

The Village of Schoharie Creek Multi-Use Trail

The Village of Schoharie has been awarded two grants - a NYS Department of State, Local Waterfront Revitalization Implementation Grant and an Appalachian Regional Commission Grant – totaling \$656,500 to construct a 1.75 multi-use trail along the Schoharie Creek. As part of the grant program, the Village of Schoharie is required to provide a match through cash or in-kind services in the amount of \$168,800. The Village has over \$20,000 in cash already raised and commitments from the County to provide in-kind services for construction that will go towards our match requirement. The Village Board and a local trail advisory committee is currently working to raise additional funding to meet match requirements.

The project includes construction of a ~1.75-mile multi-use trail along the Schoharie Creek in the Village of Schoharie, with two trailheads/gravel parking lots, a canoe/kayak boat launch, signage and amenities such as kiosk and picnic tables. It is located wholly within the Village of Schoharie, in the Town and County of Schoharie. The boat launch will allow for enhanced recreational use of the Creek and create a 2-mile blueway trail from the Village north to the existing NYS DEC boat launch in Central Bridge. As access to the Creek is currently very limited, creation of a new boat launch will allow for enhanced use of the State boat launch and will benefit other communities in the Schoharie Valley.

This trail will take advantage of a unique and undeveloped landscape created by the Schoharie Creek located in the heart of the Village. The trail will realize a vision the Village has had for itself for many years – providing walking and biking recreational opportunities as a central feature to enhance health, community, and the economy.

The floods caused by Hurricane Irene brought with it a critical need to revitalize Schoharie after facing catastrophic flood losses. Unfortunately, the need is still critical years later. Recovery, especially economically, has been slow in the Village. To address this, the Village has prepared a local waterfront revitalization strategy, a long-term recovery plan, and an updated comprehensive plan. Several years of planning and public input has clearly identified both desire and need for improved recreation facilities in the Village and region. Creation of this trail is a key project designed to address many of those needs.

Our combination of being a traditional, historic community that includes a large, undeveloped natural area is a unique asset the Village plans on taking advantage of with this trail. Public input established that revitalization efforts should be tied to our natural, historic, cultural, and community character assets and that a trail along the Creek was a priority. The Village’s Waterfront Revitalization Plan sums up our vision:

“The Schoharie and Fox Creeks will be positive assets in the Village and central to new outdoor-oriented recreation and tourism activities here. Schoharie will capitalize on its unique character where a largely un-built and unspoiled waterfront is located within a beautiful and historic village setting. The Village will be a place where outdoor activities that take advantage of its unique setting will be celebrated. Easy access to the waterfront will be provided for small-craft boating, biking, hiking, park, playground and other outdoor experiences. These waterfront and recreational activities will be physically linked to residential and business areas to become drivers for new economic prosperity, thriving business development, and promotion of quality of life for residents. At the same time, Schoharie protects the environment, agricultural activities within the Village, and natural functioning of the stream and floodplain. Village residents, businesses, organizations, and visitors alike will have a new appreciation and understanding of our unique natural and cultural resources and the natural beauty of our valley. Safe linkages will be made between the creeks, parks, Main Street, and residential areas within

the village. The waterfront and recreational improvements throughout the Village will promote Schoharie as a quality place to visit, live and do business.”

The trail will enhance outdoor recreation, which is the #1 desired amenity of residents in the Village. It will provide opportunities for bike, canoe, kayak rentals and tours; enhancing tourism and improving business opportunities throughout the Village year-round for food and lodging. Since the flooding from Hurricane Irene, there is more need now than ever to build a new economy in Schoharie.

Studies show that for every \$1 million spent in bike and walking projects, 11-14 jobs are created. Bicycle and pedestrian facilities increase home values and drive spending at local businesses which will spur new job creation and economic development. This trail will be an economic driver to a much broader region as we attract visitors to the entire area.

There are currently no public access opportunities to the Schoharie Creek anywhere in the Village. The creek is disconnected physically and visually from the Village. As such, the only experience the community has with this unique natural resource is negative – through flooding. However, here the creek is undisturbed, with good water quality, fisheries, nesting bald eagles, and ample recreational opportunities as it passes through the Village. The trail will promote educational opportunities at nearby Schoharie Central School and with the Schoharie River Center (an educational organization).

The trail will contribute to educational opportunities through river monitoring; birding (eagles are present along the creek), fish, and other wildlife monitoring and education; habitat identification; and others. In addition, the trail will feature signage about stream ecology, Schoharie valley history, and information to educate users about the floodway and floodplain.

The multi-use trail will take advantage of the Village's natural beauty, will have easy access from all areas in the Village and from nearby Route I-88, will appropriately uses our undeveloped waterfront in the Village to provide a taste of 'wilderness in the Village', is an appropriate and sustainable use for areas that flood, and will be an economic driver that links with Main Street to support existing and new businesses.

