

# The Batten Kill Watershed Alliance



*Coordinating, educating, and promoting stewardship for the benefit of the Batten Kill Watershed in New York and Vermont.*

## BKWA Annual Meeting to Feature Special Presentation

The Batten Kill Watershed Alliance of NY and VT will hold its Annual Meeting Tuesday, August 7th, 2007 at 7pm at the Georgi Museum in Shushan, NY. We will hold Board member elections and present brief project reports. Refreshments will be served. The main event for the evening will be a presentation by Shannon Pytlik of the Vermont Water Quality Division about the Stream Corridor Management Plan for the Batten Kill and its tributaries.

This plan is based on the study of fluvial geomorphology in the Batten Kill watershed completed by Dr. John Field. He found many areas in which streams have been channelized and bermed, resulting in instability, erosion, and other problems. He has identified a list of 49 such sites at which restoration of river dynamics, removal of berms, provision of access to the flood plain, or planting of buffer zones are needed.

The Stream Corridor Management Plan will be building on Dr. Field's analysis to improve river dynamics which will improve conditions for fish and wildlife and for people and their structures and property. Ms. Pytlik is also working with BKWA Boardmember Jim Henderson of Bennington County Regional Commission and Shelly Stiles of Bennington County Conservation District to develop the maps in the plan further, to conduct landowner visits for high priority projects and to move the projects towards implementation.

So this presentation is really about the future of the Batten Kill watershed in Vermont, and much of the analysis and policy developed will probably be transferable to New York as well. Please come and hear about these significant initiatives.

### Stream Corridor Management Plan for the Batten Kill

Join us August 7th, at the BKWA Annual Meeting for a presentation by Shannon Pytlik of Vermont Water Quality about the Stream Corridor Management Plan for the Batten Kill and its tributaries.

### Long Range Planning Meetings

In March the Alliance organized two planning meetings for the Batten Kill in New York and Vermont. Representatives of state and federal agencies along with local stakeholders attended. Immediate projects and long term plans were discussed. A comprehensive approach is emerging in both states, with Vermont further along due to the battery of scientific studies carried out from 2000-2005. The comprehensive approach consists of three components: 1) improving stream dynamics through restoration of flood channels and flood plain access, 2) installation of instream and bankside cover and shelter structures as trout habitat, and 3) re-establishing riparian buffer zones by planting trees and bushes. This three pronged approach will restore trout habitat, lessen erosion, and mitigate flood damage. The interaction of the three initiatives can lead to lasting improvements for the Batten Kill fishery, for other wildlife, and for the people who live along the streams in the watershed. You'll find this strategy reflected in the various projects highlighted in this newsletter.



## From the Desk of the Executive Director



Looking downstream from the Rt 64 highway bridge, Shushan, NY. (March & July 07)



As we move through the cycle of the seasons the extremes of our weather never cease to amaze me, and the toughness and resilience of the wild life that survive these extremes without benefit of wood stoves or air conditioning. It seems to me that in order to provide good stewardship of the river we all love, we must apparently demonstrate the same level of durability and persistence. As the reports in this newsletter indicate, we are making tremendous progress towards our goals, but there is so much work yet to be done. There are a number of ways that you can help: volunteering for planting projects, becoming a member, or making an extra contribution. But right now we also could use some new board members to replace two who needed to step down. Heartfelt thanks to Bill Whitney and Bill Bullock for their service. Attending one board meeting a month will help us move forward. Contact me (at ExDir@BattenKillAlliance.org or #802.375.9019) or Greg Cuda (at GregCuda@Yahoo.com or #518.587.1189) if you are interested. Board members Jim Henderson and Al Klein are up for reelection this year. Yet another development concerns myself. As you may or may not know, I am now the Vermont State Representative for the Arlington district. It turns out to have been impossible for me to do enough work for the Alliance during the legislative session January through May. The Board has decided to search for a new executive director, although I will stay in this position as long as needed and continue to work for the Alliance into the future as appropriate. If you or someone you know might be interested in the Executive Director position, contact me or Greg Cuda for more information.

- Cynthia Browning, July 2007

## New York Projects Update

Clearwater Trout Unlimited and the Alliance will continue habitat restoration and improvement of river dynamics on the Foster Farm in Shushan, upstream of the Highway 64 & Railroad bridges. The project here is to install cover and shelter structures that will restore habitat and function to prevent the river from cutting into the field. In the future, it may be possible to get better access to old flood channels in state land across the river, with state permission. The primary partner in this project is Carl Schwartz of the US Fish & Wildlife Service, the River Guru. There may be installation of a “W” structure upstream of the railroad bridge that was worked on over the winter to prevent scouring and erosion and keep the current properly directed

under the bridges.

Board members Greg Cuda and Charlie Wilson worked together to obtain an “Aid to Localities” grant of \$5,000 from New York State Senator Betty Little to support this project. TU and Alliance Board member Greg Cuda has also applied for a New York State Wildlife Grant for additional habitat work, but no decision on it has come through yet.

In other initiatives, Emily Zollweg, NY DEC biologist, has begun an extensive habitat survey along reaches in the NY Batten Kill to develop the database needed for future projects. Trout Unlimited and Washington County Soil, Water, & Conservation District continue to work on White Creek in Salem.



The reconstructed RR bridge in Shushan NY.



Foster Farm will be the site of ongoing cover and shelter structure installations by the Clearwater Chapter of TU.

# Vermont Projects Update

In Vermont the Alliance and its partners will continue the installation of cover and shelter structures at the downstream section of the Twin Rivers project, reaching the Green River. We have accumulated most of the rootwads that we need, but we will need more for future projects. We will be designing structures for the river at the upper end of Dr. Lesko's property next, extending the habitat restoration some distance further upstream towards Benedict Crossing. VT fisheries biologist Ken Cox's goal is improving sections of stream that are as lengthy as possible, in order to avoid a "spotty effect", in which improved habitat would attract fish from unimproved sections, but not necessarily lead to an increase in the overall population. Following the completion of the TRF project, we may move next to other long stretches of riverfront upstream, for instance, above Benedict Crossing or above West Mountain Bridge.

As mentioned on page 1, VT ANR is developing a stream corridor management plan for the Batten Kill and its tributaries based on the fluvial geomorphology study prepared by Dr. John Field. Field's study includes a list of 49 prioritized 'problem' sites (in need of some form of improvement) along the Batten Kill and its key tributaries, and the #1 site is the confluence of the Roaring Branch and the Batten Kill in Arlington where the branch has been bermed, resulting in mass failure of a giant eroding bank, leading to excessive sediment deposition in the river. (See photos below.) The Alliance is working with ANR and the landowners to do a study of how to remove some of the berming closest to the confluence to restore flood plain access and lessen erosion and damage.

In the third element of our three pronged attack, the Southwestern VT Chapter of TU, in conjunction with partners including the BKWA, VT WQD, USFS GMNF and the BCCD, is spearheading a riparian buffer zone planting initiative along the Batten Kill and its tributaries. Initial funding has been secured through the VT Clean and Clear Program and the USFS Green Mountain National Forest via the Watershed Alliance. According to BKWA boardmember and SWVTU Chapter Secretary Peter Bellamy, "We've expanded the scope

## *Twin Rivers Farm, Stream Corridor Management and Riparian Buffer Zone Planting*

of our project. We're currently identifying interested land-owners and our goal is to add 250-300 larger trees, ranging from 6-8' all the way up to 15-20' tall, to the riparian zone along the Batten Kill and its tributaries next spring."



Mass bank failure at confluence of Roaring Branch & Batten Kill. (Top)  
Looking upstream toward the Route 7A bridge. (Bottom)

### Town of Arlington Considers Purchase of Batten Kill Acreage

The Town of Arlington may partner with the Vermont Land Trust to purchase a 12 acre parcel on the Batten Kill on 313W across from the Arlington Recreation Park from the Doores Family. This is the field with the big yellow barn. The purpose of the purchase is to provide additional public access to the river, primarily for angling. It might ultimately be possible to install cover and shelter structures. The land may be used for a community garden and the barn would be preserved and used for appropriate public activities.

### Vermont Watershed Planning Process

The State of Vermont has begun the Basin Planning Process for Basin #1, which encompasses the Batten Kill, along with the Hoosic and Walloomsac Rivers. The primary focus of this process right now is to establish water quality goals and watershed councils. Contact VT Watershed Coordinator Josh Gorman by phone at #802.447.6501 or via email at [Joshua.Gorman@state.vt.us](mailto:Joshua.Gorman@state.vt.us) for more information. The next round of public meetings are scheduled for August 7th (Bennington), 9th (Manchester) and 14th (Pownal). See the BKWA website or contact Josh Gorman for details.

## Fluvial Geomorphology:

*"... a science devoted to understanding how the natural setting and human land use in a watershed determine the shape of the river channel. A fluvial geomorphologist seeks to predict what physical changes will occur to a stream channel in response to alterations in watershed conditions; and, in turn, how these changes will impact human infrastructure and fish habitat. A river's adjustment to watershed perturbations may take thousands of years, as is the case throughout much of New England as the result of deglaciation. In other instances, channel modifications may occur in less than a decade, as is frequently the case with direct human activity in a stream channel.... River managers are rapidly recognizing the role fluvial geomorphology can play in assessing channel condition, identifying long-term solutions for channel instability, and evaluating the effectiveness of restoration efforts. A geomorphological approach to river management reduces flood damages while improving salmon and trout habitat."*

- John Field, PhD

## River Stewards

The River Steward program is operating at a low level this summer as we evaluate our data from past years and plan for the future. Jennifer Durham, a River Steward from 2005 and 2006, is engaged in river patrols and the creation of computerized maps of the river and its features for use by BKWA and the public. We continue to collect accounts of unfortunate incidents on the river, including a 10 by 20 foot raft full of drunken individuals in NY, at some points being dragged across the shallow riffles. The Alliance may explore ways to develop better rules and policies for the use of the river that might be practical and enforceable.

## Help Wanted

Non-profit environmental organization is searching for an Executive Director. Must be passionate about the Batten Kill! Contact Cynthia Browning at [ExDir@BattenKillAlliance.org](mailto:ExDir@BattenKillAlliance.org) or at #802.375.9019 for details.

## Annual Meeting - August 7th, 2007

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## Invasive Species Alert! Didymo

*Didymosphenia geminata* - a.k.a. 'didymo' or by its much less attractive nickname - 'rock snot'. This invasive algae was identified in the CT and White Rivers in VT in June 2007. To find out more about didymo and what you can do to help prevent its spread, see the BKWA website.



Website: <http://www.BattenKillAlliance.org>

Email: [ExDir@BattenKillAlliance.org](mailto:ExDir@BattenKillAlliance.org)

## Batten Kill BBQ

Come support BKWA partner, the SWVTTU Chapter, Sat. Aug. 18, 11:30-2:30pm, at the Arlington Rec. Park for an all-you-can-eat cook-out to benefit SWVTTU river restoration projects, such as their riparian buffer zone planting on the Batten Kill. Raffle prizes, fly casting contests and demonstrations, great food, and more! See the SWVTTU.org website for details.

*Eat a dog! Plant a tree! Save a trout!*

## Batten Kill Watershed Alliance

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