

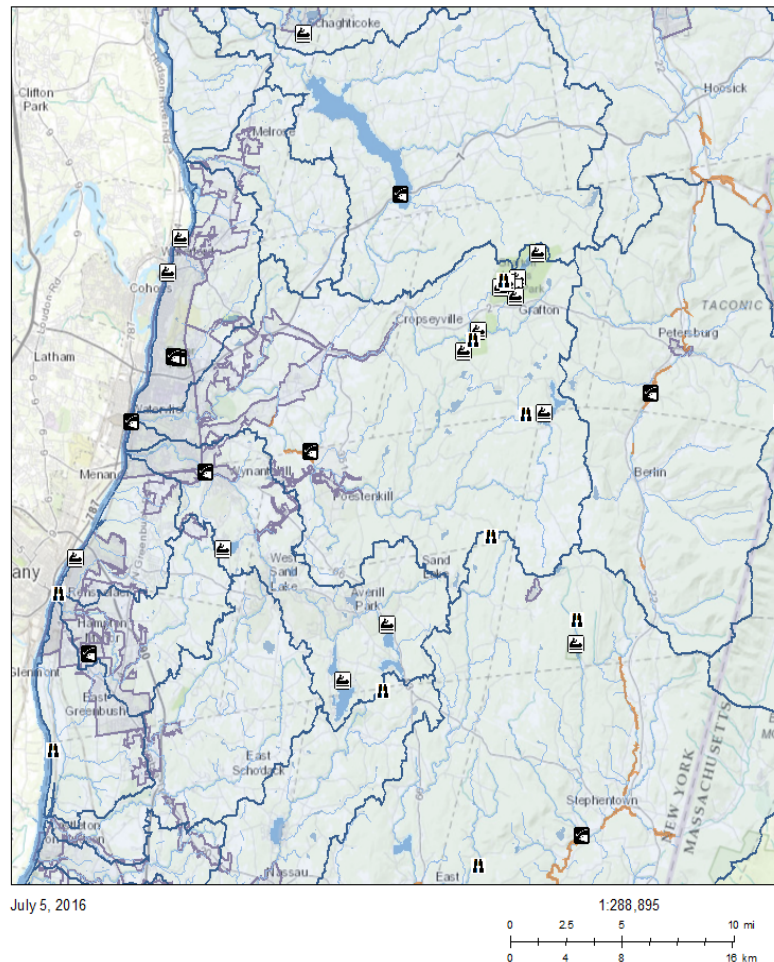
Wynants Kill

A Hudson River Tributary

Geography

The Wynants Kill is a 14-mile tributary of the Hudson River with a drainage basin of 29.1 square miles in Rensselaer County.ⁱ With its headwaters at Crooked Lake at 828 feet above sea level, the stream then flows into Glass Lake, and includes discharges from Crystal Lake in Averill Park and later discharges from three Burden Lakes and from Reichards and Snyders Lakes.ⁱⁱ Its confluence with the Hudson River is located in South Troy. Much of the watershed's surface is made up of sand and gravel deposited by the last retreating glacier, and is now the source of the region's numerous gravel mines.ⁱⁱⁱ

Rensselaer County Watersheds



Sources: Esri, HERE, DeLorme, Intermap, increment P. Corp., GEBCO, USGS, FAO, NPS, NRCAN, Geobase, IGN, Kadaster NL, Ordnance Survey, Esri Japan, METI, Esri China (Hong Kong), Swisstopo, Mapbox India, © OpenStreetMap contributors, and the GIS User Community

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History

The development of the Wynants Kill Watershed began in 1646 with the lease by a man named Thomas Chambers of a farm on the Hudson River between the Wynants Kill and the stream just to the north, the Poesten Kill.^{iv}

The first mill was built on the Wynants Kill in 1656. The man who built the mill was killed, and his widow married Wynant Van Der Poel, for whom the stream is named.^v While initially the stream powered flour mills and timber production, it later provided water power for the development of other manufacturers. In 1851, the Wynants Kill

powered the largest waterwheel in the world, 60 feet in diameter, built by the Burden Iron Company.^{vi} The Wynants Kill was the most important stream for industrial power in Rensselaer County in the late 1800s.^{vii}

A Dam Removal Success Story

In 2016, a metal dam in South Troy on the Wynants Kill near its confluence with the Hudson River was removed through a partnership between the City of Troy, Riverkeeper and the Hudson River Estuary Program. Riverkeeper Captain John Lipscomb first noticed the dam several years ago while investigating a nearby discharge into the stream on a routine patrol of the river. By removing this nearly century-old barrier, over a quarter mile of habitat was reconnected to the Hudson River, restoring spawning habitat for river herring and improving habitat for many other species including the American eel.



Alewives in the Wynants Kill, 2016. (Credit: Erica Capuana/NYS DEC)

Less than five days after the dam removal, alewives were sighted swimming and spawning upstream of the removed barrier in the Wynants Kill, reclaiming this stream as spawning habitat for the first time in 85 years. Alewives are an anadromous species of river herring, which means they migrate from the sea to spawn in the Hudson River and tributaries like the Wynants Kill. River herring populations, along with other key Hudson River fish, have been on the decline for the last fifty years, in part due to the loss of their spawning habitat in our tributaries. Hudson River streams and tributaries serve an important ecological function as the feeding, nursing and spawning grounds for fish and other aquatic organisms. Dams, culverts and other artificial barriers – many of which have become obsolete or dysfunctional since their construction in the last century – often impede the ability of aquatic creatures to move freely throughout a stream. The return of river herring populations in the Wynants Kill represents an important step towards restoring critical Hudson River fisheries and habitat. This success has larger implications not only for fishing in the Hudson River, but also for recreation, tourism and water quality throughout the entire watershed.

Resources:

While there is currently no formal watershed group for the Wynants Kill, there are various resources for more information:

- **Rensselaer Land Trust interactive watershed map:**
<http://www.renstrust.org/rensselaer-county-watersheds/113-renssco-watersheds-map>
- **NYS DEC water quality:**
http://www.dec.ny.gov/docs/water_pdf/wilhudswynantskill.pdf
- **NYS DEC Public Fishing Rights Maps:**
http://www.dec.ny.gov/docs/fish_marine_pdf/pfrwynantsk.pdf



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ⁱ Lilly, Robert J., Diane DeBlois, and Robert Dalton Harris. *The Wynants Kill: A Small Stream, but Mighty*. West Sand Lake, NY: AGatherin', 2005. Print.

ⁱⁱ Ibid.

ⁱⁱⁱ *Rensselaer Land Trust*. N.p., n.d. Web. 15 June 2016. <<http://www.renstrust.org/rensselaer-county-watersheds>>.

^{iv} Lilly, p. 4

^v Lilly, p. 1.

^{vi} Ibid.

^{vii} *Rensselaer Land Trust*.