

Moodna Creek

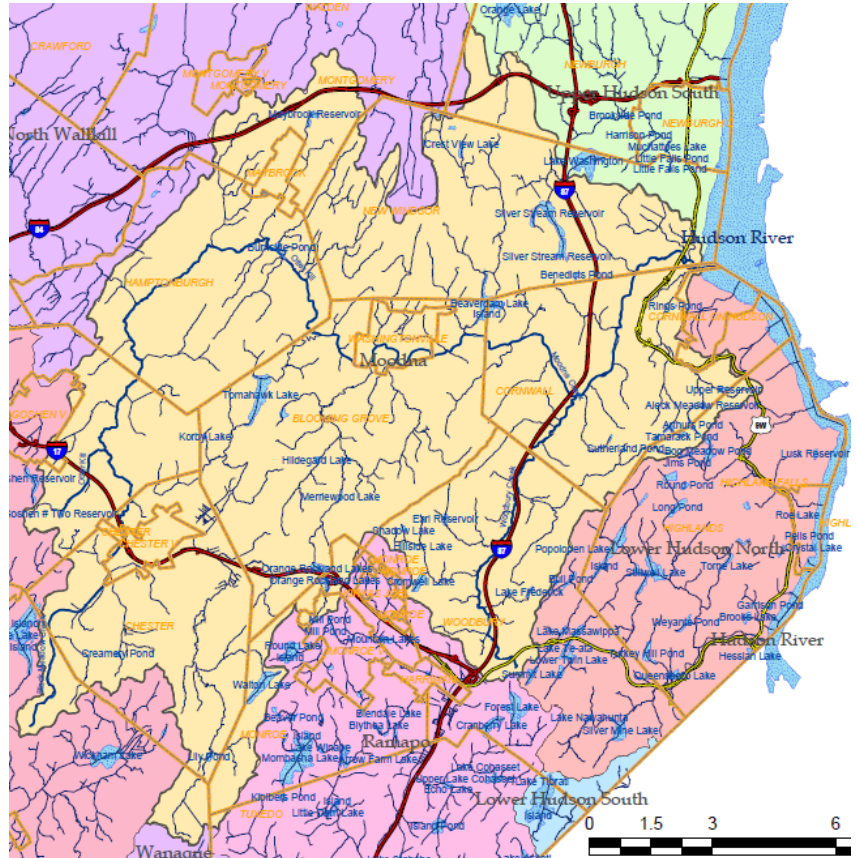
A Hudson River Tributary

Background

With a watershed that's about 180 square miles, or about 1/5 of the land area in Orange County, New York, the Moodna Creek is a tributary that joins the Hudson River in Cornwall. Flanked by the Ramapo River basin towards the south and southeast, the Wallkill River to the west and southwest, and the Quassaick Creek basin on the northern boundary, the Moodna is the only major basin in Orange County that's entirely within the county.

The Moodna Creek Watershed is home to a variety of important habitats, recreational and scenic resources, and a rich history dating from Native American and then Colonial

days. A large tidal marsh at the Moodna's mouth (which is now largely enclosed by the railroad embankment along the river's western shore) is important habitat and a popular destination for boating, birding and fishing, with two local touring companies helping to draw attention and visitors in recent years. Farther upstream, the Moodna flows along the northern boundary of Schunnemunk Mountain State Park, an important hiking destination, and working with the state's Trees for Tribes program, a series of volunteer streamside planting days have been held to improve riparian habitat there. Other protected lands that are open for hiking include Black Rock Forest, which is home to an important science and education organization, the Black Rock Forest Consortium; Goosepond Mountain State Park in Chester and Blooming Grove; Knox's Headquarters, a state historic site where a trail runs along the Silver Stream tributary down to the Moodna Creek. The Storm King Art Center, one of the leading outdoor sculpture parks in the world; several preserves of the Orange County Land Trust; and the historic hamlet of Sugar Loaf, a popular tourism destination with arts and crafts stores and the Sugar Loaf Performing Arts Center, are some other notable locations in the watershed.



Beginning in 2003, a small group of citizens, with support from the Orange County Water Authority (OCWA) and the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation Hudson River Estuary Program, formed an ad-hoc coalition to raise awareness and develop conservation and restoration plans for the watershed. OCWA received one grant from the Estuary Program in 2005 to develop the Moodna Creek Watershed Conservation and Management Plan and a Watershed Atlas, and several years later, a second grant to develop a formal intermunicipal group to implement the plan.

At a ceremony, the Moodna Creek Watershed Intermunicipal Council was formed on October 22, 2010, on the banks of a major Moodna tributary and trout stream, the Woodbury Creek, at which representatives of OCWA and most towns and villages in the watershed signed an intermunicipal Memorandum of Agreement. The Moodna is one of several Hudson tributaries that currently has an active, formal intermunicipal watershed group of this kind. (The Wappinger Creek in Dutchess County is another one, and there are major intermunicipal initiatives underway in the portions of the Croton River basin that are part of New York City's drinking water supply.) Since the formation of the Council, its quarterly meetings have often featured educational presentations on a range of issues, including management of dams and water releases from ponds and lakes to mitigate flood risks, the state's water withdrawal regulations, biodiversity in the Trout Brook and Woodbury Creek subbasins, and other topics.

Key Issues

Key issues and challenges face the Moodna Creek and its watershed. These include protecting water quality, balancing water withdrawals for drinking water with the importance of protecting enough in-stream flow to sustain healthy ecological systems and recreational values, and addressing planning priorities related to flooding. While flooding was already one of the leading issues discussed by the Council, the storms Irene and Lee in 2011 caused flooding worse than any in recent memory in some areas, resulting in an even greater focus on flood-related questions. In response, OCWA sponsored an educational flood summit in October 2012. Later that month, the storm Sandy caused major wind-related damage in the Moodna and regionally. Sandy's flooding damage along the Hudson River and farther south spurred major new state planning and funding programs to address flood and storm planning in the region, and these are underway now in several communities in the Moodna basin.

As population grows, more water is withdrawn for potable and other uses, and with the changes in climate and precipitation patterns that are already evident and are predicted to grow with climate change, concerns about the availability and abundance of water have gained more attention. Some scientific research and field work suggests that the Moodna basin may be more prone to low-flow conditions in dry weather than other watersheds in the mid-Hudson region, and perhaps also at higher risk for flooding in wet weather. To learn more about these and other issues, the Council sponsored a science workshop in October 2014. To make this information available in the region, the Hudson River Watershed Alliance sponsored videos of many of the talks, many of which

can be found on their [website](#). Among many other talks, one key initiative of the Council was featured in the agenda: model code language for protecting stream buffers through local regulations. This is a proposed local law municipalities in New York can adopt, with adaptations as desired, to protect land near streams for water quality, habitat and other local and regional goals.

In addition to ones cited above, there are a growing number of studies and resources relevant for understanding watershed-related issues in the Moodna Creek basin, and new work is underway on several fronts. The [Orange County Water Authority website](#) about the Moodna basin, and OCWA's library of [stream biomonitoring data](#) collected since 2004, are starting points, and please check the Hudson River Watershed Alliance's website for updates about the Moodna and other watersheds in the region.

Contact:

Kelly Dobbins, Council Secretary
c/o Orange County Water Authority
99 Main St.
Goshen, NY 10924
Tel: 845-615-3847
kdobbins@orangecountygov.com



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