

# Delaware County SWCD to Lead Streamside Protection Program Funded by DEP

By Glenn Graves

WALTON – The Delaware County Soil and Water Conservation District (DCSWCD) will administer a new incentive of the New York City Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) to protect and manage stream banks within Delaware County and the Catskill/Delaware Watershed. The DEP has committed \$3.6 million to the program in the watershed, and Delaware County is slated to receive \$600,000 in funding in the next four years.

The Catskills Stream Buffer Initiative is for residential conservation projects only, but could include some projects that have already been implemented on many watershed farms, such as developing riparian buffers. Originally, the DEP announced that the deadline for filing an application for funding was Feb. 1, but DCSWCD Executive Director Rick Weidenbach said his organization will be accepting and prioritizing applications until all the grant money has been allocated.

“We’ve got approximately \$150,000 a year to work with,” Weidenbach said. “Our problem at this point is staffing. We figure we may be able to do about 20 projects this year, and we probably already have 10 in the pipeline.”



The DEP explains that the program will help landowners obtain permits for a streamside project or provide access to financial support, labor and materials. The initiative also offers free planning assistance and educational seminars to help landowners understand how best to keep stream banks stable and protect property from erosion.

“We’ll be doing ongoing education and outreach throughout the four-year contract period,” he added.

Weidenbach said the grant program is set up to fund projects that will protect stream banks, help improve water quality, create shade and reduce the amount of nutrients, such as phosphorus and nitrogen, from entering the stream.

“We’re going to provide technical assistance to establish or enhance vegetative buffers,” he said. “We want to have people call us up and we’ll determine whether they’re eligible. I would

encourage them to do a little website browsing so they're familiar with the program when they call.”

Weidenbach said this program fills an acknowledged need, because prior and concurrent programs have only addressed stream corridor protection for agriculture and municipalities.

“The purpose of this program is not to fix every stream bank, obviously we aren't going to have the funding for that, but to provide assistance where it's needed most,” he said.

Among the guidelines for the Catskill Streams Buffers Initiative is the provision that landowners who are involved in another DEP-funded program, such as the Watershed Forestry program's Management Assistance program, may be eligible for supplemental assistance for riparian planting activities or bank stabilization projects.

Applicants will be selected based on how high they score in the rating criteria. The criteria includes information on the number and specifics of riparian functions to be addressed, location, whether the applicant is eligible for other watershed programs, the presence of invasive species and sustainability of the completed projects.

Applicant contributions are also among the criteria, according to the program's website, and applicants who are willing to sign “a 10-year temporary easement or greater” rate higher than those wherein the landowner is only willing to sign “a five-year license agreement.” Projects score better when landowners are willing to contribute 10 percent of the costs of the projects, as well.

Landowners can view eligibility guidelines and the program rules for the projects at the website [www.CatskillStreams.org/CSBI](http://www.CatskillStreams.org/CSBI). The telephone number for the DCSWCD is 607-865-7161. The office is located at 44 West Street in Walton.

*Walton Reporter*  
*January 27, 2010*