

1.3 Stakeholder Concerns List

Stakeholder concerns were initially gathered during the first stakeholder and steering committee meeting held January 21, 2011. There were 24 people in attendance and each person was asked to place a tack on a watershed map of where they lived. The watershed was well represented. Attendees were invited to voice their concerns and all comments were recorded on a flip chart. Each person was then given three sticky notes to vote for their highest priority.

Every steering committee meeting and work group meeting since then has been a public meeting and we always ask for new concerns to be listed, see Table 6 Complete list of Stakeholder Concerns. These meetings, along with newspaper articles and personal conversations have been the secondary mechanism for stakeholder concerns to be recorded. Concerns were grouped and summarized by the steering committee into problem statements in Table 7 Problems List based on Concerns.

Table 6 Complete List of Stakeholder Concerns

Concerns	
dead trees-log jams	link to Rensselaer trail system
lack of recreation opportunities on river	lack of organizations working together
flashiness of river	sediment loading
excessive nutrients	high e.coli levels
excessive sediments	how do we fix the problems?
access to river	flooding
lack of bike/walk routes	flashiness of river
Kentland lack of walk/bike path	lack of healthy fish habitat
Lack of drainage	Altering natural hydrology
farming right along waterways	stream bank erosion
is the water safe to touch	beaver dams slowing water
Can we eat the fish?	livestock in creeks
lack of riparian corridor	CSO's
dirty/fertilizer filled water	Failing and not maintained septic systems
lack of ag land using BMPs	urban run-off
loss of native fish and mussels	over channelization and ditch cleaning
no trail system	lack of public knowledge about WQ
poor fishing	bare ground on ag ground over winter
lack of crop residue	tile drainage bypassing filter strips

Table 7 Problems List based on Concerns

Concerns	Problem
Flashiness and flooding of the Iroquois dead trees/Log jams	The Iroquois River has undesirable high and low levels and flows of water that threaten our towns, agricultural land, and health of the river.
Beaver dams slowing water	
Too much sediment	
Altering of natural hydrology/over ditching	
Lack of drainage in areas	
Tile drainage negatively impacts water quality and water flow	
lack of healthy fish habitat	The desirable native fish populations in the Iroquois River and surrounding waterways are suspected to be in decline.
Farming right along streams/ lack of riparian corridor	
Loss of native fish/mussel populations	
Channelization/Ditch cleaning that results in loss of fish habitat = altered hydrology	
Fish are unhealthy to eat because of c ontamination	Area streams within the watershed are very cloudy and turbid.
Excessive sediments in water	
Agriculture BMPs should be utilized more	
Locals unaware of Ag and Urban BMP options	
Too many locations where cattle have direct access to watershed streams	
Too much Fertilizer entering the water	
Lack of crop residue on fields	Widespread recreational use is prevented.
Surface and soil erosion contributes to scouring and sloughing of stream banks	
Access to river limited	
Lack of recreational opportunities on river	
Lack of bike/walk routes or trail system	
Kentland/Rensselaer lack of walking/bike paths	
High E.coli levels within watershed streams	The Iroquois River and its tributaries are listed on IDEM's 303(d) list for "excessive nutrients, e.coli, and IBC."
Public lacks knowledge about the river and its tributaries' water quality	
Perceived poor fishing	
dirty/fertilizer filled water	
Septic systems not efficient enough and/or not properly maintained	
Excessive nutrients in water	
Urban run-off	
Surface and soil erosion contributes to scouring and sluffing of stream banks	
CSO's	
Agriculture BMPs should be utilized more	
Tile drainage bypassing filter strips	
Lack of ag land using BMPs	
Nothing actively growing during non cash crop season to prevent nutrient loss	

1.3.1 Preliminary Problem Statements

The steering committee and work groups then took the concerns and problems list and developed problem statements to bridge the gap from obtaining information to setting concrete goals. These statements helped to clarify our thinking and move forward in the planning process. These will continue to be updated and be used as a guide for the final goals and action plan.

Problem Statement 1: *The Iroquois River has undesirable high and low levels (flashiness) and flows of water that could negatively impact our towns, agricultural land, water quality, and fish habitat; we think this is because of channelization, sedimentation and increased water inputs (tile outlets, impervious surfaces, loss of upstream water holding capacity), resulting in increased velocity of in-stream water.*

What we want: Ensure flow of water is not hindered via log jams and cleaning areas where needed, while at the same time slowing water down in upper headwater areas to even out the high and low flows (Dunne and Leopold 1978). Explore and identify sites for 2-stage ditches and wetland creation (slow release of water). Reduce stream bank erosion. Increase capacity, decrease velocity, expand existing wetland areas and/or create new wetland areas in old oxbows and low lying areas, raise public awareness, and create and promote honest and open discussion between various points of view.

What information is missing: Public awareness; studies on hydrology; flow rates data and levels, and information on river bank status; identify sites for two stage ditch projects in upper headwaters; model results for “x” feet of 2-stage ditches to offset/reduce “x” amount of flash flooding downstream; information on how to prevent log jams, but still protect fish and wildlife habitat along streams is needed. Additional sites for wetland creation that will hold water during storm events are needed. Any information on other BMP’s is needed.

Problem Statement 2: *The desirable native fish populations in the Iroquois River and surrounding waterways are suspected to be in decline; we think it’s because of poor water quality and lack of good breeding habitat.*

What we want: Appropriate and healthy populations of native species, protection of existing fish habitat and known fishing spots and creation of more favorable fish habitat, which will result in improvement of water quality. Open sealed backwaters and bayous, increase forested riparian buffer zones, establish water quality data baseline.

What information is missing? What activities impact fish habitat and how so (ditch cleaning, discharge pipes, etc.); what types of fish should we see; level of water quality good enough, what indicators do we use? Are there other reasons for decline, other BMPs to encourage habitat? What county and town policies/ordinances exist that protect habitat? Is there a review of fish population survey data?

Problem Statement 3: Soil erosion (both water and wind) are contributing to the scouring and sloughing of stream banks which *appear to be negatively impacting water quality and reducing water capacities. We think preventing sediment from reaching the water and reducing stream flashiness may help.*

What we want: We want to see our toes when standing in the water! To do this we must prevent soil from reaching river via encouraging conservation tillage practices, installation of waterways, cover cropping, preserving riparian areas and encouraging other BMPs.

What information is missing: Where is soil coming from: in-stream, from fields, during high rain events? Would 100% no till and cover crops solve the problem? Joint maintenance fund – Jasper/Newton. What is a realistic goal for reducing sediment? What level of sediments in the water is acceptable for wildlife, fish, and mussels? Will slowing the water down help?

Problem Statement 4: *Recreational use of the whole Iroquois River watershed is desirable; however lack of awareness, log jams, poor water quality, perceived poor fishing and eating quality, and lack of public access points prevent widespread recreational use.*

What we want: Increase variety of uses of river. Increase number and better access points, clear log jams, verification of safety of eating fish, create map of access points, area map, report of water quality, increase public use.

What information is missing: Map of current and potential access points, water levels, log jam removal, water quality reports, and land use maps. How to increase late summer flow? List of game species and index of abundance.

Problem Statement 5: *The Iroquois river and its tributaries are listed on the 303(d) list for “excessive nutrients”, which negatively impact aquatic wildlife and potentially can impact groundwater drinking supplies. We think failing septic systems, manure mismanagement, field soil erosion, nitrogen loss out of tile drains and lawn fertilizer, bare ground during the winter, stream access by livestock, lack of conservation tillage, and geological based hotspots may be significant sources of nutrients.*

What we want: Waterways delisted from 303(d) list, reduce nutrients reaching waterways, more acres in conservation tillage, use of cover crops, funding sources, filter strips, septic management issues.

What information is missing: What are current nitrate and phosphorus levels in surface waters and groundwater? What is normal background? Trends over time, highs and lows, what can and is being done to reduce nitrogen/phosphorus losses? Are there hotspots? What are the locations of septic's? What are the conservation tillage numbers, cover crop acres? Locate septic systems without leach fields (tied directly to tile drains. Public awareness.

Problem Statement 6: *Elevated levels of E.coli in the waterways may make it unsafe to swim, fish, recreate, and impact other downstream uses. We know failing septic, combined sewer overflows, and other possible sources such as stream access by livestock, pet wastes, wildlife, and improper manure management may be key sources.*

What we want: Reduce E.coli levels. Establish facts about septic systems and livestock access points, funding options to address septic, trends, policy changes to promote improved systems, cluster development for new subdivisions, reduce over- application of manure.

What information is missing: Public awareness about sources of E.coli, impact to environment, recent data, strains and species links, prioritize areas, location stream reaches that are impaired, number of failing septic and "no-fail connections", where are they and why failing, cattle having unlimited stream access ,existing BMP's.