Route 12 and a farm property including house and barn recently donated to the Morristown Gateway Museum.

DOS Findings:

Overview

The Village and Town of Morristown adopted the LWRP in 1991 to guide development within the coastal zone in a way that protects and preserves natural resources and supports development that will best



Northumberland Bridge in disrepair - Inner Bay side. Fill and armoring visible.

utilize the potential of the waterfront. The LWRP recognizes the St. Lawrence River and Morristown Bay as important recreational resources and emphasizes the need to preserve and improve public access and use of the River.

Through implementation of its LWRP, the Village has improved public access to the waterfront at Bayside Park. The village and town have also made great strides in improving local infrastructure including the sewer system, supporting private investment in residential and commercial properties. The village has also improved recreational opportunities through improvements to Chapman Park and investments in the Gateway Museum. Currently, the village is working on building a road around the south end of Morristown Bay to improve vehicular access to the west side of the village and the town.

Several waterfront issues were highlighted during the tour including siltation in Inner Morristown Bay due to constriction of water flow at the Northumberland Bridge, lack of river access for swimming, delays in the



Proposed road around Inner Morristown Bay – facing east.

construction of a proposed road around the south end of Inner Morristown Bay, and problems with sewer infrastructure along River Road/Route 12. The bridge is currently in such disrepair that it is yellow-flagged by NYS Department of Transportation. The road construction was halted due to permitting questions raised by the US Army Corps of Engineers. Once the road is completed, the Village would like to explore the feasibility of removing the Northumberland Bridge and the fill under it that constricted the opening and possibly installing a pedestrian walkway instead. The Village would also like to work with DOS to explore the potential for installing a swimming beach on the east side of Inner Morristown Bay, which is contingent on the road being completed. The town is interested in providing trails and parkland on the farm property recently donated to the Morristown Gateway Museum. Activities such as these on property open to the public would be eligible to apply for funding under the EPF LWRP grant program.



Proposed road around Inner Morristown Bay – facing west.

Although it is twenty-five years old, the Village and Town of Morristown LWRP is still used as a reference document which informs proposed waterfront development and revitalization projects. DOS suggested that the LWRP could be updated to improve the maps and update project and land use information. For example, the LWRP mentions commercial land use as a goal for the west side of Morristown Bay, which has since been determined to be unrealistic, with residential remaining as the dominant land use in this area.

LWRP Implementation

The Village of Morristown’s Land Use Code, enacted in 1975 and updated in 2015, is the primary means of implementation of the LWRP. The Land Use Code consists of Zoning Regulations, Subdivision Regulations, and Building and Sanitary Regulations. The village also adopted a Waterfront Consistency Review Law in 1991 to implement the LWRP. The law included language to require review of projects in the local waterfront area for consistency with the LWRP policies. The Town of Morristown adopted Waterfront Consistency Review Law in 1990, a subdivision law in 2000 and a zoning law in 2006 which was revised in 2012 and 2013.

The LWRP has helped the village and town secure funding for local projects from the Department of State's EPF LWRP grant program, through other State agencies, and through other funding sources.

Bayside Park

The first project that the Village implemented was improvements to Bayside Park on Morristown Outer Bay to enhance the existing village-owned public marina, docking facility and boat launch ramp. Supported by a 1997 DOS EPF LWRP grant, improvements included a bathhouse for the public marina, widening of the boat launch, and paving of an area large enough to accommodate boat trailers at Bayside Park. The facility is heavily used by transient boaters on the St. Lawrence River. The construction of the bathhouse significantly enhances the utility and attractiveness of this important regional boating harbor.



Bayside Park Bathhouse

Morristown Gateway Museum Renovation Project

Supported by a 2004 DOS EPF LWRP grant, the village partnered with the Morristown Gateway Museum to renovate and install improvements in the old Town Hall located on Main Street. While not originally identified as a project in the LWRP, the development of a museum to highlight local history supports the objectives of the LWRP to preserve, protect and promote the numerous historic buildings and structures in the village and town. The museum also draws visitors and residents downtown through improved visual and physical linkages between Morristown Bay, Bayside Park, and the Main Street business district.

Stone Windmill Restoration

The 1825 Old Stone Windmill located in Chapman Park was identified in the LWRP as an important structure to target for restoration. While major renovations have not been attempted due to high cost, the village has done some repairs such as restoring the "sails" to improve the historic visual quality of the windmill. This project remains a priority for the LWRP.

Bicycle/Jogging Path

This project was identified in the LWRP, however the village and town have since determined that it is not feasible to connect the village and the Jacques Cartier State Park located in the town with a paved path due to geology and land use constraints.

New Project: Inner Morristown Bay Road

The village has proposed installing a road around the south end of Inner Morristown Bay to improve vehicular access to the west side of the village and the town. This land area where this road is proposed

is wide enough that it could include a bicycle/jogging path in the future. This project is awaiting permitting from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

New Project: Swimming Area

The east side of Morristown Outer Bay was originally proposed as a potential swimming area. However, this area is not feasible due to high boat traffic and wave action. The village proposes creating a new public beach and swimming area on the west side of Inner Morristown Bay that would be accessed by the proposed road. Removal of the Northumberland Street Bridge would facilitate better water flow and reduce siltation, providing beneficial conditions for a swimming area. This project would be highly beneficial project for the communities since the only other swimming area available is at Jacques Cartier State Park which is frequently closed due to water quality issues caused by geese. DOS staff recommended that development of a swimming area be done in conjunction with the Inner Morristown Bay Sedimentation/Eutrophication Control Study mentioned in the LWRP (see below).

Status of Studies Suggested in Section V of the LWRP

1. Comprehensive Traffic and Parking Study – The village has increased parking facilities since the LWRP was written so there is not currently a need for a study.
2. Harbor Management Plan – The village does not have the capacity to prepare and implement a harbor management plan at this time.
3. Inner Morristown Bay Sedimentation/Eutrophication Control Study – This study should be undertaken to examine the surface runoff quality entering Inner Bay from Louce Creek and to look at the potential beneficial impacts of removal of the Northumberland Street Bridge to ensure viable water quality for the proposed Inner Morristown Bay swimming area.
4. Main Street Façade/Streetscape Improvements Study – While this study could be considered for the future, the proposed Inner Morristown Bay Road, Swimming Area, and the Sedimentation/Eutrophication Control Study are currently the highest priorities for the village and town.

LWRP Document Accessibility

Copies of the Village and Town of Morristown LWRP are on file at the Village Office (402 Gouverneur St.) and are accessible during normal business hours. An electronic copy of the LWRP is available on the DOS website: http://www.dos.ny.gov/opd/programs/WFRevitalization/LWRP_status.html

Local Consistency Review

The Town and Village of Morristown adopted the Waterfront Consistency Law in 1990 and 1991, respectively, to implement the LWRP along with their local land use codes. During the site visit DOS staff discussed the benefits of the local Consistency Law, including use of the Law as a tool to review development projects for alignment with the LWRP policies. The law ensures that actions to be undertaken, approved or funded by village and town agencies that are classified as Type I or unlisted under Part 617 of Title 6 of NYCRR will be undertaken in a manner consistent with the policies and purposes of the Village and Town of Morristown LWRP.

There are very few projects each year in the waterfront area that require consistency review. The Planning Board reviews an application for a proposed project in the waterfront area and then makes a recommendations to the Village Board of Trustees or the Town Board for final consistency determination.

The local consistency review law establishes that initial review of proposed actions shall be done in a matter compatible with the requirements of the State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA). LWRP Consistency and SEQRA review shall be done through the Planning Board and, as applicable, the local lead agency if that agency is not the Planning Board. Actions in the waterfront area shall be consistent to the maximum extent practicable with the applicable coastal policies. The Village and Town feel that their local land use codes combined with the Waterfront Consistency Review Law have been effective tools for protecting waterfront resources and ensuring proposed development will advance the Village and Town of Morristown’s waterfront vision.

Grants Awarded			
Title 11 Environmental Protection Fund Local Waterfront Revitalization Program (EPF LWRP)			
Grants to the Village of Morristown			
Year	Amount of Grant	Project Description	Status
1997	\$25,000	Access Improvements - The Village constructed a public marina bathhouse and paving of an area large enough to accommodate boat trailers at Bayside Park. The Village owns and operates a public marina/docking facility and boat launch ramp in the center of the Village. The facility is heavily used by transient boaters on the St. Lawrence River. The construction of the bathhouse for transient boaters significantly enhances the utility and attractiveness of this important regional boating harbor.	Closed
2004	\$50,000	Morristown Gateway Museum Renovation Project - The Village, in coordination with the Morristown Gateway Museum, renovated the abandoned old Town Hall on Main Street to serve as a waterfront museum and to improve visual and physical linkages between Morristown Bay, Bayside Park, and the Main Street business district.	Closed