



Hudson River Watershed Alliance

Watershed Characterization: Request for Applications for Technical Assistance

Project Summary

For more details and definitions, please refer to the sections below.

Opportunity: The Hudson River Watershed Alliance is soliciting applications to provide technical assistance to develop watershed characterizations, based on the process outlined in the NYS Department of State and Department of Environmental Conservation *Guidebook on Watershed Plans*. The Hudson River Watershed Alliance will work with advisory committees from two watersheds within the Hudson River estuary watershed to develop watershed characterizations in 2022 and 2023, which will serve as templates in the future.

This is an application for technical assistance from the Hudson River Watershed Alliance. No funding or match is required from participants. Applicants and advisory committee members will commit their time to support the watershed characterization process.

Roles: The Hudson River Watershed Alliance will facilitate the advisory committee meetings, write the two watershed characterization reports, and manage the overall process. The applicant will identify and confirm advisory committee members. The advisory committee will assist with gathering data to inform the watershed characterization and community engagement to support an inclusive process. Project deliverables include a final watershed characterization report for each watershed, including narrative and maps, along with a final presentation to the participating communities.

Eligibility: Eligible watersheds must: 1) be located within the Hudson River estuary watershed, 2) be HUC 12 size or smaller (based on US Geological Survey delineation), and 3) include at least two local municipalities, in addition to the county or counties. Applicants may be watershed groups, municipalities, or other entities, and must demonstrate local stakeholder support for this project.

Deadline: Fill out the application form by Wednesday, June 15 at 5 pm.

For More Information: See the program website [here](#). Hudson River Watershed Alliance will hold an informational webinar on this program on May 19 from 1-2 pm. You can register for the webinar [here](#). The webinar will be recorded and posted on the program website for reference.

This program is supported by funding from the Hudson River Estuary Program, New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, with support from the New York State Environmental Protection Fund, in cooperation with NEIWPC.



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Watershed Characterization Background

A watershed plan compiles information for a particular watershed, defines targets, and sets priorities for next steps to achieve specific goals. Watershed planning is a collaborative process that requires buy-in and expertise from a variety of stakeholders. The NYS Department of State (DOS) and Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC)'s [Guidebook on Watershed Plans](#) provides a framework for watershed planning in New York State.

Developing a watershed characterization report is the first step in watershed planning. This process includes organizing a watershed advisory committee, delineating the focus watershed, gathering existing data, and organizing and summarizing the information into a written watershed characterization report. A watershed characterization includes the watershed's geographic setting, a summary of physical conditions, maps, a review of existing data, land use and land cover analysis, regulatory status of features within the watershed, and appendices with technical details.

According to the *Guidebook on Watershed Plans*, "This [characterization] report will provide a context for the planning effort, and can be used to educate partners and the community on watershed conditions and generate local support. The watershed characterization report will provide you with a description of the watershed, a summary of baseline watershed conditions, and provide a sense of the key problems in the watershed."

Watershed characterizations and plans are included in the Climate Smart Communities certification program for municipalities. In [PE7 Action: Watershed Plan for Water Quality](#), municipalities can receive two points to: "Develop or update a watershed characterization for one or more watersheds covering a minimum of 15% of the municipal geographic area." Additional points are available for a watershed plan, which would refine the characterization and develop specific management recommendations and site-specific projects/plans to address specific water quality goals.

New York State's [Drinking Water Source Protection Program \(DWSP2\)](#) provides a framework for watershed characterization specifically for sources of drinking water. This process includes creating a watershed assessment, which is similar to a watershed characterization.

This work completes progress toward measurable targets identified in the [Hudson River Estuary Action Agenda 2021-2025](#) (A Thriving and Resilient Watershed, Benefit: Healthy Tributaries): "By 2025, 10 watersheds have one or more of the following: a watershed-based assessment, characterization, intermunicipal cooperative agreement, management plan, Drinking Water Source Protection Program plan, stream habitat study, or flood risk and mitigation studies (e.g., Resilient NY flood studies). By 2030, that number is doubled."

The Hudson River Watershed Alliance is providing this technical assistance through funding from the Hudson River Estuary Program, New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, with support from the New York State Environmental Protection Fund, in cooperation with NEIWPC.

Opportunity for Technical Assistance

The Hudson River Watershed Alliance is soliciting applications from watershed representatives to provide technical assistance to develop watershed characterizations in 2022 and 2023.

The Hudson River Watershed Alliance will work with advisory committees from two watersheds within the Hudson River estuary watershed to develop watershed characterizations, which will serve as templates in the future. These will compile existing information into a framework that can be used as the foundation for a more technical watershed plan, based on the process outlined in the NYS DOS and DEC [Guidebook on Watershed Plans](#). We will select one urban watershed and one rural watershed to participate in this program.

This is an application for technical assistance from the Hudson River Watershed Alliance. No funding or match is required from participants. Applicants and advisory committee members will commit their time to support the watershed characterization process.

The Hudson River Watershed Alliance's goals for this program include creating two watershed characterizations within the Hudson River watershed, developing templates for an urban watershed and a rural watershed, and piloting this watershed characterization process. The Hudson River Watershed Alliance will share lessons learned and the watershed characterization templates for future planning.

Process and Roles

The applicant will be responsible for identifying and confirming advisory committee members. During the application process, the applicant will identify members of the local advisory committee, who will demonstrate commitment to this project by submitting a letter of support. Additional advisory committee members can be added once the watershed characterization process is underway, but applications demonstrating a higher level of commitment from advisory committee members will be scored higher. Advisory committees should include key local stakeholders, and may include representation from watershed groups, elected or appointed municipal officials, municipal staff, county agencies, academic institutions, land trusts, local or regional nonprofits, community groups, businesses, etc.

Once a watershed is selected, the Hudson River Watershed Alliance will hold a kick-off meeting with the applicant and confirmed advisory committee members to describe the project in more detail, and to establish the project advisory committee. The advisory committee will meet eight times between Fall 2022 and December 2023 to advise on the watershed characterization and process. The advisory committee will assist with gathering data to inform the watershed characterization, community engagement, identifying any additional stakeholders to participate in the advisory committee, and supporting an inclusive process.

The Hudson River Watershed Alliance will facilitate the advisory committee meetings, write the watershed characterization report, and manage the overall process. Project deliverables include a

final watershed characterization report, including narrative and maps, along with a final presentation to the communities.

NYS DEC Hudson River Estuary Program staff will advise on the project and participate in the planning process.

Eligibility

For this technical assistance opportunity, watersheds must be located within the Hudson River estuary watershed, defined as the Hudson River Estuary Program's program area. [This PDF map](#) and [this web map](#) both show the extent of the eligible area.

Watersheds must be HUC 12 size or smaller. The US Geological Survey uses Hydrologic Unit Codes (HUCs) to map and identify specific watersheds at a variety of scales. While HUC 12 watershed sizes vary depending on the specific watershed and waterbody, they are generally about 36 square miles in area. HUC 12 watershed delineations within the Hudson River estuary watershed can be found using the [Hudson Valley Natural Resource Mapper](#). Under Stream and Watershed Layers, select Watersheds (HUC12) and zoom in until the blue watershed boundaries appear on the web map.

A focus watershed for this program can be a HUC 12 subwatershed of a larger watershed. Watersheds that are larger than 36 square miles generally include multiple HUC 12 subwatersheds. In this case, the watershed characterization would focus on one specific HUC 12 subwatershed, to be selected by the applicant.

Watersheds must include at least two local municipalities, in addition to the county or counties. Municipal boundaries can be found using the [Hudson Valley Natural Resource Mapper](#), under Reference Layers. Select Counties, Cities, Towns, and Villages, and zoom in until the municipal boundaries appear on the web map.

Applicants may be watershed groups, municipalities, or other entities, such as nonprofit organizations, land trusts, academic institutions, community groups, etc. Applicants must show stakeholder support and local buy-in for this project. Project advisory committees should include a diverse range of stakeholders to provide local knowledge and expertise.

Watersheds for sources of drinking water are currently eligible for technical assistance support through New York State's [Drinking Water Source Protection Program \(DWSP2\)](#), and are *not* eligible for Hudson River Watershed Alliance's watershed characterization technical assistance. If you are interested in developing a source water protection plan for municipal drinking water supply, we encourage you to apply to the DWSP2 program to receive more robust and specific technical support.

Selection Criteria

All eligible applications (watersheds located within the Hudson River estuary watershed, HUC 12 size or smaller, and including at least two local municipalities) will be scored based on the following criteria. A more detailed scoring sheet is available [here](#).

Readiness/Timing:

- Capacity, background, and interest in watershed work.
- How a watershed characterization process and report will support local conservation goals. (Examples could include working towards a watershed plan, Climate Smart Communities, Natural Resource Inventory or other municipal plans, organizing a watershed group, etc.)
- If/how a watershed characterization will build on previous watershed or municipal planning projects. This watershed characterizations can be used to update outdated plans or build on existing work, but cannot be used to duplicate recent work.
- Climate Smart Communities status of municipalities within the watershed (either registered or certified). Municipalities participating in Climate Smart Communities are listed [here](#).

Stakeholder Support:

- Demonstrated buy-in from key stakeholders, including watershed groups, municipalities, organizations, and other stakeholders.
- Applications must include letters of support indicating that stakeholders are committed and have capacity to serve on the advisory committee and/or provide information to support the watershed characterization. A Letter of Support Template is available for applicants to use [here](#).
- Outreach plan for community engagement and an inclusive and equitable planning process. (The EPA's [EJScreen: Environmental Justice Screening and Mapping Tool](#) may be a helpful resource to review demographics, socioeconomic indicators, and other Environmental Justice indices. The Hudson River Estuary Program's Climate Program also has resources on best practices for an inclusive planning process [here](#).)
- Environmental justice areas within the watershed, defined as DEC's mapped [Potential Environmental Justice Areas](#). (To find Potential Environmental Justice areas within the watershed, use the [DECInfo Locator](#). Under DEC Information Layers – Environmental Quality – Public Involvement, click the box for Potential Environmental Justice Areas and zoom in until the layer appears. It may also be helpful to add municipal boundaries, and you can do so by going to Reference Layers and click the boxes for Cities, Towns, Villages, and County Boundary.) Letters of support/advisory committee participation from members of environmental justice communities within the watershed are encouraged.

Template for Future Planning:

- The extent to which the watershed represents a useful case study and template for future watershed characterization planning processes, based on the other applicants.
- We will select one urban watershed and one rural watershed, defined by Municipal Separate Storm Sewer Systems (MS4s) and wastewater facilities located within the watershed. (To find MS4 areas, use the [DECInfo Locator](#). Under DEC Information Layers – Environmental Quality – Permits and Registrations, click the box for Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4)

and zoom in until the layer appears. To find wastewater facilities, use the [DECInfo Locator](#). Under DEC Information Layers – Environmental Quality – Permits and Registrations, click the box for Wastewater Facilities.)

- Availability of existing local data. While this project will focus on statewide and regionally available data, it will be helpful to know if there are also existing data locally to include.

Other Watershed-Based Planning Needs

This section will not be included in the scoring criteria, but is an opportunity to document any additional watershed-based planning needs.

Hudson River Watershed Alliance will be maintaining a list of watershed-based planning needs, in case additional opportunities arise. These may include a watershed plan, flood study, stream management plan, drinking water source protection plan, road-stream crossing management plan, action plan, strategic plan, or other watershed-based plan.

For more background information on types of plans, review the presentation on [“Introduction to Watershed Planning”](#) by Emily Vail, Hudson River Watershed Alliance, from the Hudson River Watershed Alliance’s 2021 Annual Watershed Conference.

Application Process

To apply for this technical assistance opportunity, please email the completed PDF application form and a PDF copy of all letters of support to Emily Vail, Hudson River Watershed Alliance, at emily@hudsonwatershed.org. Applications must be submitted by Wednesday, June 15 at 5 pm.

Applications will be reviewed by a team including staff from the Hudson River Watershed Alliance and NYS Hudson River Estuary Program. We anticipate announcing the technical assistance recipients by August 1, 2022.

Timeline

May 19 – informational webinar

June 15 – application deadline

August 1 – notification of technical assistance recipients

Fall 2022 – project kick off, establish advisory committee

Fall 2022-Fall 2023 – Advisory committees meet eight times to advise on project

December 2023 – Watershed characterizations complete, final presentations to communities

For More Information

A link to the application form and additional information can be found on Hudson River Watershed Alliance's website: <https://hudsonwatershed.org/watershed-characterization-technical-assistance>.

The Hudson River Watershed Alliance will hold an informational webinar on this program on Thursday, May 19 from 1-2 pm. You can register for the webinar [here](#). Questions can be submitted questions ahead of time through the webinar registration form or by emailing them to Emily Vail at emily@hudsonwatershed.org. We will also take questions during the webinar. The webinar will be recorded and posted to the Hudson River Watershed Alliance's YouTube channel and program website for reference.

If you have questions on this application or process, please contact Emily Vail at emily@hudsonwatershed.org.