

Creating a Natural Resources Inventory

A Guide for Communities in the Hudson River Estuary Watershed

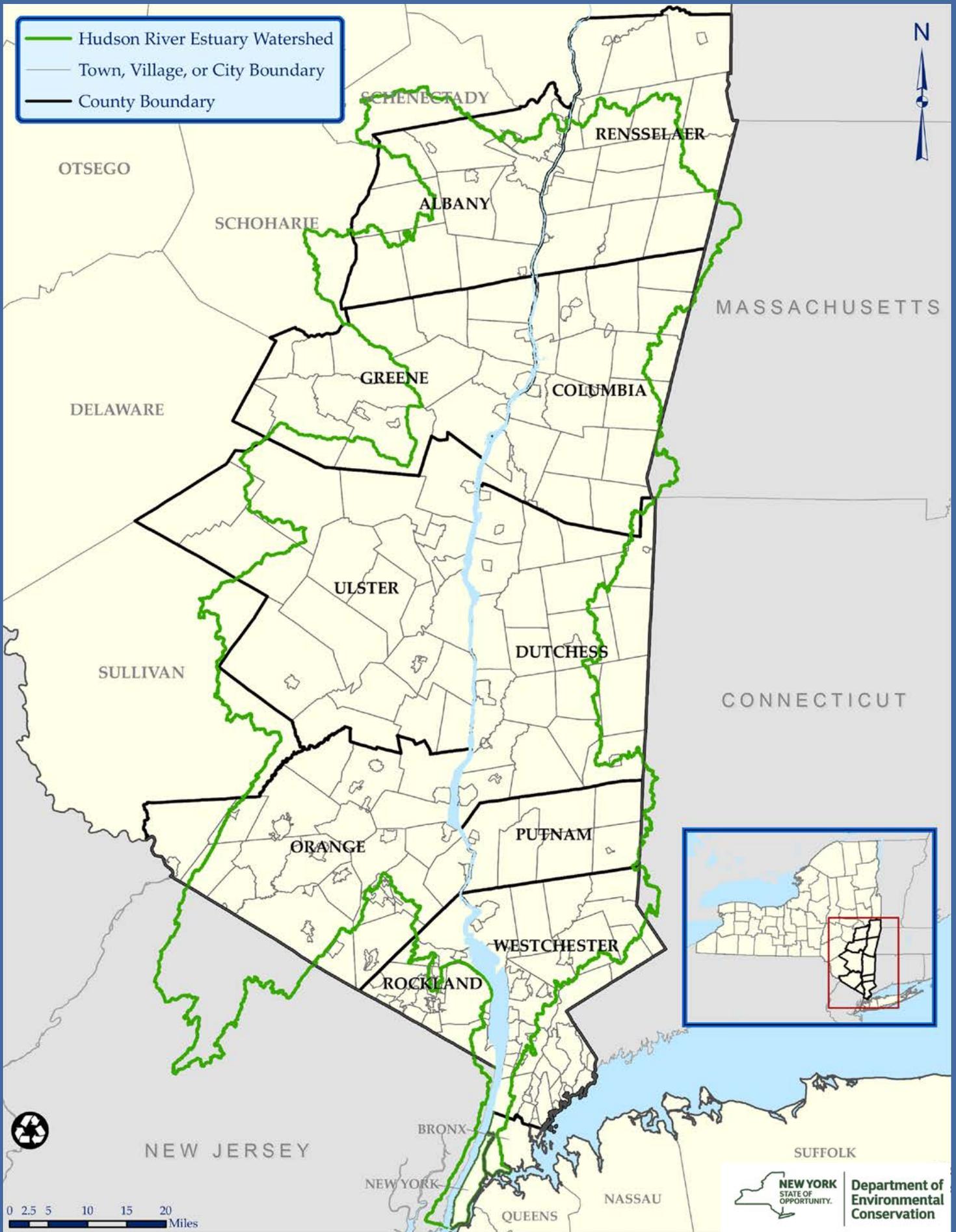


Cornell University



Hudson River Estuary Program
A Program of the New York State
Department of Environmental Conservation

New York State Municipalities in the Hudson River Estuary Watershed



Creating a Natural Resources Inventory

A Guide for Communities in the Hudson River Estuary Watershed

2014

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for New York State Department of Environmental Conservation's
Hudson River Estuary Program



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Department of
Environmental
Conservation

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About the Hudson River Estuary Program

The Hudson River Estuary Program uses the science of ecology to help people enjoy, protect, and revitalize the Hudson River estuary. Created in 1987 through the Hudson River Estuary Management Act (ECL 11-0306), the program focuses on the tidal Hudson and its adjacent watershed from the dam at Troy to the Verrazano Narrows in New York City.

The core mission of the Estuary Program is built around six key benefits:

- Clean Water
- Resilient Communities
- Vital Estuary Ecosystem
- Estuary Fish, Wildlife, & Habitats
- Scenic River Landscape
- Education, River Access, Recreation, & Inspiration.

The Estuary Program works in close collaboration with many partners – from nonprofit organizations to businesses, local governments to state and federal agencies, interested residents, and many others. For more information, visit www.dec.ny.gov.

About Cornell University's Department of Natural Resources

The Department of Natural Resources at Cornell University creates knowledge and facilitates learning to improve society's stewardship of the environment and promote a conservation ethos for a sustainable planet. For more information, visit <http://dnr.cals.cornell.edu/>.

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Preface and Acknowledgments

Shoreline cities, quaint villages, expanding suburbs, and pastoral towns—the communities of the Hudson River Valley are as diverse as its natural areas and habitats, but they all share two key characteristics. First, they are all connected to the estuary, either directly on its shorelines or tributaries, or by the living landscape of forests, fields, wetlands, and streams that comprises its watershed. Second, they all rely on local decision-makers—town boards, planning and zoning boards, conservation advisory councils, and open space commissions—to grapple with the many challenges facing Hudson Valley communities, including economic growth, development, aging infrastructure, climate change, historic preservation, and protection of farmland, source water, scenery, and wildlife habitat.

To build community capacity for sound decision-making that balances future growth with protection of the Hudson River estuary and the rich natural resources in its watershed, Cornell University's Department of Natural Resources and the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation's (DEC) Hudson River Estuary Program initiated an outreach and technical assistance program in 2001. The program emphasizes voluntary approaches, offering technical assistance, data sharing, training, and grants to support community planning and conservation initiatives at the local level. With assistance from the Estuary Program, many municipalities have developed plans and practices that address regional habitat priorities and local community values, and will ultimately help to sustain the health and resiliency of the estuary ecosystem.

Despite this progress, many municipalities are still in need of a foundation of natural resource information to guide their planning decisions. This guidebook was developed to address that need by assisting communities with learning how to inventory their natural and cultural resources. By having information about features such as aquifers, floodplains, shoreline habitat, and farmland, communities can begin to identify priorities and local officials can incorporate protection of important resources into land-use planning to ensure they remain available to future generations.

The concept of the guidebook came from *Natural Resources Inventories: A Guide for New Hampshire Communities and Conservation Groups* (2001), originally written by Phil Auger and Jeanie McIntyre and revised and updated by Amanda Lindley Stone of University of New Hampshire Cooperative Extension (UNHCE). It also serves to provide an update to the 1997 document, *Natural Resource Inventory: A Guide to the Process*, which was written by the Dutchess County Environmental Management Council (EMC) in partnership with the Ulster County EMC. In the spirit of conservation, the authors, UNHCE, and the Dutchess EMC graciously gave us permission to use the text of their handbooks, for which we sincerely thank them. Chapters 1, 2, 3, 5, and 6 and Appendix D are based on the New Hampshire document and borrow language from that text; Chapter 4 and other appendices were extensively rewritten.

This guidebook helps to implement the *Hudson River Estuary Action Agenda*, which provides a vision and plan to help people enjoy, protect, and revitalize the Hudson River estuary and its valley. Although the focus of the guidebook is on the Hudson Valley region, it describes a process that can be used by any municipality in New York State and in other states where communities are engaged in local planning and conservation initiatives. The guide also complements the program's *Conserving Natural Areas and Wildlife in Your Community: Smart Growth Strategies for Protecting the Biological Diversity of New York's Hudson River Valley* (Strong 2008), which provides a broad overview of strategies that can be used locally to conserve natural assets.

We greatly appreciate the program leadership, guidance, and support of Ted Kerpez, Region 3 Wildlife Manager for the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation; Frances Dunwell, Coordinator of the Hudson River Estuary Program for DEC; and Patrick Sullivan, Cornell University Professor of Natural Resources.

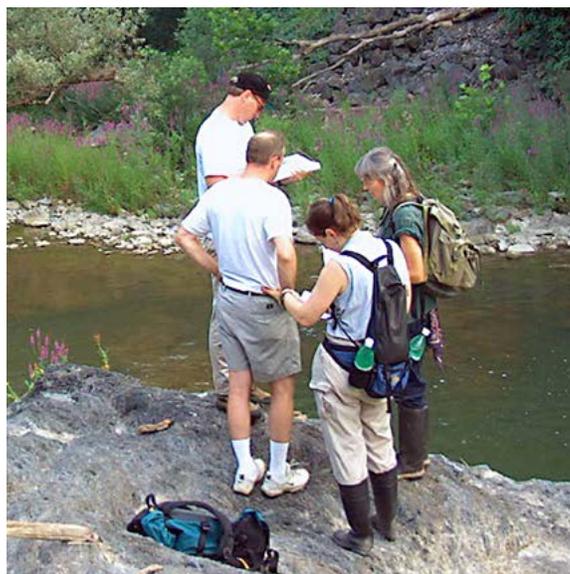
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Contents

Preface and Acknowledgments	iii
Chapter 1: Introduction	1
Why inventory natural resources?	1
What is a natural resources inventory (NRI)?	1
About this guide	2
Chapter 2: Getting Started	5
Establish a work group	5
Determine goals and scope of project	6
Define the study area	7
Review existing natural resources documents	8
Develop a draft inventory outline	8
Develop a budget and scope of work	8
Publicize the inventory and solicit public input	8
Where to find help	8
Chapter 3: Mapping Options: Using Online Tools and Geographic Information Systems (GIS)	9
What is a geographic information system?	9
Online mapping tools	10
Where can you obtain GIS data, maps, and assistance?	11
What map scale should be used?	12
What do you do if the information you need isn't available digitally?	12
How recent are the GIS data?	12
Chapter 4: What to Include in the NRI	13
Inventory Format	14
Inventory Components	16
Base Map	16
Geology and Soils	16
Bedrock and Surficial Geology	16
Soils	18
Slopes	19
Water Resources	19
Groundwater and Aquifers	19
Watersheds	21
Streams and Waterbodies	22
Floodplains	23
Wetlands	24
Water Quality: Standards and Assessments	26
Water Quality: Potential and Known Sources of Contamination	28
Habitats and Wildlife	28
Significant Biodiversity Areas of the Hudson River Estuary Corridor	28
Hudson River Coastal and Shoreline Habitat	29
Stream and Riparian Habitat	30
Wetland Habitat	32
Forests	33
Grasslands and Shrublands	34
Rare Plant and Animal Species and Significant Natural Communities	36
Unfragmented Habitat Blocks	39
Climate Conditions and Projections	40
Cultural Resources	41
Historic Resources	41
Scenic Resources	43
Recreation Resources	44
Land Use	45
Zoning and Tax Maps	45
Land Use and Land Cover	46
Farmland	47
Conservation and Public Lands	49



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Chapter 5: Analyze the Information	51
Chapter 6: Putting the Inventory to Work	53
Make the Inventory Available	53
Public Education	53
Comprehensive Planning	54
Watershed Plans	54
Critical Environmental Areas	55
Open Space Inventories and Plans	55
Open Space Plan Implementation	56
Zoning and Subdivision Regulations	56
Development Review	58
Conclusion	58
References	59
Appendix A: Agencies and Organizations	62
Federal Agencies	62
New York State Agencies and Programs	62
Statewide and Regional Nonprofit Organizations	63
County Agencies, Programs, and Land Trusts	63
Appendix B: Publications and Web Resources for Further Reading and Research	66
Geology and Soils	66
Water Resources	66
Habitats and Wildlife	67
Climate Conditions and Projections	67
Cultural Resources	67
Land Use	68
Appendix C: Recommended GIS Data Sources	69
Appendix D: Information about Commonly Used Maps	70
USGS Topographic Maps	70
NRCS County Soil Survey Maps	71
National Wetlands Inventory Maps	71
Aerial Photographs	72
Appendix E: Biodiversity Assessment Overview	74
Appendix F: Hudson Valley Climate Resilience	76
Appendix G: Model Local Law to Adopt the NRI	79
Appendix H: Sample Checklist for Assessing Site Resources During Subdivision Review	82
Appendix I: Examples of Maps from a Municipal NRI	84
Appendix J: Examples of Inventory Projects	98
Town of Rosendale Natural Resources Inventory	98
Town of Berne Inventories of Forests, Wildlife, and Wetlands	98
Town of Shawangunk Open Space Inventory and Analysis	99
Town of Ancram Natural Resources Conservation Plan	100
New Paltz Open Space Plan	100
Shawangunk Mountains Regional Open Space Plan	101
Wappinger Creek Natural Resource Management Plan	102
Dutchess County Natural Resources Inventory	102



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