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**Guidelines for Partnering Sponsors**

The NY Master Watershed Steward (MWS) program is designed in order to empower 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. The purpose of the MWS program is to provide trainees with opportunities to learn and put to use skills and knowledge to support watershed management in their communities through the challenging process of developing and implementing a watershed plan.

The designation of Master Watershed Steward is contingent upon the completion of an in-depth 40 hour, apprenticeship-based project. As the focal component of their training, the trainee is required to select a partnering sponsor that will demonstrate expertise in an area of watershed planning and/or management. The job of a MWS partnering sponsor can be both extremely rewarding and laborious. In choosing to participate as a partnering sponsor, your cooperation is essential in assisting your trainee’s ultimate success in this endeavor. In order to adequately complete this project, the trainee may necessitate financial assistance in terms of equipment, technical support or general funding. Additionally, the scope of their research may prove a significant time commitment on behalf of both the MWS trainee and you, as a partnering sponsor. Thus, your continuing cooperation with your individual trainee is highly conducive to their eventual success. It will be advantageous that parameters of the project be forthright agreed upon and understood in advance of the undertaking of this task.

We ask that all partnering sponsors demonstrate credentials as a professional in watershed management (or) a particular area of or related to watershed planning and/or management. The trainee’s project should encompass a scope of approximately 40 working hours. The research should be science-based, while providing hands-on experience for applied learning. All projects will have been previously approved by the trainee’s respective county coordinator.

In assisting your trainee through this process you be will providing a critical service in terms of increasing the capacity of communities to address watershed management issues in New York State. It is a mission of this program to foster hands-on collaboration with watershed professionals and generate lasting professional and interpersonal relationships between New York Master Watershed Stewardship Program coordinators and participants. It is our hope that these efforts will result in an overall more integral network of peers and professionals working on watershed issues throughout the state.