

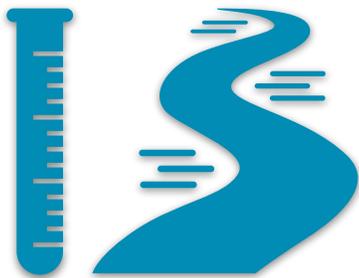
SKWC

SAW KILL WATERSHED COMMUNITY

Protecting the Saw Kill watershed and its ecological, recreational, and historic resources through hands-on science, education, and



Saw Kill Monitoring Program Update

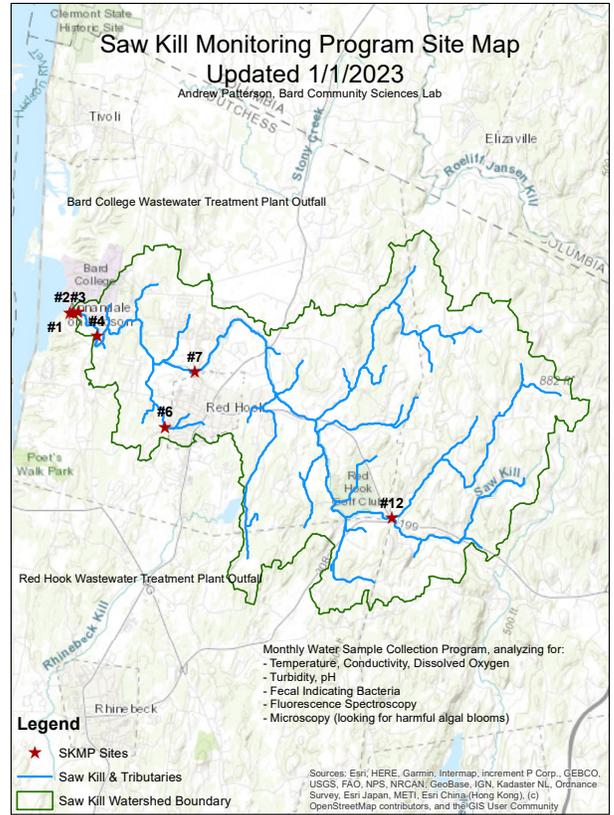
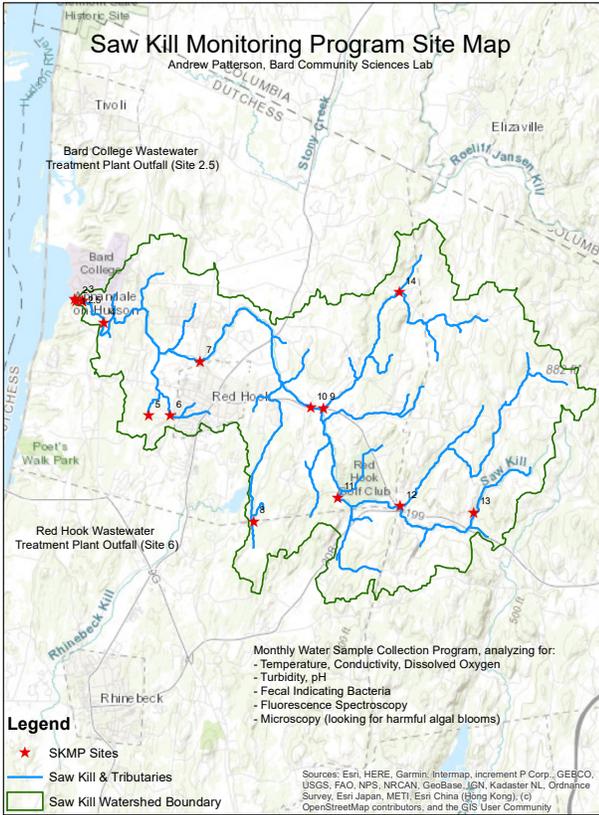


The Saw Kill Monitoring Program was initiated in 2015 to answer Red Hook community members' calls for action in watershed conservation. The idea was to establish accountability for the health of the watershed by individual stressors and polluters. Community engagement with the program has dwindled, signaling lessened need for the program as it currently exists, and likely a shift in priority for community members.

Bard's Community Sciences Lab (formerly Bard Water Lab) has maintained the program through the pandemic at various capacities, and is currently sampling a pared-down selection of important sites (see map below).

Currently, data construction is being done to compile a comprehensive dataset for all the information gathered from the program, as well as a navigable dashboard, both of which will be made available for public use. Once historical data is compiled and synchronized with new data in a presentable way, a review of the data and re-prioritization of the program should take place with community input.

Saw Kill Monitoring Project: Past vs. Present Sampling Sites



Next Steps for the Saw Kill Tributary Naming Project



Saw Kill tributary near
Rock City (see site 12 on
map above)

The Saw Kill (called *Metambesem* by the Algonquin peoples) reaches its terminus in the Hudson (*Mahicannituck*) only after picking up water from 22 unnamed tributary streams in Milan and Red Hook. A stream, even a small tributary, may not seem important enough to protect unless it has an official name and is accurately mapped.

As part of the Saw Kill Watershed Community's mission to protect the watershed, we are working on a project to map and name all the tributaries. Naming can be a way to connect to the ecological, recreational, and historic value of the stream, along with its scenic beauty. The name can honor the presence of specific plants or animals, important people and events, or help us learn and appreciate Indigenous names for the land.

Familiarity with the name of a stream can provide a sense of belonging and a way to connect with others in the community.

The crucial first step of mapping the watershed accurately and identifying all the tributaries, named and unnamed, is now complete, thanks to help from Hudsonia and the DEC. Our next step is to actually go look at the streams. This will help us check the accuracy of the map and will also help us get a sense of where the tributaries are within the larger landscape of Red

Hook and Milan. We'll be looking for the interesting, historic, and unique aspects of each tributary to help us propose names to the community and ask for their suggestions. We're also researching existing, but not yet formalized stream names, and are working with stewards of the land, including the Stockbridge-Munsee nation, Historic Red Hook, watershed residents, and landowners along the watercourses.

For this preliminary next step, we'll be doing windshield surveys of the unnamed streams starting in mid-March, mostly by getting as near to each as we can from the road (no hiking required). If you'd like to help, please get in touch with Sheila Buff at sheilabuff@frontiernet.net or (518) 353-2686.

Town of Milan Natural Resources Inventory Update



Lakes Kill, photo by Phil Zemke



Muscovy Duck, photo by Phil Zemke

The Town of Milan, working with Hudsonia, is nearing completion on its first ever Natural Resources Inventory (NRI). The final draft should be ready for public comment by April. When complete, it will be publicly available in print and online through the town website.

The NRI looks at, maps, and illustrates the landforms, geology, soils, groundwater and surface water, habitats, plants and animals of conservation concern, and places of scenic and recreational value in the town. Importantly, it has helped identify some sensitive environmental areas in the town and has given a much better picture of the town's water resources. The goal of the NRI is to provide recommendations for uses and stewardship so that the natural resources will continue to support the town long into the future.

The NRI is intended to be a practical reference for Milan residents, landowners, businesses, developers, municipal agencies, conservation NGOs, and others interested in understanding, using, and caring for the land and water of the town. In addition to the town's comprehensive plan and other guidelines, the NRI will be a valuable source of information for everyone. The recommendations for protecting natural resources will be very helpful for new and revised zoning and planning regulations in the future.

The NRI project is funded by a grant to the town from the New York State Environmental Protection Fund through the Hudson River Estuary Program of the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation. The town advisory committee is chaired by Town Board member Debra Blalock and includes representatives from the Town Board, Planning Board, Zoning Board of Appeals, Highway Department, and three volunteer community members. Input from other town residents is welcome.

For more information, check the Milan town website at townofmilan.wordpress.com or contact Debra Blalock (dblalock5270@gmail.com) or Gretchen Stevens (stevens@bard.edu).

Amphibian Migrations



Wood Frog



Jefferson / Blue-Spotted Salamander



Spotted Salamander

Each year as the weather warms and the early spring rain arrives, hibernating salamanders, frogs, and toads emerge from their forest habitat, making their way to the vernal pools where they hatched, to lay their eggs and begin a new cycle. To get there, they can travel far and often have to cross busy roads. To help these amphibians migrate safely, the NYSDEC started the Amphibian Migrations & Road Crossings project over a dozen years ago. The Saw Kill Watershed Community has supported this project for several years by organizing trained volunteers in Red Hook, Tivoli, and Milan to help these amphibians migrate safely to their vernal breeding pools in our own community. The data collected is used to help identify species of concern and their critical habitat, as well as key wetlands and vernal pools that are important features of our watershed. This information is an important tool in assessing the health of our watershed and can inform future conservation projects. We have a dedicated group of volunteers here in Red Hook who are ready to spring into action when the conditions are right - the first rainy late winter/early spring nights where temps hover above 40 degrees F - to collect migration data and help amphibians cross the road safely, if need be, but we are always looking for more to join us.



Spotted Salamander

To volunteer you need to complete the online DEC training and be prepared to head out to your assigned road when migrations are possible. Migrations typically occur over a few nights scattered throughout late February to early April.

If you are interesting in joining our SKWC Amphibian Migration Project volunteers in Red Hook, Tivoli, and Milan (or would like more information), please sign up here: <http://bit.ly/3IN0bKs>

For information about the DEC AM&RC project, including trainings, volunteer handbook, and data forms, please visit <https://www.dec.ny.gov/lands/51925.html>.

About the Saw Kill Watershed Community

The Saw Kill Watershed Community covers the Saw Kill watershed and recently has expanded to include the adjacent Mudder Kill and Stoney Creek watersheds. This area includes most of the Town of Red Hook, portions of the towns of Milan and Rhinebeck, the villages of Red Hook and Tivoli and the Bard College campus. Bard College has helped to catalyze the creation of the SKWC, which is made up of community members living in the watershed, members of the conservation advisory councils of the Towns of Red Hook and Milan, Bard College professors and staff, local, county and state officials, the Hudson River National Estuarine Research Reserve, and several nonprofits, including Riverkeeper and Scenic Hudson. The development of this group and the monitoring program has been supported by the Hudson River Estuary Program, the Hudson River Foundation, and Bard College.

For more information, check our Facebook page and our website at:

<http://sawkillwatershed.wordpress.com>

Contact us at thewebsite@sawkillwatershed.org.