



Hudson River Watershed Alliance

2022 ANNUAL REPORT

SHARING SCIENCE AND STRATEGIES

This year, the Alliance held **22 educational programs**, both virtual and in-person, engaging over **900 people** from throughout the Hudson River watershed, which extends from the Adirondacks to New York City.

Our Annual Watershed Conference focused on **climate change** impacts to water, convening over **200 participants** across three days. After a virtual session to share science and key context, we held two in-person sessions to discuss local case studies, strategies, and how to put the information into practice.

A climate change impact especially visible this summer: Harmful Algal Blooms. In August, we supported the Wallkill River Watershed Alliance to document a bloom over 14 miles in both the Wallkill River and Rondout Creek. We publicized the health hazards via social media posts that went viral, reaching over **150,000 people**.

Our monthly breakfast webinars have covered a variety of timely topics. This fall, we focused on funding opportunities and implementation projects, including **floodplain restoration**, **green infrastructure**, and **dam removal**.

CONNECTING LOCAL LEADERS

In partnership with Pace University Land Use Law Center, we held a three-day land use training with **30 local leaders** from the Rondout Creek and Esopus Creek watersheds.

The Alliance also supports the Hudson River Flood Resilience Network, along with New York Sea Grant and the Consensus Building Institute. This Network convenes municipal leaders from riverfront communities to work together on current and future flood risks, with **14 municipalities** participating in webinars, networking sessions, and field trips this year.



Participants at the Annual Watershed Conference at the Hudson River Maritime Museum in Kingston discussed collaborating to support flood resilience.



The Alliance amplified warnings about a Harmful Algal Bloom on the Wallkill River, shown here in New Paltz at the community gardens.

PLANNING AHEAD

Through programs and direct technical assistance, we supported **14 watershed groups** focused on rivers and streams throughout the region. We are working on watershed planning with the Sparkill Creek Watershed Alliance and the Roe Jan Watershed Community, and helping several other watershed groups re-organize and build capacity.

The Alliance has also been building our own capacity, with a new strategic plan, new staff, and more to increase our efficiency and bring even more impactful programs to our community.

The Hudson River Watershed Alliance unites and empowers communities to protect our shared waters.

A growing organization, the Hudson River Watershed Alliance is responding to our communities and stepping up to meet big challenges.

Needs Assessment & Strategic Plan

The Alliance published our *Watershed Needs Assessment* in 2022. Over three years, we conducted 32 interviews with 28 different watershed groups and held four focus group meetings with 26 regional partners. Each conversation was recorded and analyzed to understand accomplishments, strengths, challenges, barriers, and needs across the region. We incorporated this information directly into our new 2022 Strategic Plan, identifying roles that the Alliance can play to better support our local watershed partners. Our strategic planning process also included scenario planning to help us weather uncertainty.

Watershed Planning

The Alliance began a new program in 2022 to directly support watershed groups with the first step of watershed planning. In partnership with NEIWPCC and the Hudson River Estuary Program, we are developing watershed characterizations with advisory committees from the Punch Brook-Roeliff Jansen Kill watershed and the Sparkill Creek watershed. A characterization compiles information into a framework that can be used as the foundation for a watershed plan. The Alliance will share lessons learned from this process and provide templates for other watersheds to use in the future.



Photos from Hudson River Watershed Alliance events, including (clockwise from top left): Land Use Leadership Alliance training in Rosendale, Newburgh Clean Water Project receiving a Watershed WaveMaker award at our Toast to the Tribs Awards Benefit in Marlboro, panel on Hudson River waterfronts with the Future of Small Cities Institute at FOCUS Lab in Troy, and Hudson River Flood Resilience Network meeting in Hudson.

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, & Justice

Advancing diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice (DEIJ) is critical to achieving our goals of healthy watersheds. The Alliance held an internal DEIJ session in 2020, and we are incorporating these principles into each aspect of our work, recognizing that this is a slow, intentional process. In 2022, we engaged speakers to present on a new toolkit on centering equity in climate adaptation, Groundwork Hudson Valley's work to improve climate resilience in neighborhoods impacted by racially discriminatory policies, funding available through Environmental Justice grants, and Friends of Oakdale Lake's new watershed assessment to improve a public bathing beach in Hudson.

Climate Change

Climate change is bringing more unpredictable and extreme weather to the Hudson River watershed. The Annual Watershed Conference highlighted impacts to our waters and people, along with strategies that communities are already implementing to improve resilience. The Alliance is also working with the Hudson River Flood Resilience Network on a strategic roadmap to identify opportunities and needs to set the direction for the next stage of collaboration. The Alliance brought in River Network, a national capacity-building organization, to guide us through this process and share lessons learned from similar initiatives from across the country.