**2014 Program Overview**

**What is the NY Master Watershed Steward Program?**

Watershed stewardship is about caring for the waters of New York and working to protect, restore, and enhance watersheds. The NY Master Watershed Steward (MWS) program empowers watershed professionals and volunteers to be leaders in their communities and to promote healthy watersheds through increased awareness, understanding, and knowledge about the function of watersheds, potential impairments, and watershed protection strategies. Master Watershed Stewards can help reduce the negative impacts of land-use practices and pollutants while planning effectively for the future of New York State’s watersheds. The purpose of the MWS program is to provide you with opportunities to learn and put to use skills and knowledge to support watershed management in your community through the challenging process of developing and implementing a watershed plan.

**Who should become a NY Master Watershed Steward?**

You! The program is designed for anyone with a willingness to learn about and protect watersheds in their community. We welcomewatershed coordinators, citizen volunteers, local government officials, engineers, planners, conservation agency staff, stormwater managers, members of land trusts or community environmental organizations, drainage boards, town boards, or others that influence water management.

**Why is there a need for Master Watershed Stewards?**

New York has an abundance of rivers, streams, lakes and coastal waters and there is a continual need to manage and protect these valuable resources. These waters serve as the source for recreation, fishing, tourism, agriculture and manufacturing. However, a number of these rivers, lakes, streams, and coastal waters are impaired or have threats that impact the current designated use of these water bodies. These waters face a variety of threats introduced by human uses including pollution from urban runoff, municipal wastewater, agricultural runoff, streambank erosion, inadequate on-site septic treatment, and much more. These threats are significant because approximately 95% of New Yorkers receive their drinking water from public water supplies.

Through this program, we hope to strengthen watershed support networks in New York, and increase the capacity of communities to address watershed management issues. Read more about the program at the Web site: www.NYWatershedSteward.org

**What are the benefits of becoming a NY Master Watershed Steward?**

* + Learn from leading experts about topics including watershed planning, volunteer watershed monitoring, assessing and inventorying, hydrology, stormwater and floodplain management, green infrastructure, leadership and communication skills, and stakeholder involvement techniques.
	+ Receive materials and resources (training materials, handbooks, access to web resources) to help you learn about watershed management
	+ Receive a professional certificate as a NY Master Watershed Steward (please let instructors know if you would like Cornell Continuing Education credits-CEU’s)
	+ Earn the position of an official Cornell Cooperative Extension volunteer
	+ Use your skills to implement a 40-hour MWS Volunteer Project that benefits watersheds in New York.
	+ Receive technical support from a range of professionals on the design and implementation of your MWS Volunteer Project
	+ Meet, learn from, and build a network of peers and professionals working on watershed issues.
	+ Gain strategies, skills, and resources for successful watershed management.
	+ Be recognized as a leader in watershed management
	+ Maintain involvement with the New York Master Watershed Steward Post-training as mentors to new trainees, watershed outreach volunteers, contributors to the website, etc.

**How was the NY Master Watershed Steward Program developed?**

The NY Master Watershed Steward is funded in part by grants from the NYS Water Resources Institute and the NYS Agricultural Experiment Station (Smith-Lever and Hatch) with support from the Hudson River Estuary Program. The NYS MWS program is guided by a diverse and broad steering committee of conservation and environmental organizations and agencies. The content of the curriculum benefits greatly from lessons developed by other “master” watershed programs across the United States and their successful programs. Additional lesson modules were developed through collaborative efforts between the NY Master Watershed Steward Project Team and the multi-stakeholder steering committee and other volunteer reviewers. The NY MWS program combines distance education lesson modules with face-to-face group training sessions, along with a hands-on project.

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**2014 Program Description**

**A. What are the requirements to become a certified NY Master Watershed Steward?**

*1. Become an Enrolled CCE Volunteer*

First, interested participants must fill out the NY Master Watershed Steward Volunteer application before November 22, 2013:

[http://www.nywatershedsteward.org/How\_to\_Apply.html](http://www.nywatershedsteward.org/How_to_Apply.html%20%20)

If accepted into the program, you will be expected to pay the $100 registration fee – the fee is used to cover the expenses of guest speakers, all training materials, and meals – and follow the procedures to become an official representative of Cornell University Cooperative Extension (CCE) as an enrolled volunteer. Being a NY Master Watershed Volunteer is a unique privilege and CCE holds its volunteers in high esteem. CCE volunteers are often the most visible face to the public and work with stakeholders administering programs, often unaccompanied by paid CCE staff. There are four forms that you will need to read, complete, sign, and return to CCE. These forms will be sent to you once you have been accepted into the MWS Program.

* Form #1: CCE County Volunteer application
* Form #2: CCE Volunteer Agreement and Code of Conduct -- explains the code of conduct expected of CCE volunteers and outlines the terms of volunteering with CCE
* Form #3: CCE Reference Check
* Form #4: Criminal Background Check Authorization – please note that the background check is confidential and MWS program staff does not see the records nor have access to those files. This background check is required as many CCE volunteers work with vulnerable groups of people (e.g., children, senior citizens). Even if you don’t anticipate working with these groups, CCE still requires the background check.
* Optional Form #5: the Department of Motor Vehicle Record Request Permission form is an optional form that you may choose to fill out if you would like to be a volunteer driver during CCE programs.

The forms are simple and are handled by the Human Resources staff of the respective CCE offices.

*2. Attend the In-Person Trainings*

In order to create opportunities for students to learn from each other and develop new professional relationships, we have included multiple face-to-face meetings in the MWS program curriculum. These in-person trainings not only include networking opportunities, but are also filled with guest speakers who discuss issues important to watershed management, policy, and people. It is very important that you plan to attend these face-to-face sessions. Be sure to notify your county coordinators as soon as possible if you are unable to attend a face-to-face meeting.

Refer to the MWS program overview for the specifics including the date, time, and location of the face-to-face meetings. Directions and detailed agendas will be communicated during the course. Scheduling of face-to-face meetings will be determined once steward trainee roster is completed.

*3. Complete the Required and Elective Modules*

Every participant must complete the three required lesson modules and three additional elective lesson modules. These modules are discussed in detail in section C, “How is the Master Watershed Steward training organized?”

*4. Complete an In-Depth Learning Project*

Every participant in the MWS program will complete an in-depth learning project to be presented during the graduation session in November 2014. The MWS program leaders will present project options to the stewards that are based on both steward interests and watershed needs in the region. Each steward should plan to spend 40 hours on the in-depth project over the 10-month time period of the course. More details about the in-depth learning project will be discussed at the initial training session. Stewards will receive technical support and guidance from MWS program staff, such as details about the skills, time, and equipment needed, the benefits to volunteers, skills gained, etc. associated with the project.

**B. What topics are covered in the Master Watershed Steward Program?**

The modules, presentations, and workshops cover important watershed topics such as watershed planning, watershed assessments, green infrastructure, and best management practices. Social topics are also included, such as policy issues, how to engage with stakeholders, and how to determine and build on your personal strengths.

**C. How is the Master Watershed Steward training organized?**

The topics covered in the program are taught in multiple ways: online/distance-learning modules, in-person presentations by professionals in watershed-related fields, in-person field sessions, and attending seminars or workshops hosted by local groups.

There are **three required lesson modules** and you will choose **three additional elective lesson modules**. Thus, you are required to complete a total of six lesson modules plus the in-person trainings in order to graduate and receive your professional certificate in watershed management. The elective modules include “online” options as well as additional in-person trainings that you can attend and provide proof of participation.

*Online/Distance-Learning Modules*

The required lesson modules in the MWS program are all online/distance-learning modules. These modules are: 1) Watershed Planning, 2) Stakeholder Engagement, and 3) Leadership Skills for Watershed Volunteers and Managers. They contain an introduction, learning objectives, beginning and advanced choices for assignments, and a list of background readings and resources. Some of these readings are labeled "Required" -– you should complete these readings in order to complete the module. All of the required readings will be made available to you online, either via PDF format or as a link to another website, or will be handed to you at an in-person training. Other background readings are offered under the heading "Additional Resources" if you wish to learn more about a particular topic. The elective lesson modules that are available online/distance-learning follow this same format.

*Module Assignments*

The module assignments have been designed to relate directly to your watershed planning and restoration efforts. Therefore, assignments are of a “hands-on” nature and you will be encouraged to work with your MWS cohort, watershed group, stakeholders, local officials, and others in your community as part of the assignments. Although you are ultimately responsible for writing and submitting your own assignments, we strongly encourage you to work with these aforementioned people as a critical part of the learning experience.

Most lesson module assignments often have more than one option: basic and advanced. You should complete only one of the options. Indicate clearly which option you have selected when you submit your assignment. A “Course Sites” website (<http://NYWatershedSteward.CourseSites.com>) has been set up for this MWS Program and you will be able to upload your assignments via this website. Instructions for accessing the site and uploading documents will be provided at the first in-person training.

Assignments should be in MS Word format and the file name should follow this format: LastName\_ModuleName\_AssignmentOption.doc. For example: Smith\_Leadership\_IDP.doc

**Assignments must be turned in on the scheduled due date to receive credit.** We know that you probably have a full time job, family, or other responsibilities, and that certain circumstances may make it impossible for you to submit an assignment on time. In these instances, contact us as soon as possible to arrange for a suitable alternative deadline. Assignment due dates are listed in the course schedule.

*Review and Feedback on Assignments*

Rather than assigning a number or letter grade to your work, we will keep a record of completed assignments. You must submit six complete assignments to receive your professional certificate in watershed management at the graduation session. To improve networking and connections with others working in watershed management, we will utilize peer review along with steering committee members in providing feedback to participants.

*In-person field sessions*

Several of the elective modules are field-based lessons, such as Watershed Assessment or Stream Monitoring, and modules that are lab-based, such as GIS and GPS Training. These modules will typically be scheduled once or twice during the length of the Program depending on instructor availability and demand.

*Assignments*

While these in-person trainings don’t usually have an “assignment” associated with them, you must be fully involved in the activities to receive credit for attending. There will also be a designated place on CourseSites where you will check off that you attended a particular training; details will be provided during the first in-person training.

*Attending local seminars and/or workshops*

The MWS program coordinators will supply a list of local seminars and workshops that may be attended to receive credit as elective modules. If you locate a seminar/workshop that wasn’t previously listed, you may ask the MWS coordinators if you may receive elective credit for attending the event. There will also be a designated place on CourseSites where you will check off that you attended a particular event; details will be provided during the first in-person training.

**D. What will be my time commitment to the MWS Program?**

We recognize that you probably hold a full time job, may have family and community responsibilities, and that additional work outside of these can be difficult to accomplish. This program has been developed to directly benefit and aid in the day to day work of watershed professionals and volunteers. In this way, the MWS program will help you in your volunteer or professional watershed management activities. Lesson modules have assignments due every few weeks, and each assignment will involve about 3 or 4 hours of your time. In addition you will be involved in completing an in-depth lesson project involving about 40 hours of your time. The skills and knowledge gained, the relationships built, and recognition of being a graduate of the NY Master Watershed Steward program will be the rewards for the time and effort you contribute to the program.

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**Current and Former Undergraduate Student Interns**

Meredith Frenchmeyer (Science of Natural and Environmental Systems, Cornell ‘14)

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