Report Shows Widespread Potential for Development

The Lake George Association has recently published a Data Atlas* compiling population and development information for the nine municipalities in the Lake George Watershed. A watershed describes an area of land that contains streams and wetlands that all drain into a larger water body, such as a river or lake (i.e., Lake George). The Atlas is intended to be a source of information about the impact of human influences on the watershed. Such information could assist local officials to start a dialogue on land use and future growth. If there is to be such a dialogue, local Assembly Point residents should be involved. This article will focus on data for the Town of Queensbury; but residents are encouraged to study the data for the entire watershed because it impacts our water quality.

The Town of Queensbury accounts for 20% of the acreage in the entire Lake George watershed and has approximately 15.1 miles of shoreline. Most importantly, **18.6% of Queensbury watershed acreage is classified as "disturbed land cover" –** meaning it is hardscape, developed landscape or cleared land. In comparison, the percentage of disturbed cover for the whole Lake George Watershed is 8.2%. But that figure is rising. **According to experts, water bodies are adversely affected when 10% or more of a watershed is**

disturbed or developed land cover. Queensbury watershed is already over this development limit. Other towns that have exceeded the accepted percentage for disturbed cover include Lake George Village (95.1%), the Town of Lake George (16.9%) and Ticonderoga (27.1%).

The Data Atlas also includes a build-out analysis for each municipality. The build-out analysis estimates how many more residential units could be built under two different scenarios. In the first scenario, all existing land regulations are respected. In the second scenario, land use regulations are also respected but best management practices – such as not building on steep slopes and adjacent to wetlands and streams – are not observed. We know that existing land use regulations cannot ensure that the pristine quality of the Lake will be preserved, so either scenario will have serious water quality consequences. As reflected in the section in the Atlas on wastewater treatment, sewers serve 35% of the watershed. That means that 6,000 of the total 9,900 residential units have onsite waste water treatment systems, many of which are unknown or past their sale date. For example, on Assembly Point, 60% of the houses were built before 1980. Furthermore, the Town of Queensbury has no septic information on 70-80% of those residential units. Being hooked up to a town sewer system does not necessarily ensure that the water quality is protected, either, especially if it brings with it an increase in disturbed area. Indeed, the Lake George Village Sewage Treatment Plant is between 60-90 years old and has failed on occasion discharging raw sewerage into the Lake.

Each municipality's build-out analysis omits the statistics on disturbed land and the state of septic systems and calculates the number of new units that could be built. The Queensbury watershed has 1,516 existing units (i.e., Assembly Point, Cleverdale, Rockhurst and part of Pilot

Knob). According to the report, 777 more units could be built under existing land use rules and 999 if best management practices are ignored. This would be at least a 50-65% increase in residential units. However, these numbers underestimate the potential build-out if variances to existing rules are allowed. The impact of the variances would be more difficult to predict but critical to any development analysis.

It is important to remember the build-out analyses do not consider the impact on water quality of on-site septic and sewage treatment systems that are outdated or unknown, outdated basin-wide stormwater regulations and non-existent stream corridor regulations. We leave it to the reader to imagine what impact these constrained and unconstrained build-outs would have on water quality which is currently under threat from pollutants flowing into the Lake from storm water runoff, septic seepage, fertilizers, pesticides and salt. We end with a slogan from our Cleverdale neighbors: Lake George—yours to protect.

*http://www.lakegeorgeassociation.org/documents/20161213LGADataAtlasOptimized.pdf

Please consider a tax-exempt donation to the APWQC this year!
To receive the newsletter via email contact:
Beverly Pozzi 656-9440; apwqc7@gmail.com

Short Notes and Events:

- Assembly Point Snorkel Swim is scheduled for the first week of July. Please call 307 7842 if you are interested in joining us.

- APWQC Annual Meeting, 10am, 1 September 2017, 66 Bay Parkway

- Welcome Packets for new residents are available. If you have a new neighbor please contact Beverly Pozzi: 656-9440.

- The APWQC was honored to receive a $900 organizational grant from the Lake Champlain Basin Program.

The Assembly Point Water Quality Coalition, Inc. is a 501c3 non-profit corporation committed to improving and restoring water quality and compromised ecosystems in the Lake George Lake Champlain Basin by supporting policies, regulations and practices which preserve and protect waters and watersheds.

APWQC

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