

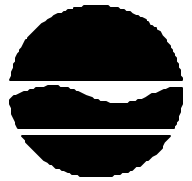
New York State Department of Environmental Conservation

Hudson River Estuary Program, Region 3

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Protecting Nature in Your Community:

The Hudson River Estuary Program and Its Partners Can Help You

The Hudson Valley's natural heritage

Nature has long been part of the allure of the Hudson Valley. From the Hudson River School of landscape painting to the current designation of the Hudson Valley National Heritage area, the Valley has been recognized nationally and worldwide for its scenic beauty.

The region surrounding the Hudson River Estuary boasts a remarkable diversity of habitats and wildlife. These and the connections among them are the foundations of a healthy environment and a vibrant local economy. If we consider its beauty and natural resources when planning, the Hudson River Valley will continue to be a place of great beauty and wonder as it has been for centuries.

The role of local governments

Most land use decisions are made at the local level, and the greatest threat to our local wildlife is habitat loss and change. Recognizing the importance of local decision-makers in conserving our natural heritage, the Hudson River Estuary Program of the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation has developed a program to help local governments incorporate biological information into their decision-making and planning.

Towns are encouraged to find out as much as possible about their natural resources. Land use tools can then be used to protect those resources. By using this information when updating your comprehensive plan, zoning codes, or subdivision and site plan regulations, resources can be better protected and conflicts during reviews can be reduced. This is a non-regulatory program designed to support local home rule. Municipalities of the counties that border the Hudson River from the Troy Dam south to New York City are eligible for assistance.

More turtle species than nearly anywhere else on Earth?

The Hudson River Valley, the landscape that forms the watershed of the Hudson River Estuary, is home to more than 2,000 plants, birds, mammals, reptiles and amphibians. Nearly every species of bird, mammal, reptile and amphibian that occur in New York State are found in the Hudson Valley. There are also many thousands of less glamorous, but ecologically important species of invertebrates, fungi and bacteria. For example, more species of dragonflies and damselflies are found in the Hudson Valley than in almost anywhere else in the country.

Many species use the valley as a migration route, spending part of their life cycle here and part of it elsewhere, connecting us to the world at large. And indeed, one can find more turtle species here than nearly anywhere else on Earth. This means that conserving the biological resources of the Hudson Valley is critical to biodiversity in New York State, and throughout the world.

Wildlife diversity matters

Wildlife and habitat diversity affects our lives in ways most of us do not realize. Fewer people get Lyme disease in areas with many species of small mammals, like shrews and voles. Pollination of fruits and other crops require healthy insect populations. Pest species are kept in check by healthy ecosystems. Furthermore, every beneficial species requires hundreds of other species to thrive.

Intact forests help keep the air and water clean and recharge aquifers. Wetlands can absorb flood water and filter pollutants. Natural areas are places to hike, hunt, and fish. But most of all, by considering wildlife and habitat today will help to ensure a quality environment for future generations.

Technical Assistance and Training

*NYS Dept. of Environmental Conservation
Cornell University*

Since Action Plan 1996, the Estuary Program and its partners have worked to catalog the biological resources of the Hudson Valley. In order to conserve the great natural resources that have been identified, DEC is taking steps to share this information with those who make land-use decisions. Biological information and technical assistance is available free of charge to towns, counties and land trusts for use in the local planning process and open-space conservation. The Estuary Program's Biodiversity Outreach Coordinator is available to share information and work with municipalities to identify some of the planning tools used to protect biodiversity locally.

Regardless of experience, knowledge or expertise, Hudson Valley municipalities have a role in conserving biological diversity. This program is entirely voluntary and available to any town, village or city in the Hudson River Valley. For more information on biodiversity or the technical assistance program, please contact:

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Outreach Partnerships

The NYS DEC is supporting partner organizations to extend the reach and scope of the outreach program. Program partners include the New York Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit at Cornell University, Hudsonia, Ltd. and the Wildlife Conservation Society's Metropolitan Conservation Alliance. For more information on these programs, please contact Ms. Strong.

Training to Identify Habitats

Hudsonia, Ltd.

In partnership with DEC, Hudsonia, Ltd. published the *Biodiversity Assessment Manual for the Hudson River Estuary Corridor* in 2001. The manual can assist municipal agencies of the Hudson River Valley, in conducting detailed assessments of biodiversity in their home town. Small grants and training are available to a limited number of groups per year. Training involves using the manual to understand the unique contribution of your area to the region's biodiversity.

Technical Planning Assistance

Wildlife Conservation Society

DEC is also working with the Metropolitan Conservation Alliance, a program of the Wildlife Conservation Society at the Bronx Zoo, to incorporate biodiversity information into local land use planning practices. The Alliance conducts species surveys in areas known to be especially significant for biodiversity and develops land use tools that can protect those resources during the planning process. MCA works with communities closely to promote better habitat stewardship that benefits both wildlife and people.