

Understanding & Managing Floodplains for Healthy Watersheds and Resilient Communities

Sustainably managed floodplains provide flood risk reduction benefits by slowing runoff and storing flood water.

In 2022, to help local government and Tribal leaders, New York Sea Grant (NYSG) held day-long workshops to improve participants' knowledge about floodplains, related risks, and ways to maintain and enhance the health of the Great Lakes by sustainably protecting and managing watersheds. The workshops were locally customized to attract planning, zoning and municipal board members, supervisors, mayors, code enforcement officers, conservation advisory boards, and floodplain managers.

Workshops were held in Dunkirk for the Western NY region, in Waterloo for the centralized Lake Ontario region, and in Altmar for the Eastern NY region. A total of 120 people representing 48 different municipalities and 10 counties attended the workshops, with 76% of the group from the target audiences. Workshop presenters engaged participants through classroom training, small group discussions with topical experts, networking with experts and peers, and interactive game play that demonstrated the application of watershed management concepts and resources learned during the workshop.

Workshop evaluations indicated that 100 percent of participants gained knowledge of watersheds and the tools and resources that communities can implement to improve floodplains. A participant at the Dunkirk training said, *"The resources and tools were practical and will be useful references. The watershed game was great; it was fun to learn through playing. Smart use of interactive methods for learning."*

As a result of this NYSG healthy floodplains training, participants from throughout New York's multi-county Great Lakes watershed are now empowered with knowledge, the workshop experience, and networking connections to make better-informed decisions regarding maintaining and enhancing healthy floodplains to reduce flooding risk and improve water quality.



NYSG workshop attendees learn about healthy watershed management on a localized gameboard. Photo: Mary Austerman/ NYSG Inset: How participants described the workshop experience.

2022 Great Lakes Floodplains Training Presentations:
<https://www.nyseagrant.org/2022GLFloodplainsTraining>

Partners:

- Central New York Regional Planning & Development Board (CNYRPDB) • Chautauqua Watershed Conservancy (CWC)
- Finger Lakes Lake Ontario Watershed Protection Alliance • Genesee/Finger Lakes Regional Planning Council
- Lake Erie Watershed Protection Alliance • New York State Department of Environmental Conservation
- New York State Department of State • Tug Hill Commission
- **Funding:** Federal Emergency Management Agency Cooperating Technical Partners Program • National Sea Grant Office Visioning Funding • CNYRPDB • Chautauqua Lake Watershed Management Alliance with support by CWC • New York State Environmental Protection Fund under authority of the New York Ocean and Great Lakes Ecosystem Conservation Act

The Sea Grant Focus Area for this project is Resilient New York Communities and Economies.

New York Sea Grant is a joint program of Cornell University, the State University of New York, and NOAA.
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