



Hudson River Watershed Alliance

2021 ANNUAL REPORT

SUPPORT WATERSHED GROUPS

This year, the Alliance held **25 educational programs** with **1,038 people** participating from throughout the Hudson River watershed, which extends from the Adirondacks to New York City. Alliance staff gave nine presentations at events, reaching an additional **204 people**. Through these programs and direct technical assistance, we supported **26 watershed groups** focused on tributary streams and watersheds throughout the region.

Our Annual Watershed Conference focused on watershed planning, convening over **190 participants** to discuss strategies to increase groups' efficiency and effectiveness by aligning their work with a plan. We continued the conversation at our Watershed Roundtable, a core Alliance program that convenes watershed groups from across the region twice a year to share strategies and improve collaboration.

Our monthly breakfast webinars have covered **timely topics**, from climate science and stormwater, equity in planning, water quality monitoring, land return to the Stockbridge-Munsee Community, and more. We held a science storytelling workshop and shared student research with communities, in partnership with Siena College.



The Alliance's 2021 WaveMaker awardees (clockwise from top left): Alene Onion, Outdoor Promise, Bronx River Alliance, and Stormwater Coalition of Albany County.



2021 breakfast webinar speakers.

IMPROVE INTER-MUNICIPAL COORDINATION

We held **Community Resilience Building Workshops** for the Towns of Esopus, Lloyd, and Hyde Park, and the City of Poughkeepsie, with The Nature Conservancy and Cornell Cooperative Extensions from Dutchess and Ulster Counties. These workshops brought together municipal officials to discuss climate change and flooding, including actions to improve resilience. Since 2017, we have brought these workshops to **34 municipalities** along the Hudson River, including all seven that draw drinking water from the Hudson.

COMMUNICATE AS A COLLECTIVE VOICE

We are building a **strong network** for watershed groups. We served as a liaison between state and local projects, including the Hudson River Estuary Program's Action Agenda and New York State's Climate Action Council initiatives on adaptation and resilience. Our *Work on Watersheds* report showcased watershed group successes. Our monthly newsletter shared events, opportunities, and case studies to over 2,480 people. In these ways, we are amplifying our partners' voices across the watershed.

The Hudson River Watershed Alliance unites and empowers communities to protect their local water resources.

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

The Hudson River Watershed Alliance is stepping up to meet big challenges in the Hudson River watershed. We have secured funding to deliver targeted programs in 2022 and continue to expand capacity for the future.

Needs Assessment and Strategic Plan

The Alliance's work is guided by the needs of the Hudson River watershed and our watershed group partners. Between 2019 and 2021, we conducted 32 interviews of people from 28 different watershed groups, and held four focus group meetings with 26 regional partners as part of our watershed needs assessment project. Each conversation was recorded and analyzed to understand accomplishments, strengths, challenges, barriers, and needs across the region. This needs assessment is feeding the Alliance's strategic planning process, helping us chart a path forward that best supports our local partners.



Annual Watershed Conference session on Environmental Justice, with youth from throughout the Hudson River watershed.

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Justice

Advancing diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice (DEIJ) is critical to achieving our goals of healthy watersheds. We are working to incorporate DEIJ principles into each aspect of our work, recognizing that this is a slow, intentional process. The Alliance had an internal DEIJ visioning session in 2020. In 2022, we will hold two workshops open to partners, providing support to bring together watershed groups, agencies, and organizations to discuss DEIJ together. These sessions will be a forum to identify where these issues show up in watershed work, along with short-term next steps. By listening to local leaders from diverse backgrounds, we will better understand how to mutually support partners to improve our shared waters and strengthen our communities.

Watershed Planning

Building on lessons learned from our needs assessment project and the Annual Watershed Conference, we are starting a new program to directly support watershed groups with the first step of watershed planning. In partnership with NEIWPCC and the Hudson River Estuary Program, Alliance staff will work with two watershed groups to create watershed characterizations. These will compile information into a framework that can be used as the foundation for a more technical watershed plan, based on New York State's watershed planning guide. The characterizations will be templates for other urban and rural watersheds to use in the future.



Walkkill River flooding in New Paltz after Hurricane Ida on September 2, 2021.

Climate Change

Climate change is bringing more unpredictable and extreme weather to the Hudson River watershed. The Hudson River Watershed Alliance will partner with the Consensus Building Institute and New York Sea Grant to support the Flood Resilience Network, a community of Hudson River municipalities working together to address current and future flood risks. We are starting a new webinar series on state resources for implementing best management practices, with NEIWPCC and the Hudson River Estuary Program. This will connect watershed groups and municipalities with funding, technical assistance, and resources to implement projects, along with linking to opportunities available through NYS Climate Smart Communities.