

NYSDEC Water Quality Improvement Land Acquisition Program: Protecting Land in Rensselaer County

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NYSDEC Water Quality Improvement Program Land Acquisition Grant

Grantor: NYSDEC Division of Water

Grantee: Rensselaer Program - Agricultural Stewardship Association, Rensselaer Land Trust, Rensselaer Plateau Alliance

\$1.5M for program; 25% landowner match

2017-2022 grant

Grant Service Area

Tomhannock Reservoir Watershed

50%+ of Rensselaer County gets water from Tomhannock

Municipalities: Pittstown, Schaghticoke, Hoosick Falls

Land Protection Program vs. Project

Compare with other WQIP acquisition grants statewide: mostly projects elsewhere

Program = Voluntary Land Acquisition Strategy and Recruitment + Educational Components

Landowner Recruitment vs. Single Parcel; determined in advance

DEC looking to Rensselaer Program grantees for program development and land selection

Land Protection Tools

Conservation Easement, Fee Simple Acquisition

Mostly undeveloped woodlands, agriculture, open space

Acquisitions require DEC approval

Fee simple public access available with approved DEC plan

Municipal approval required

Education Component

Website:

www.tomhannockruralland.org; see
resources page

Collaborate with Rensselaer County Soil
and Water Conservation District

Residential and agriculture water
quality best management practices info
on website

Follow-up outreach on BMP
implementation anticipated

Prospect Recruiting

Eligibility: landowners in watershed on reservoir shore (300 ft) or tribs (100 ft)

220 residential or ag landowners with 20+ acres located on reservoir or tribs that feed it

Outreach to landowners with marketing/communications firm (Water Words That Work)

Monthly postcards to watershed landowners with 20 acres+

Acquisition Status

2 fee simple acquisitions committed –
Pittstown (82 and 38 acres); 0 CEs

10 current prospect parcels (7
landowners), all CEs, 4 residential, six
ag (400+ acres)

Observations

Landowners have limited connection to Tomhannock since they do not get water from it

Lengthy transaction periods

For AG: Competing with NYS Ag & Markets farm protection program

For Ag: Water quality goals not always consistent with farm practices

Next Steps

Close on current transactions

Determine viable prospects and proceed with transactions

Continue water quality education

Assess program for DEC