

# Planning for Growth: Ground Water Protection Planning In the Mid-Hudson Valley

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**R**ecently I have begun to work with two communities in Ulster County on identifying and protecting their ground water resources. Both communities are currently experiencing “building booms”. This is not uncommon in many communities of the mid-Hudson

Valley region. The region has seen an influx of new residents from New York City and Westchester County. The reasons include rising living costs further to the south, concerns arising from 9/11, etc. Increasingly, many towns in the region are becoming bedroom communities for the New York metropolitan region. As growth intensifies in the region and the rural nature of communities change, many citizens and governments are taking action to address planning concerns. These concerns often involve the loss of open space, the increased risk of ground water contamination from development, and the need to better plan for public water and sewer infrastructure. In addition, there is the increasing sense from many that critical water resources must be protected now to prevent them from being overly developed.

The impact of rapid growth on smaller towns in the region is especially intense. These are towns that are generally under 10,000 population and historically had more limited government functions as compared with larger towns. For example, many of these towns have not had municipal water districts that they operate and maintain. As Figure 1 indicates, many of these same smaller towns are now experiencing an influx of new residents since 9/11. As a consequence, many of these town governments are now wrestling with a variety of issues. Ground water resource planning is a key issue in many such towns.

In November 2001, NYRWA completed a study entitled Local Source Water Protection and Smart Growth in Rural New York: A Pilot Project. A summary of this project can be found on our website at:

<http://www.nyruralwater.org/bulletins/booklet.pdf>. The purpose of the project was to illustrate how groundwater and source water concerns can be integrated into the local planning efforts of small and rural communities. This method that I am using with the communities in Ulster County and elsewhere involves: (1) identifying local water supply resources; (2) delineating likely growth areas; (3) evaluating the susceptibility of water supply resources to growth; and (4) developing acceptable management measures. These management measures may include

changes in land use regulations to address local needs and/or infrastructure.

If your community is concerned about preserving its water resources for future generations, please give me a call at 1-888-NYRURAL ext 17 or email me at [Winkley@nyruralwater.org](mailto:Winkley@nyruralwater.org). ♪

