

B. ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES

Goal: Preserve and conserve existing open space, acquire new properties for preservation and recreation, and protect the trees, water supply and watersheds, steep slopes, viewsheds, scenic resources, wildlife habitats and other significant environmental assets of the community. Explore and promote the use of alternate forms of energy relative to the use of fossil fuels.

1. **Objective:** Protect and enhance the Indian Brook Reservoir, its watershed and other natural resources through Town and inter-municipal efforts and coordination with private landowners.

Implementation Strategies:

- The Town Environmental Advisory Committee (EAC) should work cooperatively with the Village of Ossining, Towns of New Castle and Cortlandt, and Westchester County to prepare a protection and management plan (with various techniques) for the Indian Brook Reservoir watershed. This effort could be similar to the Croton and Kensico Reservoir watershed plans through inter-municipal cooperation between a number of municipalities, the County and New York City Department of Environmental Protection.



View of the Indian Brook Reservoir during the winter-time.

- The Town and EAC should work cooperatively with the Village of Ossining to ensure that proper refurbishment of the Indian Brook Reservoir's treatment plant and distribution system occurs and maintenance is done on a regular basis.

- The Environmental Advisory Committees (EACs)/Conservation Boards (CBs)/ Conservation Advisory Councils (CACs) in the Towns of Ossining, Cortlandt and New Castle, and Villages of Ossining, Briarcliff Manor and Croton-on-Hudson should coordinate efforts to create vegetated buffer areas for the streams that feed into the Indian Brook Reservoir and Hudson River. The streamside vegetated buffer areas would intercept and filter surface runoff contaminants (such as: silt, road salts, oils and nutrients) and could be created without much land disturbance.
- The Town EAC, surrounding municipal CACs/CBs and other environmental groups should: (1) coordinate and expand their efforts to inform residents, businesses and community organizations about the significance of the Indian Brook Reservoir and watershed, pollution prevention techniques, and various natural resource issues; (2) identify contacts at organizations and agencies; and (3) outline opportunities for local involvement in environmental activities. The Town should also make some of this information available on its website, along with links to these organizations.
- The Town EAC and other interested groups should prepare a Guide with educational information about the Indian Brook Reservoir and watersheds, other water issues and environmental factors. The Guide should be distributed to residents in the Towns of Ossining, Cortlandt and New Castle, Villages of Ossining and Briarcliff Manor, as well as businesses and schools located within the watershed. The Guide should also be posted on the Town's website and public access TV channels.

2. **Objective:** Protect the important habitat areas, water bodies and other significant natural resources.

Implementation Strategies:

- The density provisions of the Town's Zoning chapter have not been analyzed to determine if they are appropriately environmentally protective in many decades. Given the sheer length of time since such an analysis has been performed, it is presumed likely that the density provisions of the Zoning chapter have not kept up with the times, and are not sufficiently protective of the Town's sensitive environmental resources. The Town should review the density provisions of the Zoning chapter to determine whether modifications should be made in this regard.
- The Town should work cooperatively with the Villages of Ossining and Briarcliff Manor, Towns of New Castle, Cortlandt and Mount Pleasant, and other communities, to enact consistent lawn fertilizer and pesticide management plans

which could reduce the levels of pollutant loads in the Indian Brook Reservoir, Hudson River, ponds, streams/creeks and lakes by decreasing point and non-point sources of pollution.

- The Town and EAC should identify areas suitable for nature preserves or permanent buffers around habitat areas, water bodies and other areas in order to protect the function and character of the resources.



Water resources in the Town consist of various streams, ponds, lakes, aquifers, the river and reservoir.

- The Town, EAC and interested residents should actively participate in local and regional environmental studies/plans/projects in order to identify issues relevant to Ossining (environmental and land use), as well as to incorporate information from this *Comprehensive Plan* into other projects.
- The Town Board, EAC and Planning Board should coordinate efforts to make sure that Ossining's regulations are in compliance with, and local decisions are consistent with, the Stormwater Phase II Regulations of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.
- The Town should strive to meet the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation's recreational water standards for all streams in the Town.
- The Town should make educational materials and information available to residents regarding the importance of testing their septic system to determine the effectiveness of the systems, and should encourage the repair or replacement of failing systems.
- The Town should encourage the use of permeable pavers and pavement where feasible and appropriate.

- Where feasible, barriers to appropriate wildlife migration and movement, including in waterways, should be removed.

3. **Objective:** Explore options between the Town and other public agencies to work with property owners and land trusts to protect open space and parkland throughout the region.

Implementation Strategies:

- The Town and EAC should coordinate efforts with the Westchester Land Trust and other land trusts to educate property owners about conservation easements, life estates and dedicated land options which can benefit the property owners and enhance Ossining's inventory of protected natural resources.
- The Town should coordinate efforts with private landowners, land trusts and other environmental and civic groups in the acquisition and maintenance of new open space areas.¹
- The Town should explore all techniques and possible funding sources (including grants and a dedicated open space fund or line item in the Town budget) to preserve open space resources and enhance park/recreation areas.



The preserved natural and scenic resources of the Town's Sally Swope Sitting Park can be enjoyed by members of the community and visitors.

¹ Successful open space preservation depends on commitment, responsibility and stewardship from individuals, organizations, businesses and corporations, and institutions.

4. **Objective:** Encourage the inclusion of landscaped buffers, open space, pocket parks and/or trail connections in proposed projects which are considered by local boards.

Implementation Strategies:

- The Town Planning Board should continue to require applicants to comply with the standards in the Zoning Code regarding setbacks, buffers and “context-sensitive” landscaping within sites, along roadways and between properties in order to enhance the appearance of the community, increase vegetation and shade, and supplement the open space resources in Ossining.
- The Town, Villages, County and State agencies should develop inter-municipal roadway guidelines designed to encourage consistency with respect to landscaping (including the appropriate type and size of roadside trees, shrubs and other vegetation) where appropriate, signs, lighting, and other streetscape improvements for roads which serve the communities.



Trees, landscaping and well maintained roadways contribute to a positive visual image of a community while preserving natural resources. (Left: Garden City, NY; Right: North State Road, Ossining)

5. **Objective:** Establish an integrated open space and trail network connecting parks, preserves, open spaces, institutional properties, schools and other community resources which will provide important aesthetic and environmental functions as well as opportunities for the community to more fully enjoy the resources.

Implementation Strategies:

- The Town, EAC, property owners and community groups should identify locations where paths or walkways can be made between the Ossining Nature Preserve, Ryder Park, other parks and destinations in the community.
- The Town and environmental groups, Westchester County and local property owners should create walking/biking trails and connections to the Briarcliff-Peekskill Trail, Old Croton Aqueduct Trail and the North County Trailway from the various neighborhoods, parks, schools, waterfront and other areas in Ossining.
- The Town and other interested groups should coordinate efforts with the County Parks Department and Historic River Towns of Westchester to have maps and brochures of the trails, paths and walkways available at convenient locations for the benefit of residents, local workers and tourists. The Town and County can also provide trail information on their websites.



Trails can occur in various forms, such as the paved trail shown on the left, to more informal pathways.



The Briarcliff-Peekskill Trail, Old Croton Aqueduct Trail and North County Trailway are walking and biking trails which traverse through Ossining and other communities in the County.

6. Objective: Analyze, possibly strengthen and enforce local tree, steep slopes and wetlands protection regulations.

Implementation Strategies:

- The Town’s tree, steep slopes and wetlands protection regulations were adopted many years ago and have not been analyzed in quite some time to determine whether they are as environmentally protective as they should be. The Town should perform such analysis and amend these regulations if needed.
- The Town Planning Board and other boards/committees should continue to make their application reviews and decisions consistent with the Town Tree Preservation Ordinance’s intent to “control, protect, conserve and regulate the use of trees within the Town to ensure that the benefits found to be provided by all trees will not be lost and to protect the broader public interest.”
- The Town Planning Board and other boards/committees should continue to make their application reviews and decisions consistent with Ossining’s Freshwater Wetlands, Watercourse and Waterbody Protection Ordinance’s intent to “control, protect and preserve its wetlands in light of their valuable ecological functions.”
- The Town Planning Board and other boards/committees should continue to make their application reviews and decisions consistent with Ossining’s Steep Slopes Protection Law’s intent to “regulate, preserve, protect and conserve its steep slopes so as to maintain and protect the natural terrain and its vegetative features, preserve wetlands, water bodies and watercourses, prevent flooding, protect important scenic views, preserve areas of wildlife habitat, provide safe

building sites, protect the subject property and adjoining properties by preventing erosion and sudden slope erosion.”

[*Note: the Tree Protection Ordinance, Wetlands Ordinance and Steep Slopes Protection Law are also intended to provide a reasonable balance between the rights of property owners and the rights of present and future generations of Town residents.*]

- The Town Building Inspector should vigorously enforce the *tree preservation, steep slopes and wetlands regulations*, landscaping requirements and site plan standards in the Zoning Code as well as any other conditions of application approvals by local boards, in order to protect existing trees, replace trees which have been removed, preserve vegetation, retain wetland buffers, protect steep slopes, and ensure that suitable wildlife habitats are maintained throughout Ossining.
- The Town EAC should maintain Ossining’s designation as a national Tree City community and promote the benefits of this award.

7. Objective: Explore the use of alternate forms of energy including solar, geothermal and wind energy.

Implementation Strategies:

- The Town should make educational materials and information available to residents and merchants regarding the availability of alternate forms of energy including solar, geothermal and wind energy. This should include information about tax incentives and rebates which may be available.
- The Town should explore whether the use of alternate forms of energy are feasible and appropriate for the powering, heating and/or cooling any of its buildings or facilities.
- When implementing solar energy techniques, there should be a proper balance between solar energy and the consequential need for tree removal.

j:\docs2\500\ossining (t)\comprehensive plan\update 2014-15\environmental resources 4-15 clean.doc