

Foundation for Sustainability and Innovation  
Attn: Yaritza Plata, Grant Coordinator  
Foundation for Sustainability and Innovation  
PO Box 149  
Laguna Beach, CA 92651  
foundationforsi@gmail.com



Dear Yaritza,

Enclosed you will find a report on the \$5,000 grant awarded to NYenvironcom from the Foundation for Sustainability and Innovation grants program in 2022. We are incredibly grateful for the Foundation's support this past year and are excited to share with you the impact of this funding.

Please reach out if you have any questions.

Warm Regards and Happy New Year,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "A. Scilla".

Alex Scilla  
Executive Director  
NYenvironcom  
41 Main Street Unit 121  
New Paltz, NY 12561  
director@nyenvironcom.org  
347-867-5404

## 2022 NYEnvironcom Grant Report for Foundation for Sustainability and Innovation

### Outcomes & Impacts

Financial support from the Foundation for Sustainability and Innovation and our other grantors helped NYEnvironcom successfully build upon our existing infrastructures and expand our WaterInsight and TerraINScape programs in 2022.

Our mission continues to be increasingly urgent and, while there is much work ahead of us, we are proud to have made significant progress toward our objectives this year. We prioritized growing our volunteer base, which now includes a total of 18 trained individuals, and installing new water monitoring stations, bringing us to a total of 7 monitoring stations in the Basha Kill and Neversink tributaries. Because of the ongoing limitations of the pandemic and limited school staffing, our conversations with the Monticello School District are currently paused. We intend to resume this conversation in the new year with the hope that the school has the capacity to engage. In the meantime, we have begun planning a 6-week series of Community Education Outreach classes. We are also steeped in our work to use our data to defend the Clean Water Act and address egregious violations in the watersheds we monitor. We've included a more detailed summary of this work below.

NYEnvironcom's overall grant funding this year was more limited than we expected, which meant the support we did receive made an enormous impact. We maintain and will continue to work toward our goals to increase staff hours, compensate our leadership staff, and create and distribute a community-wide survey.

The \$5,000 grant from Foundation for Sustainability and Innovation this year was critical to our work and was applied toward the total costs for labor, equipment, and data for installing new water monitoring stations and support for our volunteer training programs and development.

### Our Water Monitoring Stations

Trainees who are part of our programs become equipped as "citizen scientists" who can properly collect, interpret, and share water quality and mapping data and also help bring forth this critical data into the community, and advocate for clean water and thoughtful land use.

Our 7 water monitoring stations are currently installed in the following locations:

- 4 stations in the lower Basha Kill stream at points southwest of the Wildlife Management Area and before it meets the Neversink, slightly above the intersection of the Neversink River and Lower Basha Kill
- 1 on Orange County Land Trust land, along the lower Basha Kill at near the intersection of Rt 209 and Rt 211
- 1 on the Neversink, below the intersection of the Neversink River and Lower Basha Kill
- 1 at the south end of the Basha Kill Wildlife Management area. This, our northernmost WaterInsight station, was installed with the generous support of Paula Medley, longtime president of the Basha Kill Area Association (BKAA) and beloved NYEnvironcom Board Member, who sadly passed away this year. 'Paula's Station' is a standing testament to her dedication to the community and support for groups like ours working in the region.



*Close-up image of the inside of a water monitoring station; and stations 1 and 2, located on the Lower Basha Kill. The stations are checked monthly by our trained volunteers, and are reliable year-round in ordinary weather conditions.*

### **Community Education Classes**

Advancing environmental literacy is key to our mission, and NYenvironcom plans to use the reports and techniques we've created from the programs to develop a 6-week series of community workshops, to be hosted at our offices or the Mamakating Environmental Center, that help educate community members on our research, methods, and findings.

Our proposed series will build on our existing community outreach work and programming. These workshops will provide a basic overview of the science and methods we use, followed by a field trip to a WaterInsight monitoring station to see it in the real world. We will also provide background on working with the data and introduce some techniques of hardware assembly and programming.

### **Defending Clean Water**

Data we have collected with our ongoing water monitoring stations demonstrates that the Dragon Springs facility in Cuddebackville and its owners are in clear violation of the Clean Water Act, and continue to actively contaminate the Basha Kill Stream and Neversink River with sewage discharge (Fecal Coliform) between 3x and 25x the legal limit—often rising in spring and dipping down in winter. Anything above 100 cfu/100 ml is not safe for ingestion and, according to EPA recommendations, above 200 cfu/100 is not safe for full body contact, including to swim in. This level of contamination also puts the purity of our well water at significant risk. Our water testing data has shown excesses of contamination on these dates:

|            |                                |
|------------|--------------------------------|
| 7/01/2020  | ~500 Cfu/100ml Fecal Coliform  |
| 8/11/2021  | ~750 Cfu/100ml Fecal Coliform  |
| 8/24/2022  | ~2500 Cfu/100ml Fecal Coliform |
| 12/13/2022 | ~1396 Cfu/100ml Fecal Coliform |

There have also been numerous documented instances, going back over 10 years, of pollution from construction runoff, sediment, and erosion. While this contamination is a widely known issue, it continues to be a critical concern for our local environment. NYenvironcom is urging those with power to act and respond now. Our goal is to protect the Basha Kill and Neversink from sewage contamination by compelling Dragon Springs to cease wastewater violations and remediate damage.

### **Ongoing Priorities**

- NYenvironcom and the Deerpark Rural Alliance are still battling in court to hold Dragon Springs accountable for their violations of the Clean Water Act. We have recently initiated GoFundMe and Facebook fundraisers for our Clean Water Act Legal Fund, which supports our data collection work and advocacy against these violations and efforts to ensure remediation occurs.
- Our water quality monitors are collecting data pertaining to the health of local waterways now under unprecedented pressure from new, poorly controlled development. More monitors are in the pipeline.
- The proposed development at Rivendale (rebranded as Riverside Park Townhomes) has returned, and its plans have increased in size to include an office building, 500 parking spots, and a wastewater treatment plant. Across the street New Century Films (same company is bringing both these applications) wants another 1,000 car parking lot, among other things, right along the Neversink. We have significant work ahead of us and will be providing data and advocacy about how these developments would impact the health of the community environment and watersheds.
- NYenvironcom will be at town planning board meetings fighting for our constituents and community, and putting in the hours of preparation required to present our community members' points of view in ways that the board will understand and take seriously.

### **Engagement and Publicity**

NYenvironcom proudly recognized the support of Foundation for Sustainability and Innovation in its bimonthly newsletter and in Twitter and Facebook posts. As the amount of information and data we are able to make public increases, we continue to see increased website traffic and a growing number of individuals who have accessed the data NYenvironcom publishes. We publish our bi-monthly newsletter, *On The Ground*, and regularly update our YouTube content. In the new year, we will be reaching out to new audiences through radio and other news outlets.

We are continually seeking opportunities that will help us reach a larger audience and bring attention to our urgent work.

### **Partnerships**

NYenvironcom continues to work with a number of institutional partners to advance our work. The Stroud Water Research Center has been a longtime partner providing science and technical support. We continue to work with the Friends of the Upper Delaware and the Coalition for the Delaware River Watershed on advocacy. The Nature Conservancy and Orange County Land Trust

have supported us with access to their lands for stations, as well as informational support. We collaborate with The Basha Kill Area Association with volunteer and programmatic support. We also work with the Town of Deerpark, Neversink Watershed Management, and SUNY Orange.

We are looking at new avenues to grow our engagement numbers and network of partners and contributors, including direct donor outreach, sponsorships, advertising, and an increased media presence to connect the public with the impact of and importance of our work. We are grateful to the Foundation for Sustainability and Innovation for its ongoing support and recognition of the importance of our work.