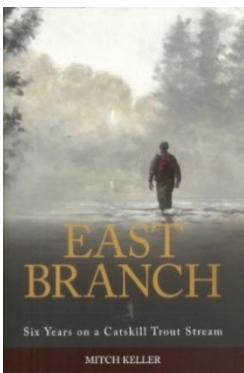


Blue Mountains trout news

Newsletter of the Ashokan-Pepacton Watershed Chapter of Trout Unlimited, #559
P.O. Box 119, Phoenicia, NY 12464
March 2021



Banner above depicts an early March winter Blue Hole day. Where are all the summer bathers, swimmers, and abusers of this Catskill treasure now. Read about Ed Hewitt's Blue Hole experience elsewhere in this newsletter.



March Zoom meeting: On March 24th, at 7 PM, the chapter will host another virtual Zoom meeting. Our guest speaker this month is Mitch Keller, author of *East Branch: Six Years on a Catskill Trout Stream* and one of our newest members. The book tells of one person's struggle trying to get by while living in Margaretville with no steady source of employment yet fishing the East Branch of the Delaware River upstream of New York City's Pepacton Reservoir. Mitch has been a newspaper man for various publications including the *New York Times* and the former *Woodstock Times*. He spends his time in New York City and our Catskills.

A separate email on this meeting, and how to join, will be sent out prior to the event, but for now mark your calendars. At our April 28th virtual meeting we are hoping to have Dany Davis of New York City Department of Environmental Protection (NYC DEP), Jason Siemion of US Geological Service (USGS), and Allison Lent of Ulster County Soil & Water Conservation District (UCSWCD) to discuss the Christmas 2020 flood that devastated the Esopus Creek watershed.

Ashokan pump storage proposal: By now you might have read that Premium Energy Holdings (PEH) requested a permit from the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) to study a pumped storage project on New York City's Ashokan Reservoir. The project is known to FERC by docket number P-15056, the Ashokan Reservoir pumped storage project. PEH requested the FERC permit without consulting with NYC; the DEP had no prior knowledge of this proposal. PEH is a California based developer. FYI:

<https://premiumenergyholdings.com/>

Essentially a pumped storage project is a closed loop system that utilizes water from two different sources, a lower reservoir and an upper reservoir. Water is pumped from the lower basin to the upper basin, and then when electricity is needed, the process is reversed and the pumps become generators. This proposal intends to utilize NYC's Ashokan Reservoir as the lower reservoir while studying three alternative sites for an upper reservoir. The three sites include Wittenberg in West Shokan, the Stony Clove and Woodland Valley both in the Town of Shandaken. As of March 12th, FERC had received roughly one hundred comments opposing this project plus five parties requesting intervention status. Those applying to intervene include: New York City, the Town of Olive (where a major portion of the Ashokan and Wittenberg are located), Town of Woodstock, a private individual from the Town of Shandaken, and the New York State Council of Trout Unlimited (NYSC TU). Our chapter falls under the NYSC TU umbrella, and is working with Bill Wellman--- Hydro Chair of the NYSC TU, and other TU members, on this matter.

The Town of Olive is holding a virtual Zoom meeting at 6:30 PM on March 18th to discuss this proposal. Join using this link: <http://bit.ly/olivehydro> The Phoenicia Library is hosting a similar project review on March 16th at 7 PM. Zoom their meeting here: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89881469679> Ginger Strand will present at both these virtual events; she recently presented an overview of this proposal to the Woodland Valley Association. FERC has established April 12th as a deadline to receive initial comments on this proposal.

For those so inclined, Bill Wellman of the NYSC TU has provided information on how one can register with FERC regarding this proposal, and submit comments. I cut and paste a portion of his email below.

On your browser, enter FERC.gov Press enter.

FERC opening page appears. In right column, click on Elibrary

Elibrary page appears. In center of this complicated page is box labeled "enter docket number." All FERC projects have a docket number.

The number for Ashokan Pumped Storage Project is P-15056 Enter it, just as I have written it, in the box labeled "enter docket number."

Press the blue "Search" button on the lower right. The 'results' page will open.

Read through the documents listed and select the one you want. For instance, my Intervention is listed as "Intervention by NYS Council of Trout Unlimited,"

In that document column on the right side, press "generate PDF." A download bar appears, and will flash green when your document has downloaded. It will be on the lower right side of your office bar at the bottom.

Click on your download list, then click on the lowest (last) item in the download set. Your document will appear.

Now for the next tutorial: This one is a little more complicated, but not much. This tutorial will give you information on how to get on FERC's emailing list to get everything that FERC issues on a project. Once registered, you will get all that FERC issues, but you will not get things issued before you registered-but you can get that from the elibrary. Here we go.

Enter FERC.gov on your browser. FERC page opens. On left side, go to "About FERC." Page opens. Click on FAQ.

FAQ page opens. Click on "active participation/interventions."

Go to item 7 "How to keep track of a project." Click on highlighted "esubscriptions."

New page opens. Scroll down to esubscriptions and follow guidance on registering for FERC issuances.

This is where you will enter P-15056 if that is the project you want to get info on.

Esopus Creek: NYC DEP held its semi-annual Shandaken SPDES permit review on February 25th in a virtual format. Some thirty folks participated including reps from New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYS DEC), Department of Health, Ashokan Watershed Stream Management Program (AWSMP), the Catskill Center for Conservation and Development (CCCD), private individuals, NYC DEP, plus Mark Loete, Chet Karwatowski, and myself from the chapter. David Warne, Assistant Commissioner of NYC DEP, chaired the meeting. He opened it stating NYC was unaware of the proposed Ashokan pumped storage project and had no contact with Premium Energy Holdings, but intended to review this matter and participate in the FERC proceedings.

Then there were three presentations, mostly led by DEP employees, giving the status of current conditions and ongoing restoration projects within NYC's Schoharie Reservoir plus their Shandaken Tunnel (ST). The chapter received copies of these presentations. Essentially there will be several more shutdowns of the ST in the months ahead as work continues on tunnel intake gates. DEP hopes to complete these projects before yearend, as they want to work on the Delaware aqueduct and need the Catskill aqueduct functional. As ST shutdown dates become available, we will share them with chapter members. DEP also noted that a Schoharie Reservoir High Level Outlet (HLO) is still in plan, but work on this has been impacted by Delaware aqueduct projects. It was anticipated that the ST could be offline through April, but NYC DEP and NYS DEC meet weekly to review project status and natural Esopus Creek flows. In late January DEP brought the ST back online at the request of DEC; it was recently shut down again in late February. It is anticipated that snowmelt will provide a sufficient flow to protect the Esopus Creek fishery.

East Branch Delaware River: Under the leadership of Tracy Brown--- NY/CT Restoration Manager from Trout Unlimited National--- and recently in cooperation with Caroline Shafer also of TU National, the chapter's East Branch Delaware River committee of Len Millen, George Markos, and Peter Marx, and members, have been working on wild trout restoration projects, upstream of NYC's Pepacton Reservoir since 2016. Efforts included stream temperature monitoring, riparian planting, cooperating with NYS DEC Region 4 Fisheries on fish tagging/movement, and assessing trout barriers. A twenty-two page report, prepared by Tracy, can be downloaded from this link: https://www.tu.org/magazine/effort-improves-trout-habitat-in-delaware-watershed/?zs=bWNKc&zl=7xUR2&utm_source=newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=informz It's full of graphs, charts, and other data gathered thus far. While the chapter committee is finished recording water temperatures, via in-stream loggers, focus has moved to other areas including replacing of potential fish barriers.

Peter Marx, is the chapter's rep to the Coalition for the Delaware River Watershed, an umbrella organization uniting one-hundred-sixty-three groups working throughout the region to enhance/advocate for protecting and restoring the Delaware River Basin. Peter reports that one of the Coalition's highest priorities is to lobby in Washington, DC ensuring funding is provided for the Delaware River Basin Restoration Fund under the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. This habitat restoration and protection program covers work in the headwaters of the East and West Branch in the Catskills all the way downstream to the Delaware Bay estuary. Funding for the Program was first secured through Congress in 2018 at \$5 million and has steadily increased to \$10 million in 2021. The Coalition is now deploying its member organizations to try to secure up to \$15 million in Fiscal Year 2022. Efforts to do this will continue until Congress makes its final funding determinations at the end of the year. Our chapter joined numerous other organizations signing a letter of support of such.

FYI: <http://www.delriverwatershed.org/>

Acid rain report: Jody Hoyt reported in February there were 10 measurable storms as recorded in Boiceville,

NY. These had a 5.9 weighed pH with 4.07 inches of equivalent liquid precipitation, including 32.9 inches of snow. There was one trace snow event that did not produce enough water, when melted down, to allow measuring of pH. By comparison in February 2020 there were 6 such events with a total of 4.33 inches of liquid precipitation, including 6.3 inches of snow and 5.4 weighted pH.

At DEP's February 25th Shandaken Tunnel SPDES Permit Review meeting, DEP announced Catskill snowpack at that time was above average and thus NYC would be increasing releases from some Catskill reservoir to create a void for snowmelt runoff. Just this past week the region experienced some unseasonably warm weather with a couple days in the 60's and low 70's, causing a fair amount of snowmelt.



USGS study of upper Neversink watershed: Barry Baldigo, Scott George, and other USGS scientists recently published a paper on their ongoing studies of the upper Neversink. It's titled, "Biological and chemical recovery of acidified Catskill Mountain streams in response to the Clean Air Act Amendments of 1990." An online version, of this interesting read, can be found here:

<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1352231021000534?via%3Dihub>

NYS Trout Stream Sportfishing Regulations: NYS DEC sought, and accepted, public input on proposed 2021 Trout Stream Sportfishing Regulations through January 25th, 2021. We expect these regulations will be finalized, and made public, prior to April 1st.



With regards to the Esopus Creek, it is anticipated that the mainstream from the Ashokan Reservoir upriver through Lost Clove will be classified as Wild-Quality, meaning the limit will be three trout/day, with only one trout 12" or longer in length fish allowed to be taken. All Esopus Creek tributaries will be classified as Wild, meaning the limit will be five trout/day, with no more than two trout 12" or longer in length taken. Thus, NYS DEC will no longer stock hatchery trout into the Esopus, or its tributaries. In some cases, for the time being, private stocking of some tributaries still be will be allowed. Furthermore, the state-wide harvest season will be from April 1st through October 15th. With regards to the Esopus Creek, this reduces the current harvest season from November 30th back to October 15th, eliminating some six weeks' time when trout can be killed. However, DEC established a new catch-and-release season on most NYS trout streams that extends from October 16th through March 31st of the following year. Anglers will be limited to the use of artificials only during this time period, use of bait will be prohibited.

Watch for forthcoming details and specifics from DEC.

The brook trout pictured above was recently caught in a New Jersey wild trout stream, on a #16 Adams, where winter catch-and-release trout fishing is permitted.

The Blue Hole and Ed Hewitt: The following is an excerpt from *Telling on Trout* by Edward Ringwood Hewitt (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1926, pgs. 114-116):

"My old friend Mr. Dimmock lived in a camp on the Peekamoose stream, about fifteen miles from my camp on the Neversink. One afternoon a pleasant drive brought me over to tea. As I arose to leave at about five o'clock Mr. Dimmock asked me if I would do him a favor. He said that in the thirty years he had lived in this camp no one of his guests had ever taken a trout out of the Blue Hole in clear low water, and he would very much like to see if it could be done. I had my rod and boots in the car, as usual, and we walked up the stream. The Blue Hole is a round pool about seventy feet across and rather deep, perhaps ten or fifteen feet in the centre. The water enters the pool between two large broken rocks at the top and flows out of the tail at the far corner, the lowest side of the pool being a bar of gravel and small stones. I had fished this place on several occasions previously, and knew perfectly well that no trout could be caught in the ordinary way in clear water, but had worked out a plan which had taken fish the last time I was there.

We stopped about fifty feet from the bar at the lower end, and I explained to Mr. Dimmock that the trout would be frightened by any line and leader if cast in the centre of this clear pool. The plan was, therefore, to cast the line and leader across the bar and let them rest on stones, with the fly about a foot within the pool in the shallow water near the bar. When the fly had rested there a few seconds it was pulled a little to make it move like a live insect. A trout at once swam up out of the deep water and slowly took the fly. A little steady pull hauled him over the bar, and I unhooked him and threw him into the stream. In this way fifteen fish were taken in succession without alarming the others. They were not large fish, only eight to ten inches long, as there are very few large trout in this stream, probably owing to the very cold water and great freshets, but experience showed how such a pool might be fished under the most difficult conditions. A single cast in the centre of the pool ended the fishing by alarming all the trout, and they promptly went into hiding."

Ashokan Watershed Stream Management Program (AWSMP): There are several upcoming AWSMP Working Group Meetings which chapter members expect to participate in.

Treasurer's report: Jody Hoyt reports as of the end of February the chapter had \$12,757.56, with \$11,969.88 in the General Operating Fund and \$787.68 in the Conservation Fund. In February, for the first time in a long time, we had a few bills that came due.

Your input needed: Trout Unlimited's fiscal year ends March 31st and our chapter needs to file an Annual Report that includes the **18 months of active that occurred prior to the end of March**. Our chapter treasurer Jody Hoyt needs to compile all volunteer hours incurred by chapter members in support of the chapter, NYS Council, or TU National. Attending general meetings do not count, but board meetings and travel time count. Items like fund raiser planning and execution, tree planting, preparing meeting minutes, East Branch Delaware temperature study, fly tying instruction, brook trout study, newsletter prep time, committee activities, attending other meetings while representing TU, AWSMP's Family Fun and Fish Day, Trout in the Classroom, plus all associated travel count. This is a simply a list of examples, and is not all inclusive. Be generous with yourself! It all counts! Hour totals, by event, should be emailed to capthoyt@aol.com Jody needs your input by May 1st. Thank you.

Membership: As of this newsletter, our membership stands at 122 members. This month we welcome Herb Brooks of Highmount; Chelsea Frisbee of Bloomville; Mitch Keller of NYC; Randolph Montagno of Shandaken; Michael Puryear of Shokan; William Roberts of Norwood, NJ; Alexander Sharpe of Denver, NY; Vincent Tabano of Denver, NY; and Michael Todd of Shandaken. Welcome one and all! As always new TU members can join for half the "regular" membership fee, or \$17.50, of which the chapter receives a \$15 rebate from National. Membership forms: http://www.apwctu.org/pdfs/TU_membership_brochure2018_web.pdf For membership questions, contact me at: Tailwaters@Hvc.rr.com

Newsletter: This issue was sent electronically to all chapter members and friends that we have valid email addresses. If you received this and would rather not, please hit **REPLY** and write **REMOVE** and hit **SEND**.

Beyond our watersheds and other news: The March/April 2021 issue of *American Fly Fishing* has an article by Mike Valla titled "New York: Batavia Kill" on pages 14-15, about on this Schoharie Creek tributary.

NYS DEC is conducting a Catskill Visitor survey, this is your chance to express your input, but the survey is only available through March 19th. Take it here: https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/Catskills_Public_Survey

Chapter board member, and Program Chair, Chris Hensley was involved with this neat I Love New York YouTube for the Western Catskills. Nice job, Chris. Enjoy: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kJBIsP-q4uE>

The February/March 2021 *Conservationist* digital edition is available here: <https://cloud.3dissue.com/129417/129610/151833/FebMar21NYSCons/index.html>

Fly tyers, here's a fly pattern that might be of interest, the RS2: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=27KQ6pDnLFM>

Sadly, we learned of the passing of Clem Fullerton, a very active member of Trout Unlimited and Theodore Gordon Flyfishers, a dedicated trout conservationist, and someone who got involved with the proposed Prattsville pumped storage project. Clem left his mark on our trout waters, and for that we are forever grateful. FYI: <https://riverreporter.com/stories/clem-fullerton-the-complete-tangler,41341>

Useful links:

Ashokan-Pepacton Watershed Chapter Trout Unlimited: <https://apwctu.org/>

Ashokan Watershed Stream Management Program: <http://ashokanstreams.org/>

CWC Watershed Currents: <https://cwconline.org/watershed-currents-e-news/>

Delaware County Soil and Water Conservation District: <http://www.dcswcd.org/Stream%20Program.htm>

Esopus Creek hatching chart: <http://www.catskillanglingcollection.org/>

NYC DEP Reservoir Levels-Releases: https://www1.nyc.gov/html/dep/html/drinking_water/release_channel_levels.shtml

Rondout Neversink Stream Program: <http://www.rondoutneversink.org/>

Until next time,
Ed Ostapczuk
March 14th, 2021