

2024 USC ANNUAL REPORT



Upper Susquehanna Coalition

We are committed to protecting and improving water quality and natural resources in the Upper Susquehanna River Basin in New York and Pennsylvania.

2024 scenes from the field

Cortland County Wetland Site



Chemung County Cover Crop



Tioga County Ag Outreach Event



Steuben Post-flood Stream Site Evaluation

Water Quality Program Review Site Steuben County



Tioga County Cover Crop



2024 USC Board of Directors



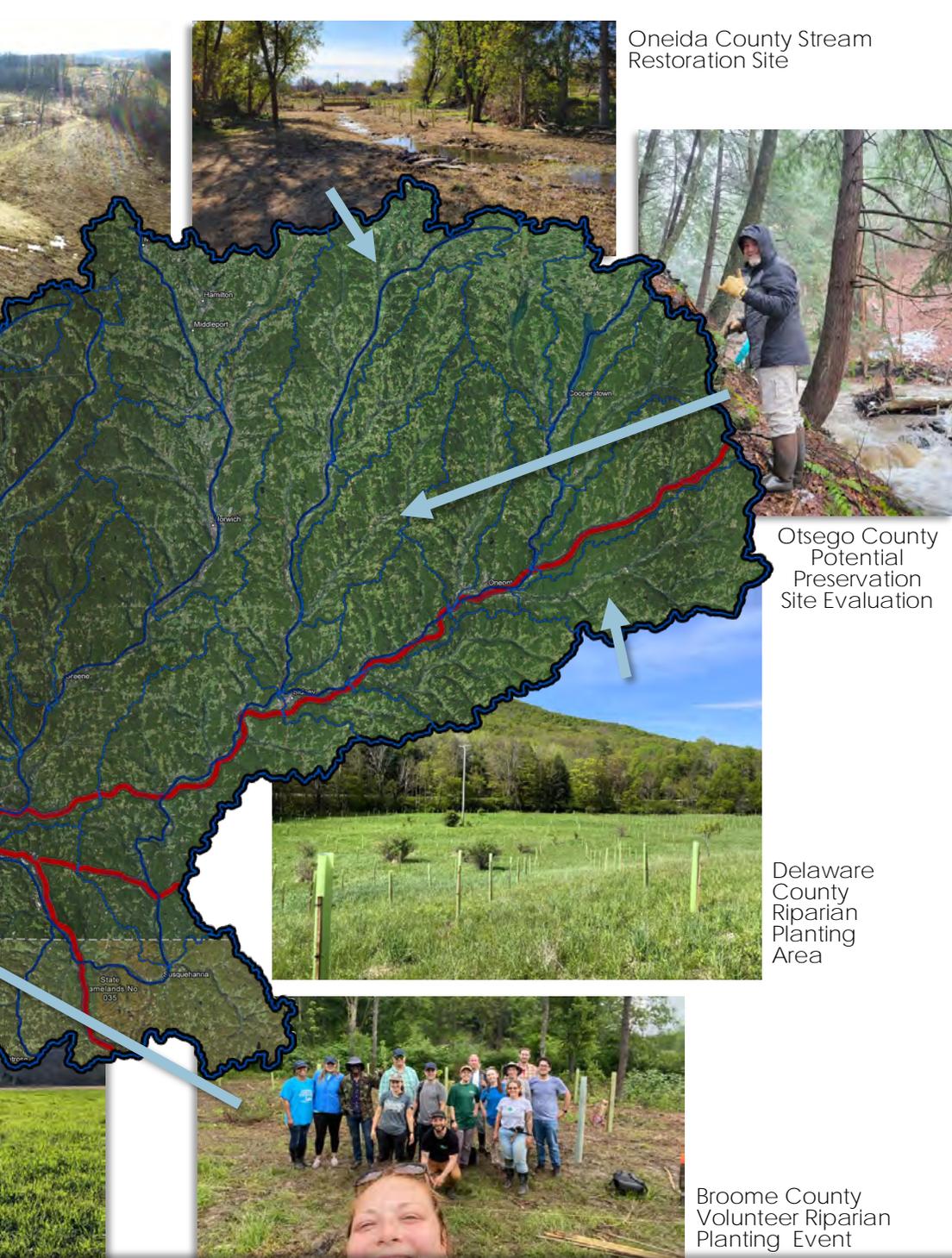
2 Chair
Jeff Parker

Vice-Chair
Jennifer Kelly

Member at Large
Steve Lorraine

Member at Large
Amanda Barber

Member at Large
Wendy Walsh



Oneida County Stream Restoration Site

Otsego County Potential Preservation Site Evaluation

Delaware County Riparian Planting Area

Broome County Volunteer Riparian Planting Event

USC Staff

- Wendy Walsh
- Lydia Brinkley
- Chris Brogdale
- Emily Dekar
- Thomas Flynn
- Ava Glasser
- Ranier Lucas
- Jeremy Waddell
- Melissa Yearick

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Coordinator's Note

2024 was another successful and productive year for the USC and our partners who were busy delivering conservation across the watershed. Once again riparian corridors were forested, streams rehabilitated, wetlands restored and posts were pounded among many other ag projects. It's exciting to take a look back and see all that we have accomplished! I want to extend a special thank you to Steuben County SWCD's Jeff Parker for his 11 years of leadership as USC's Chair, and am also thankful to our next wave of leaders willing to step up as Jeff passes the torch in 2025.

Wendy Walsh

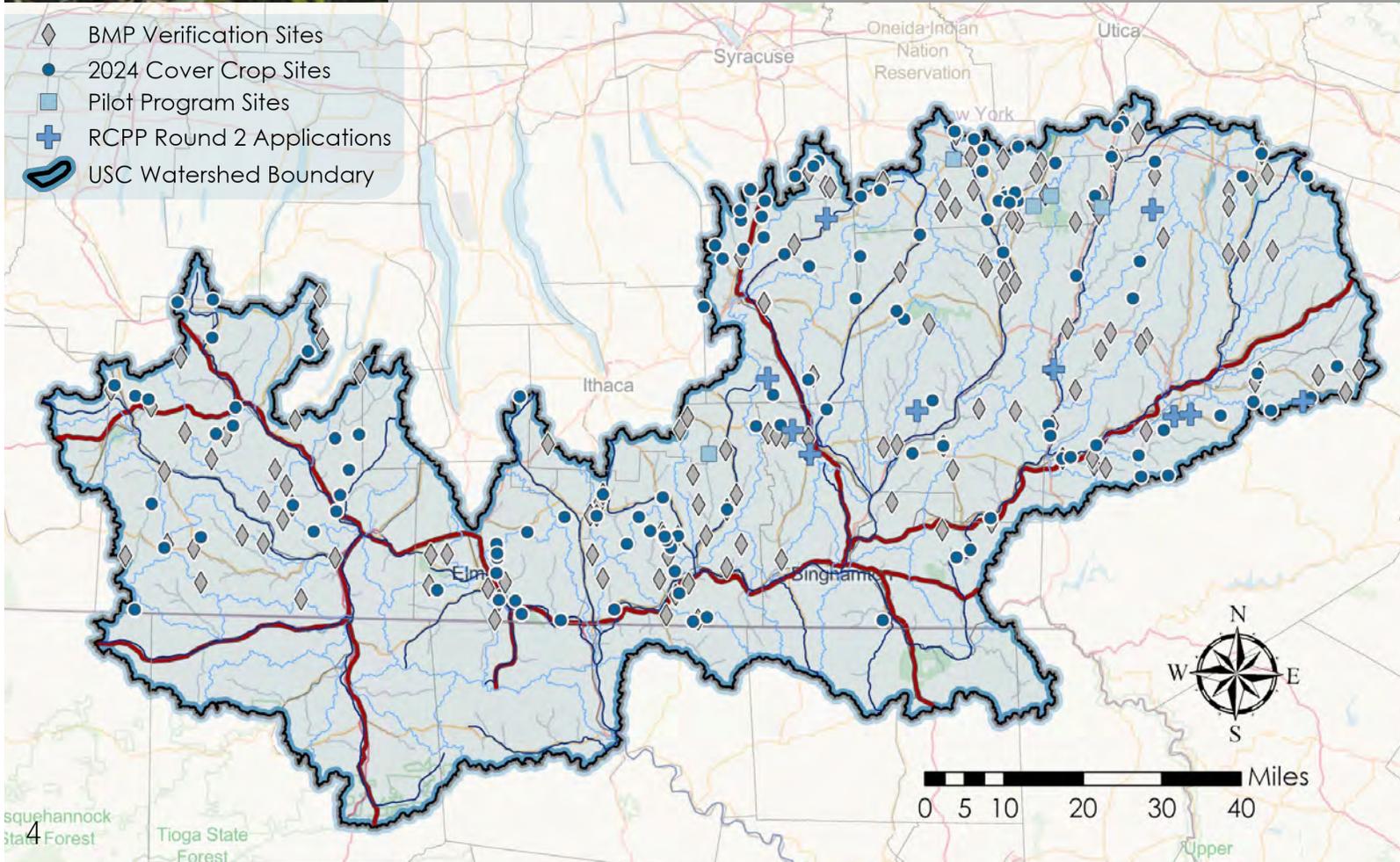


2024 Ag Team Update



Cover Crops Across the Watershed

Fall 2024 was a very successful year for Cover Crop Implementation across the Upper Susquehanna Watershed with a total of 21,629 acres implemented through the USC programs. Funding for Cover Crops is sourced from multiple grants received through the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation. The USC's program focuses on increasing Cover Crop implementation acres in the NY portion of the Upper Susquehanna Watershed. Cover Crops are considered "Annual Practices," meaning that they only receive credit in the Chesapeake Bay Model the year they are implemented. 2024 was the 8th year of this funding program with just over \$781k to support the program. There were 132 farms across 13 counties that devoted time and money to implementing cover crops across the watershed. In total, approximately 5,160 new acres, and 16,469 continued acres were implemented in the fall of 2024 through this program.



Expanding Nutrient Management Across All Landscapes



The USC's Nutrient Management Program continued to expand in 2024 with funding secured through the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation. Nutrient Management is a key water quality practice in the Chesapeake Bay Watershed, and is the foundation for additional

implementation to occur, whether it be on farms or in the urban setting. This year, the USC was able work with partners such as Binghamton University, Cornell Cooperative Extension (Chemung County), Southern Tier Central Regional Planning Board, as well as our Soil and Water Conservation Districts to develop 5 Urban Nutrient Management Plans totaling 131.26 acres. These plans were developed on "Turf Grass" areas throughout the watershed, including college campuses, airports, and county owned recreation areas. Nutrient Management in Urban areas is a newer practice for NY and will continue to be a focus in the coming years. Also as part of this program, working with our member Soil and Water Conservation Districts in New York and Pennsylvania, 33 Nutrient Management Plans were written on farms totaling 5,284 acres. In addition to the planning work, a large amount of outreach occurred throughout

the watershed reaching 6,355 people regarding the importance of Nutrient Management on all Landscapes.



144

whole farm
BMP
verifications

29,408

acres of
manure
incorporation

\$781k

spent on
cover crop
implementation

9,608

acres of
high residue
tillage

10

RCPP
farmstead
applications

2025 Ag Team Goals

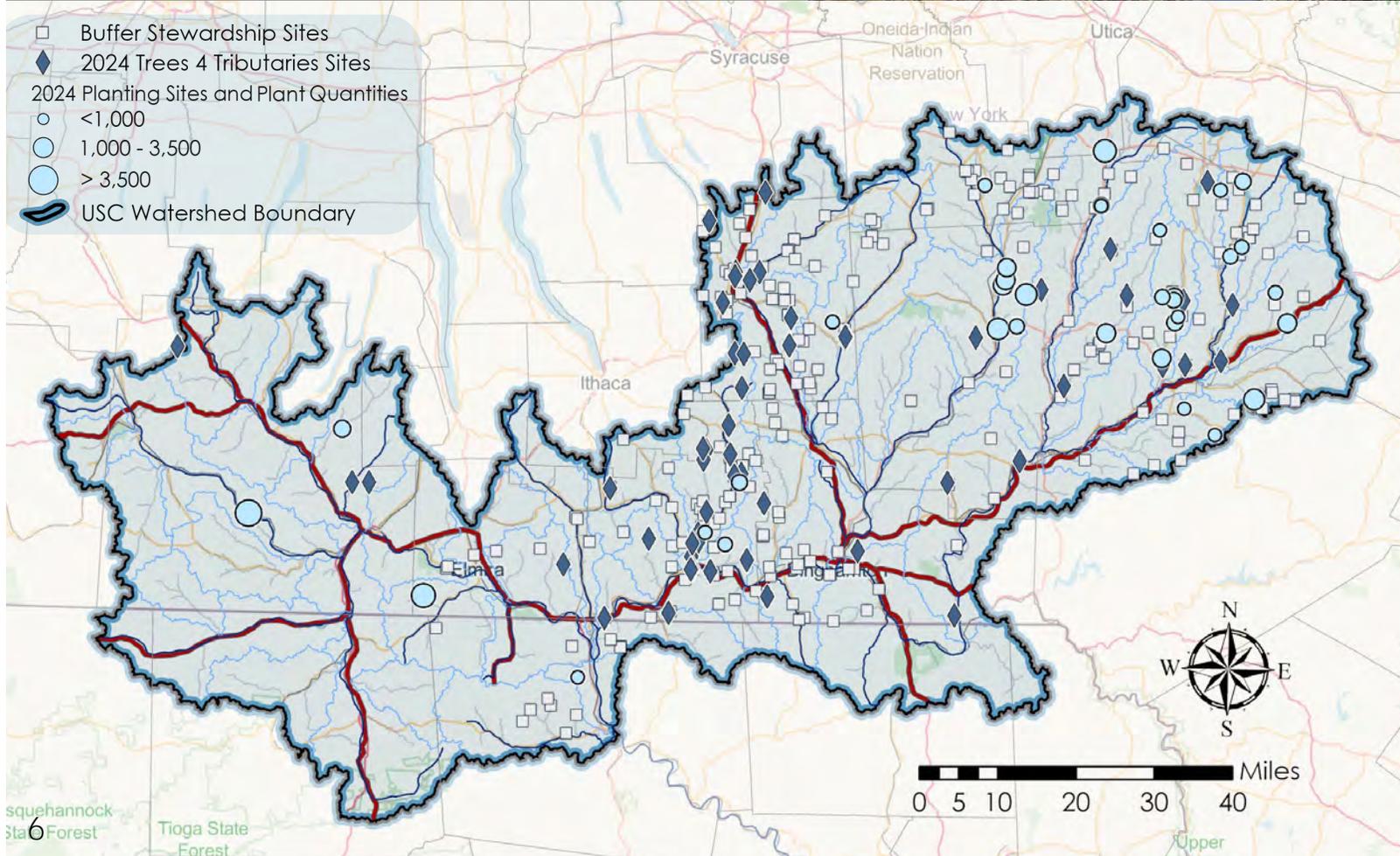
- Continue to work with the University of Vermont on the customization of the GoCrop Record Keeping Application for farms within the Upper Susquehanna Watershed in NY.
- Coordinate Round 3 RCPP Project Funding and Implement Projects from Round 1 and 2.
- Provide Trainings to SWCD and partners as needed.
- Continue to focus our efforts on capturing all implemented BMPs and data reporting as we approach the 2025 deadline.
- Reflect on how far we have come, while charging ahead on a path toward even better water quality!

2024 Buffer Team Update

2024 was a really big year for the buffer team! By utilizing robust and diverse funding from multiple entities to get trees in the ground, we were able to prioritize riparian reforestation while also planting trees in large floodplains, wetlands, on streets, and within agricultural settings. Continuing to push on the pedal, the USC submitted seven funding applications to various entities to maintain the USC's comprehensive buffer program. All program areas really flourished this year, including Trees for Tributaries, the Stewardship Program, and the USC Water Quality Program. In addition to our program accomplishments below, the USC collaborated with partners new and old to permanently protect restoration efforts through easements and property purchases, and finally, we have an exciting new partnership with The Nature Conservancy to reforest old agricultural fields.

The USC stewardship program continued to support buffer stewardship across the watershed. A total of 1,183 acres of planting area were monitored for survival this year throughout 12 counties.

Over the spring and summer, 12 buffer steward interns accomplished monitoring and maintenance needs in Chemung, Broome, Tioga, Bradford, Chenango, Cortland, Madison, Delaware and Otsego Counties. Part of the buffer steward program in 2024 included 10 group workdays, where collectively the USC buffer team, SWCD staff and interns, and other conservation partners performed stewardship on almost 90 acres of riparian forest buffer. Thanks to a recent Small



Watershed Grant award from NFWF, we were also able to bolster our contracted maintenance workload this past year. We worked with contractors to perform mowing, herbicide application, and site prep on 277 acres in 2024. We're looking forward to continuing to foster relationships with contractors in our watershed and to continue to support the hiring of buffer steward interns for monitoring & further maintenance.

The Trees for Tributaries program implemented 65 projects on 46.6 acres in 2024. Of the 65 projects, 22 of these sites were replants totaling to 8.3 acres. Overall, 10,000 plants were installed throughout the watershed through the Trees for Tributaries program. A total of 457 volunteers donated 2,197.5 hours of their time to plant trees. Volunteer groups included Owego Free Academy, Trout Unlimited, Tioga County Anglers, Waverly Middle and High Schools, Norwich High School, Sherburne High School, SUNY Oneonta Rugby Team, SUNY Binghamton students, 4H Ranch Riders Group, Boy Scouts, Morris Central School Students, Butternut Valley Alliance, local community members, as well as friends and family. Volunteers are an integral part of our Trees for Tributaries program, just this past year volunteers accounted for helping plant half of our plants. Thank you to all of our volunteers!

Another avenue that we've been offering for the past few years to increase canopy cover in the watershed has been to offer large containerized stock to our members. We've been able to connect with different partners to offer this stock, as cities and municipalities planted 934 trees as street trees and to reforest local parks. Our 2024 agroforestry program put another 1,000 large sized stock in, all planted by interested landowners. Finally, large stock was planted along stream restoration sites to increase the rate at which shade will be getting on our surface waters.

Lastly, we provided robust outreach in 2024. We planned and delivered an Agroforestry session at Water Quality Symposium, a basic forestry course at Conservation Skills Workshop, collaborated with partners for 4 days of CREP training, and prepped for The Nature Conservancy's program with a full day training. Looking to 2025, we're anticipating being able to maintain and strengthen our core programs to reforest and steward riparian zones. With so many reforestation efforts popping up in New York and Pennsylvania, the USC is well positioned to take advantage of opportunities that arise.

457
Volunteers
Engaged

85,609
plants
planted in
2024!

289.37
acres
Planted

74
species of
woody
plants
planted

25
volunteer
planting
events



2025 Buffer Team Goals

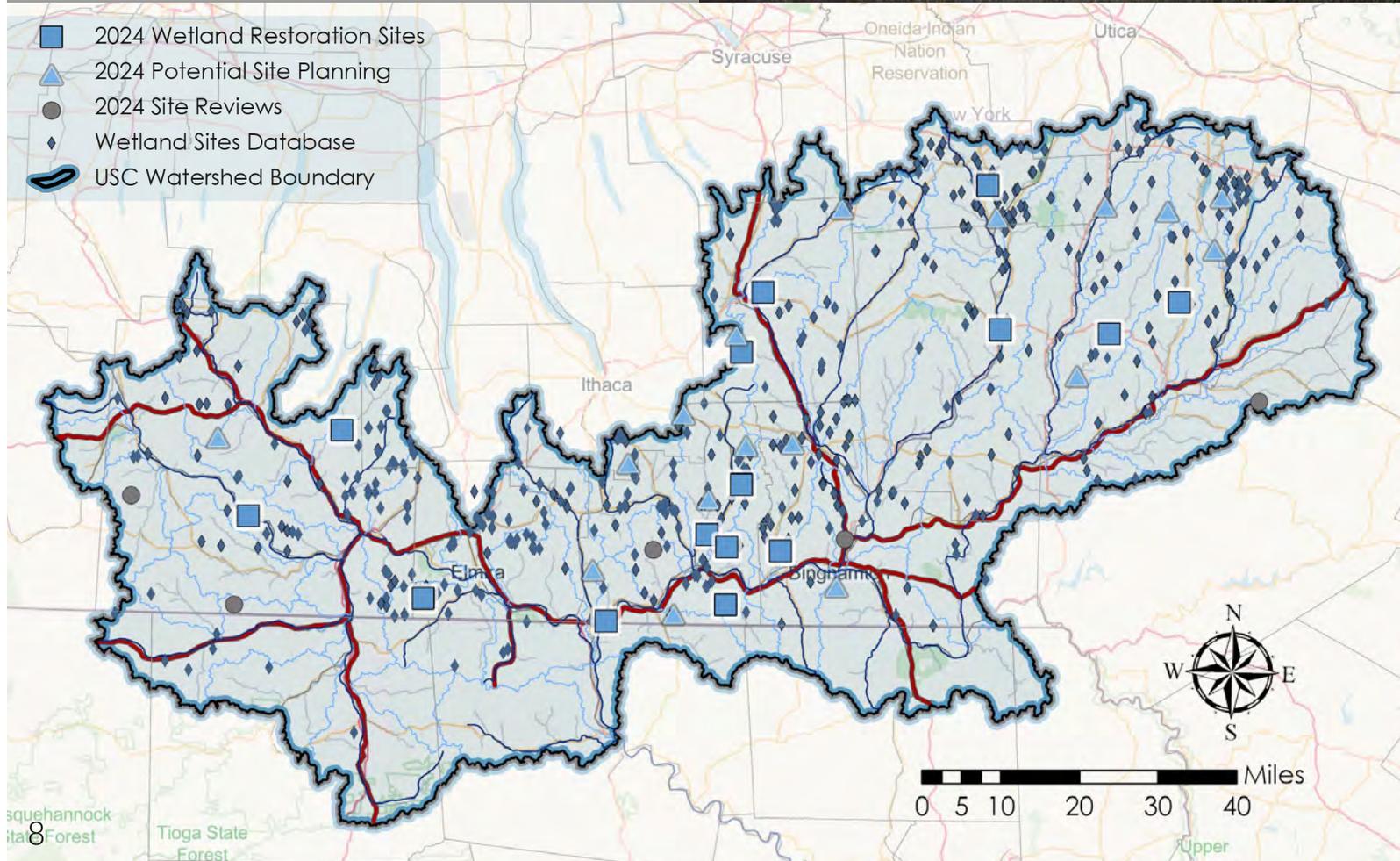
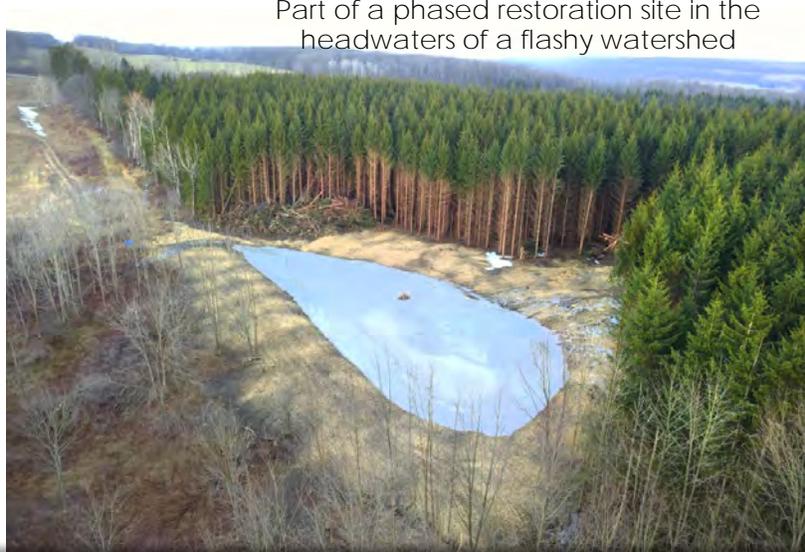
- Continue to engage with partners and contractors regarding buffer stewardship.
- Prioritize riparian restoration in areas where there are long term protections and easements.
- Advocate for support for SWCDs in their technical capacity and knowledge of reforestation planning and implementation.
- Secure native stock for Trees for Tributaries.

2024 Wetland Team Update

The USC Wetland Team delivers wetland conservation at a watershed scale. While wetlands are understood to provide nutrient and runoff retention as well as habitat to many unique species, their benefits are often overlooked across the watershed. We are dedicated to increasing wetland restoration and expanding wetland education and understanding across our region. We support a wide variety of wetland-related programs, providing site review, monitoring, design, construction and maintenance assistance to partners, members and our other USC teams alike.

In 2024, our team pursued restoration opportunities on municipally owned properties and other protected properties as well as in partnership with private landowners. We were thrilled to identify and restore several sites in the very headwaters of watersheds, where restoration can have a big effect on watershed resilience. We continued our GIS work reviewing thousands of acres of the watershed, prioritizing key areas for outreach. We have been

Part of a phased restoration site in the headwaters of a flashy watershed



Restored and Protected Site in Steuben County



successful in identifying many potential opportunities, and have initiated the planning and restoration process on 17 of these projects totaling 55 acres of potential restoration and enhancement for 2025.

We continued to evaluate and pursue restoration on potential sites as they were brought to us by our

partners, or as land-owners reached out directly. We engaged with districts and completed site evaluations for sites included as part of Water Quality Program applications. And we worked to promote wetland restoration through partnership development across the watershed. This year we specifically added endangered species considerations to our review process, identifying areas where wetland restoration will benefit freshwater pearly mussels among other species.

Our 2024 direct mailing outreach to landowners has led us to our next phase, outreach for priority sites in partnership with district staff. We are in the process of identifying the top 20 sites in each county based on our GIS analyses of the watershed. Once identified, we plan to pursue direct outreach, and to move forward with restoration planning, proposal development and construction with landowners who respond favorably.

Wetland Permitting Changes

With the 2024 announcement and request for comments on New York State Department of Environmental Conservation's revised Article 24 permit, our team completed a deep dive into the provided resources, and anticipated changes to the regulatory process, sharing information across our partners and responding to all comment requests. Our primary comments related to wetland restoration, and how the process would be affected by the changes. As the rollout begins in 2025, our team plans to continue to assist partners, devise permit training and guidance, and pursue additional wetland delineation training opportunities as districts will likely need to assist landowners with the increased permitting needs.

2025 Wetland Team Goals

- Assist USC Members and staff with navigating DEC's updated wetland regulations
- Expand targeted wetland outreach
- Develop Chesapeake Bay Wetlands Action Strategy for New York
- Construct USC Water Quality Program wetland restoration projects
- Seek grant funds to increase restoration

62.5

Acres of wetland management

15,236

Acres of watershed evaluated for wetland restoration viability

100

Landowners engaged through direct mailings

670

Watershed residents engaged with about wetland education

2024 Stream Team Update

4,533

Linear feet of construction oversight

3,900

Linear feet of stream site cost estimates

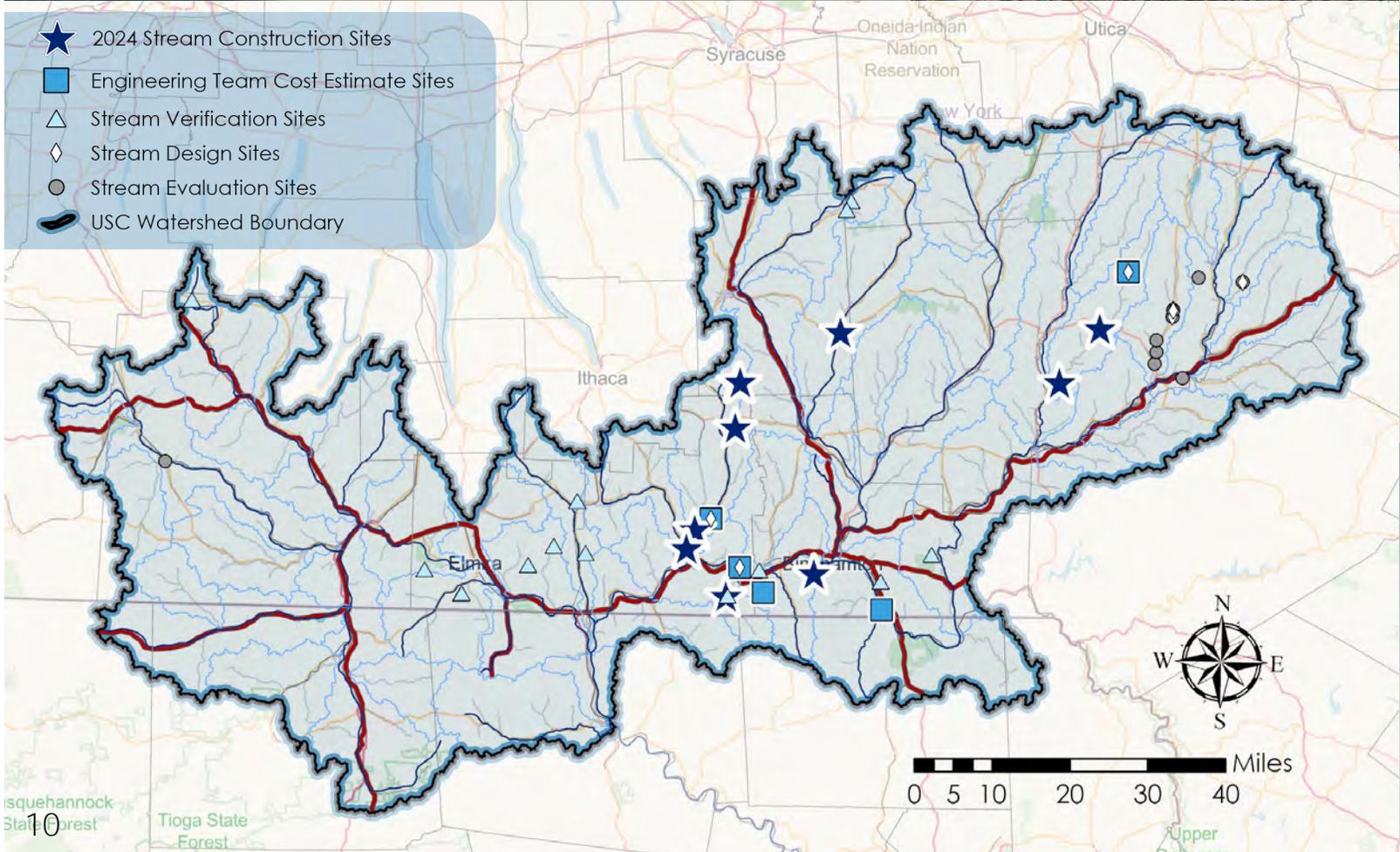
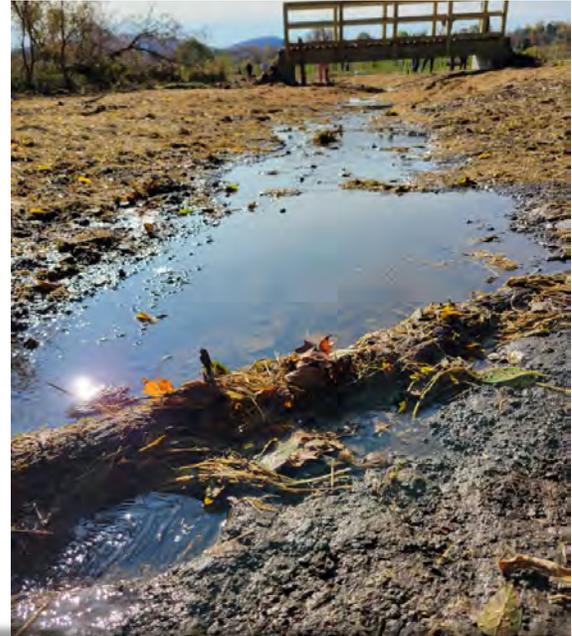
29

Total 2024 stream team sites

The Upper Susquehanna Coalition's Stream Team is comprised of the membership of the USC. Each member SWCD identifies, plans and implements stream corridor related projects individually or with the educational, technical, planning or financial support from the collective USC.

In 2024 our stream team and partners completed work on a large Stream Corridor Restoration Grant, that included outreach to 1,700 people, 1,900 feet of livestock exclusion, and restoration of 20.88 acres of riparian buffer, 7,694 feet of stream corridor and 10.85 acres of upland afforestation.

The map below identifies 2024 stream engineering team sites including 10 projects implemented, 3 projects designed, and 14 stream verification sites throughout the USC watershed.



2024 Outreach Update

In 2024, our outreach committee developed outreach material, web content and updated USC outreach flyers. We published newsletter and newspaper articles, and partnered in the hosting of the 2024 Watershed Wednesdays Webinar Series. All watershed Wednesday resources are on our website, and the webinars generated therein are on our YouTube page. We partnered with groups to provide education and outreach opportunities, with hundreds of watershed residents being reached. We produced 4 quarterly newsletters which were sent out to our member SWCDs and partners as well as posted on our website, created a 2023 Annual Report, and published 161 Facebook posts throughout the year.

In 2025 we plan to continue expanding our outreach priorities, to reach more watershed residents and be a more effective tool for our members and partners. We are in the beginning stages of various training activities, brainstorming outreach resources, and preparing for our 2025 Upper Susquehanna Watershed Forum, looking to make it better than ever.



17,800

People reached through outreach activities

54,841

Total Facebook reach

5:34:47

In YouTube content generated

Funding our Future

Our team is always searching for funding opportunities that bring project opportunities to the watershed. The following is a list of funded activities leading into 2025:

40,000

ACRES OF NUTRIENT MANAGEMENT

3,000

LINEAR FEET OF STREAM RESTORATION

120

ACRES OF AFFORESTATION

200

TREES PLANTED FOR GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE

215

ACRES OF BUFFER RESTORATION

53

ACRES OF WETLAND RESTORATION

265

ACRES OF PRESCRIBED GRAZING

5.3

MILES OF EXCLUSION FENCING

800

ACRES OF PERMANENT EASEMENT

440

ACRES OF BUFFER STEWARDSHIP

1,000

ACRES OF URBAN NM

10

ACRES OF BERM REMOVAL/ FLOODPLAIN RECONNECTION

15,860

PEOPLE REACHED

0.5

MILES OF INVASIVE SPECIES MANAGEMENT



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