

DRAFT for Discussion

Task 2.8a,b - Plan to update signage, kiosks, website, brochures and other amenities...

It goes without saying that one of the most critical pieces to an enhanced recreational access project for the East Branch watershed is the type, duration, and message delivered in any outreach effort. Not only is where the outreach is conducted critical, but also what information is included in the message(s), the timing of it, the duration of the message, the accuracy of it, and of course the resource itself. All of this feeds into perhaps the most critical of all - one's ability to access these resources with ease.

This project called for the development of a plan to look at five key areas aimed at directing the public to and informing the public about accessible resources in the upper East Branch Delaware watershed. The five identified areas are: Website, Brochure, Kiosks, Signage, and Amenities. The following plan is based upon field observations, discussions with business owners, interactions with the general public at numerous events, email exchanges, and survey results. This document is meant to feed into the final report after input from the East Branch stakeholders.

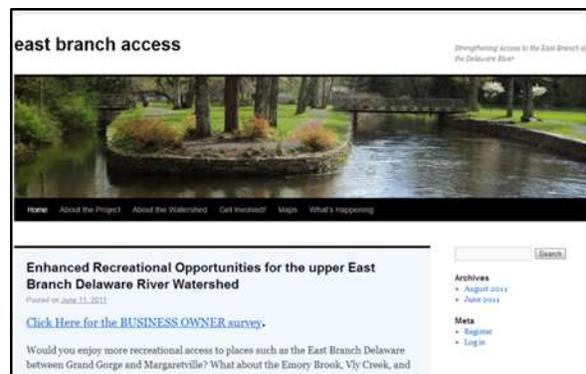
Website

An informative and up-to-date website is the most important component for heightening awareness of resources, educating the public about the resources available, directing them to it, and collecting post-use data and recommendations about it. In addition, 72% of the business owners that completed our online survey indicated that they use "websites" as the place they look for outdoor recreation, for use by their clientele, in the region.

As part of this project, we created a website, www.EastBranchAccess.com, which began to give recreational access on along and within the upper East Branch Delaware River and watershed an Internet presence. Prior to this project, the only "hit" that came up on search engines was for the NYSDEC's "public fishing rights" maps...of which there is access only in one area, around the hamlet of Arkville. It was literally impossible to find information regarding access to this resource anywhere online before this project and subsequent website.

www.EastBranchAccess.com

The site was populated in June 2011 and to date (1/4/13) has seen 2,526 views. The most in one day is 82 views, and the best month for visitation was July 2012, which was just prior to the Catskills Outdoor Experience Festival. These numbers are not very impressive, but it must be recognized that



there has been no promotion of the site outside of the watershed and our resource partners to date. The site has been used primarily as a way to disseminate information to stakeholders regarding our project, and to collect information (in survey form). In the future, upon completion of this initial effort, the site should be transitioned over to one that displays and provides up-to-date information on ALL recreational access to water and lands in the upper East Branch Delaware watershed.

Current Pages:

In addition to the homepage, there are currently five (5) sections on the site: “About the Project”, “About the Watershed”, “Maps”, “Get Involved”, and “What’s Happening”.

As this effort evolves, so too should this website in order to serve as the primary portal to disseminate access information to the general public.

Future Pages should include:

The “About the Watershed”, “Maps”, and “What’s Happening” pages should be retained, while the “About the Project” page should be replaced with an “East Branch Stewards” page that articulates all of the concerns and efforts of this group (a recommendation in the East Branch Access final report) and speaks to the history and evolution of the increased access effort. The “Get Involved” page should be changed to something along the lines of “Feedback” or “Give Us Your Thoughts” – a means to interact with the users of these resources.

Two additional pages should be added. These include a page for “Regional Links” or “Friends” where organizations, businesses, and other entities that support this effort, or are supported by this effort, can be highlighted and featured. The other page to add would be one that showcases a different location, access point, recreational pursuit, or perhaps a hamlet, village, municipality, or stream section each season (or quarter) of the year. The purpose of this page would be to spread access, attention, and use around the watershed, not only showcasing the variety of recreational pursuits, but also the diversity of the region - from small headwater streams and steep mountainsides to the valley bottoms and the massive Pepacton Reservoir.

If resources allow, the development of an interactive online mapper that can be accessed 24/7, is free of charge, and allows the user to have maps and other information at their fingertips on mobile devices should be created. This interface would combine all of the recreational assets in the watershed, regardless of ownership, location, etc, and allow the users to seamlessly determine which one best suits their interest. This would also allow for posting of the most current data and information on closures, hazards, and other pertinent information. The Delaware County Planning Department has something similar to this for real property tax services, and something similar could be developed for recreation.

Brochures

With the ever-increasing use, acceptance, and access to the Internet, brochures are quickly becoming a thing of the past. They certainly still serve a purpose, but no longer is it necessary to plaster roadside pull-offs and rest stops, kiosks, regional visitor centers, and even businesses with them. These arenas have now been replaced with having a distinct and prominent Internet presence. Brochures are still important, but now have a much narrower niche, and any brochures for this project should be limited to the greater Catskill Mountain area.

Brochures for the East Branch Access project should be created, but primarily for use at local festivals, fairs, community gatherings, and local tourism stands/offices. Brochures for this project should not be created/produced to introduce the GENERAL public about the East Branch area, but should be created to educate and inform the INTERESTED public about how to access the resource and what the resource really is.

Meaning, the brochure should focus on informing people that either live in the area and are somewhat familiar with these resources, or people that have come to the area to take advantage of the natural resources. For instance, the brochure should not be tailored to someone that is planning a hiking and fishing vacation in the northeast, but rather to someone that is already in the Catskill region or has committed themselves to visiting the Catskill region / East Branch watershed. Attracting the user to the Catskill region for hiking/fishing is the function of larger tourism efforts, such as CATS or I LOVE NY, etc. Once in the area, we want them to choose the East Branch region over the Neversink, Schoharie, etc.



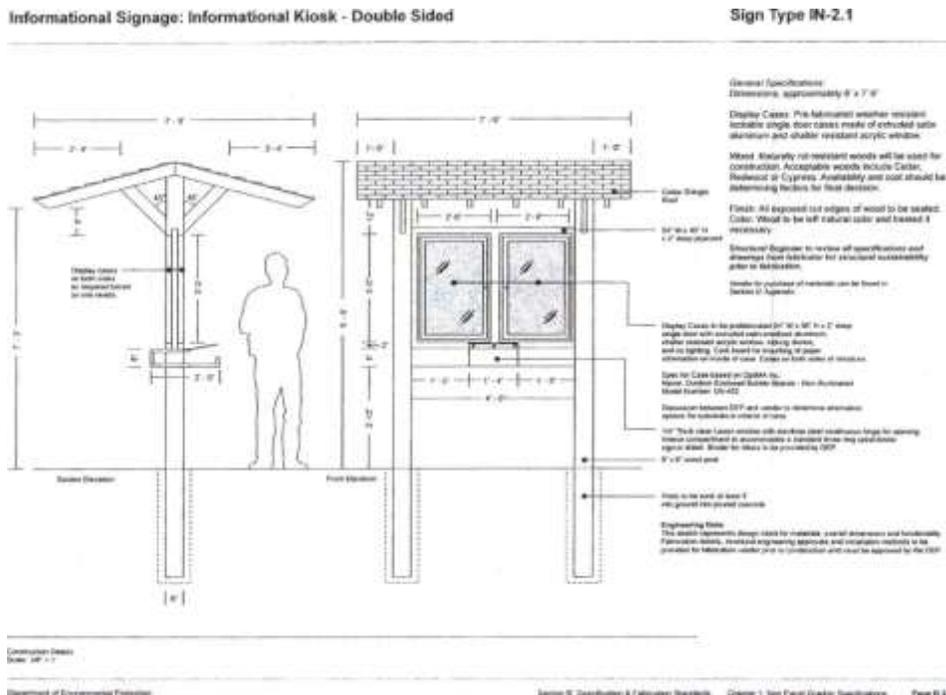
What should be Included in the East Branch Delaware Brochure:

- Types of Recreational Pursuits (fishing, canoeing, kayaking, sailing, hiking, swimming, cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, bird watching)
- Brief Summary of the major stream systems and watershed lands with indication of what type or recreation is most suitable in that area
- Brief overview of the hamlets/villages throughout the watershed with a general description of the types of amenities that are found in each (bait shops, food, restrooms, etc)
- The Pepacton Reservoir Recreational Boating Program (launches, vendors, regulations, etc)
- “Leave No Trace” Principals
- Information on the two or three most pressing aquatic or terrestrial (only for streamside access points) invasive species
- Brief descriptions of NYSDEC Forest Preserve Lands, NYCDEP lands, Municipally-owned lands, Public Fishing Rights, and what it means to be a “good neighbor”.
- A real basic overview of the Enhanced East Branch Recreational Access project, the Central Catskills Chamber of Commerce and Water Discovery Center partnership

- A general overview map with hamlets, major streams/waterbodies and open spaces with information that directs people to the website(s) for more detailed information, directions, and more.

Informational Kiosks

The kiosks for this project that have been proposed are similar to those that currently exist at a majority of NYSDEC trailheads in the Catskill Park and Forest Preserve. The overall dimensions are 7'-9" wide x 7' 6" long x 7' 3" tall. The structure consists of two panels (side by side) each with an area of 24" x 36". As proposed, these kiosks are two-sided, thus doubling the available area of a typical NYSDEC public access informational kiosk. There are a total of four display areas, one of which would be used to highlight East Branch Delaware recreational amenities. See below:



The incentive to standardize the look and feel of these structures (with the NYSDEC ones) as much as possible makes a lot of sense and should be a priority. This thread of continuity indicates to the user(s) that this region has a sense of place and has invested in these resources, and cares about the user experience and the resource in general.

The four kiosks that we recommend for construction as a part of this enhanced recreational access project include one in Andes, one in Fleischmanns, one in



Roxbury, and one in Margaretville. The kiosk in Margaretville (pictured) is already under development and funding is in place for construction. This kiosk will be different in the sense that it will essentially replace the one that existed pre-Tropical Storm Irene. It will contain some information on the Pepacton Boating, the Catskill Forest Preserve, and East Branch recreation.

The kiosks specifically designed and constructed for this East Branch access project should contain the following information:

- A map, tabloid size at a minimum, of the upper East Branch watershed lands/waters that indicates the state lands, city lands, municipal parks, multi-use trails, Pepacton designated launch sites, public fishing rights and designated access sites, the hamlets/business districts, location of steam cleaning outfits.
- Types of Recreational Pursuits (fishing, canoeing, kayaking, sailing, hiking, swimming, cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, bird watching).
- Brief Summary of the major stream systems and watershed lands with indication of what type or recreation is most suitable in that particular area.
- Brief overview of the hamlets/villages throughout the watershed with a general description of the types of amenities that are found in each (bait shops, food, restrooms, etc)
- The Pepacton Reservoir Recreational Boating Program (launches, vendors, regulations, etc)
- “Leave No Trace” Principals
- Information on aquatic and/or terrestrial (only for streamside access points) invasive species
- Brief descriptions of NYSDEC Forest Preserve Lands, NYCDEP lands, Municipally-owned lands, Public Fishing Rights, what it means to be a “good neighbor”
- Information on the proposed Water Discovery Center

The locations where new upper East Branch Delaware recreational kiosks should be established include:

- Margaretville (along the Binnekill at the community parking lot) – already under development
- Fleischmanns - at the new Village Park
- Roxbury - at Kirkside Park
- Andes - at Ballantine Park

There are a few existing kiosks that have a similar focus to this project. Any newly-designed structures should be coordinated with those that exist, both in the design, the look and feel, and the information in each. Existing kiosks include:

CWC kiosk at the Shavertown Bridge located on the southern shore along NYS Route 30 (*seen at right*)



NYCDEP kiosk(s) on either side of the old Dunraven bridge / fishing platforms along NYS Route 30/28 (north) and Reservoir Rd (south) a few miles west of Margaretville. *(seen at right)*



An area on each of these existing kiosks should be dedicated to this increased recreational access project. The owner/maintainer of these structures should be approached and asked for permission to provide the following:

- A panel (tabloid size at a minimum) that summarizes the types of recreational access such as the NYCDEP watershed lands/waters
- NYSDEC lands/waters
- municipally-owned areas
- Pepacton boating program
- Water Discovery Center site and other non-profit owned accessible lands
- the URL of the EastBranchAccess.com website (for more information)

Signage

In addition to inadequate online recreational access information, the lack of recreational signage was identified repeatedly throughout this project as an impediment to realizing the benefits of access. This not only came out in the general East Branch access survey, but also with business owners and during conversations with the general public and numerous festivals.

There are four types of signs that exist in the East Branch region that provide users some information regarding our natural resources and gaining access to them. There are “way-finding” signs, “access point” signs, “educational” or “awareness” signs, and “property use designation” signs. All are important, and all but one form are severely lacking in the upper East Branch Delaware and its watershed.

Way-finding -

Way-finding signs, perhaps the most critical of all, direct potential users to the resource(s) that are available in that particular area. Way-finding signs are virtually non-existent in the upper East Branch watershed.

The few current examples that exist include a NYSDEC sign along Route 30 for Little Pond Campground and a NYSDOT sign along Route 30/28 for a fishing pier.



Educational or Awareness -

Another type of signage, which are educational in nature, and often thought of as not as important, are actually very critical. These signs are those that heighten awareness or educate the users, telling the user that this particular area lends itself to outdoor recreation and access to streams, trails, etc. There is some of this signage in the watershed area, although not enough. The final report will recommend expanding the “Catskill Park” logo on top of road signage up into the Roxbury area and along Route 28 toward Andes, among other recommendations.

Existing Educational / Awareness signage examples:



Access Point Signage –

A third type of sign are those at each particular access point. With most of the accessible lands in the upper East Branch watershed being on lands owned by the City of New York, the signs that exist are more like ‘posted’ signs, which describe what use is permitted and if a permit is needed, or not (see the next section). Aside from these signs, the majority are NYSDEC signs that indicate trailheads, or lean-to locations. There are no designated NYS fishing access signs, although some locations do exist and the potential is there. The final report will recommend the addition of many of these types of signs where access is prevalent, although signage is lacking.

Existing Access Point Signage Examples:



Property Use Designation Signage-

The last type of sign that relates to public access are the ones that are most widely-seen in the watershed. These are combination of 'recreational use' signs (telling the user what is or what isn't permitted and a posted sign all rolled into one. These are the NYCDEP signs that indicate what uses exist on that particular unit and if an access permit (through the DEP) is required or not.



Somewhat similar to these are the NYSDEC's posted signs for Public Fishing Rights (PFRs).

There are a few locations along the Bush Kill and the Dry Brook where PFR's exist, however signage for those areas is not seen.

The final report will recommend re-posting of these PFRs and suggest to indicate roadside pulloffs for these areas.



Amenities

In many senses of the word, very few "amenities" currently exist in the upper East Branch Delaware River watershed. Types of amenities for this project, included things like: Public Rest Rooms, Support Transportation (Van pickup or kayak/canoe pickup for example), Cell Phone coverage, Medical Access and Emergency Services, Full Service Destination Lodging and Programs, Children and Teen Activities, and Educational programs.

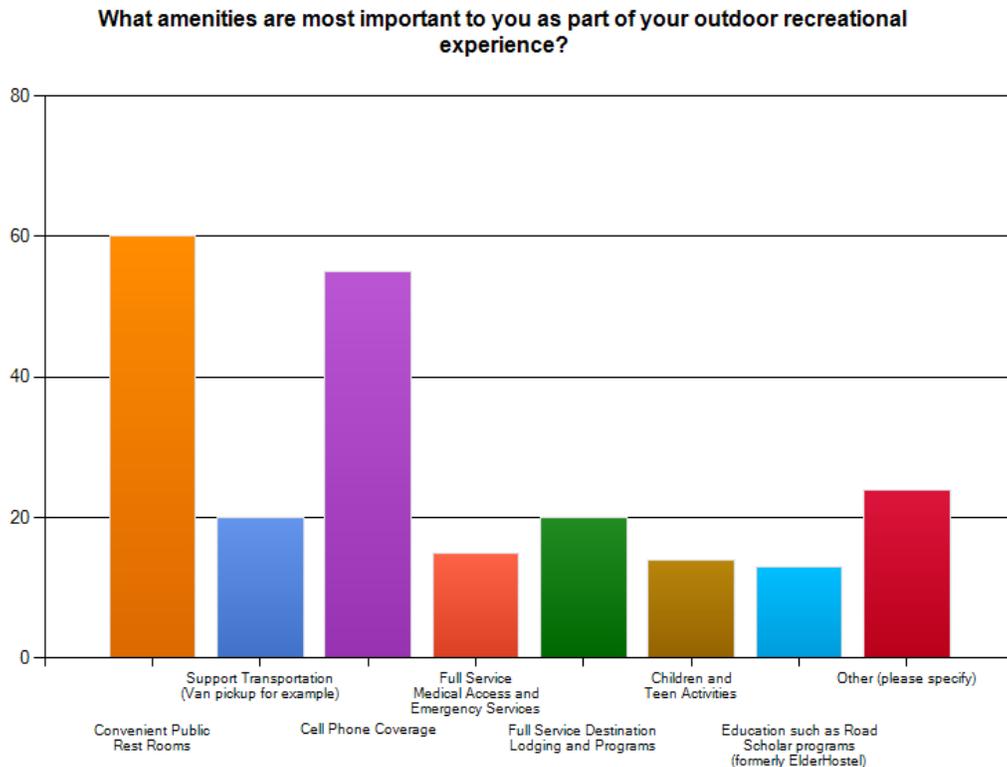
An online survey (at www.EastBranchAccess.com) was conducted of 142 users or potential users of the recreational resource. Public restrooms was the most important (55.6%) followed by Cell Phone Coverage (50.9%), followed by Support Transportation (18.5%) and Full Service Destination Lodging Programs (18.5%). The survey was



launched June 14, 2011 and was closed June 22, 2012. The survey was designed and initiated prior to the Pepacton Reservoir being open for non-motorized boating access, as well as prior to Tropical Storms Irene and Lee.

Below is a bar graph of results from Question #12 of the survey, which asked: “What types of services would you need to make it easier to enjoy recreational pursuits?”

119 respondents to this question



As you'll see from the graph, there were 26 responses in the “Other” category, and the written responses have been included below.

- *boat ramps*
- *More DEC Info. Better Garmin maps (they are very incomplete)*
- *My main concern would be active protection the sites as "recreational use" is increased. In other words, whatever of the above activities/improvements are pursued, I would hope an environmentally sensitive approach will be paramount. Otherwise, we're just talking about more trash, noise, etc. in more previously undisturbed sites.*
- *livery service guided kayak trip or tubing trip*
- **ALL THE REGULATORY AGENCIES WORKING TOGETHER TO IMPROVE THE RESOURCES**

- *equipment rentals place to purchase access permits cell service for GPS or in case of emergency*
- *boat rental shops*
- *kayak/canoe/sunfish rental made available*
- *Generally, more access to streams, but undeveloped access.*
- *NYS DEP publications and website updates, NYS Conservationist articles, Catskill Mtn News articles, 'opt-in' email distributions, Trout Unlimited articles*
- *improved access*
- *Increased access areas*
- *More time to get away to the Catskills*
- *web sites*
- *boat launches*
- *Less posted land, more DEC public easements for stream access.*
- *increased public fishing rights*
- *There are no handicapped access in the Esopus, none on the east branch Pepacton*
- *more public access*
- *state purchase of public fishing rights and fisherman access areas - better use of DOT road redo to provide pull offs, etc for fisherman parking - statewide, not just East Branch Delaware!*
- *even fewer restrictions on watershed property access*
- *Info/maps*
- *A good tourism dedicated website that unites the region and its offers.*
- *Cell towers, More bait and tackle shops*
- *Access to Pepacton for sailing. Bike trails.*
- *Info organized and accessible in brochures, online, etc.*

Very few of the written responses actually dealt with “amenities”, but ones that did essentially boiled down to improved digital capabilities to access better information in an easier way/format.

With the recent activation of a nearby cellular tower outside of Margaretville, improved cell phone coverage is already in place. Certainly not all of the watershed area is serviced, but much more now since the survey was initiated. The public restrooms, or lack thereof, continues to be a problem with no easy or cheap answer. This issue must be addressed in the near future if the full recreation potential of the Upper East Branch Delaware watershed is to be realized. Further recommendations and ideas will be included in the Final Report.