VALUES OF LARGE SCALE WATERSHED PROTECTION

A watershed includes an entire area of land and its waterways which drain into a larger body of water such as a river, bay or reservoir. Healthy watersheds and the vegetation that lines waterways (known as buffers) help control flooding, filter pollution and preserve open space, which provides economic, environmental and quality of life benefits for those who live there.

PROTECTION PROGRAMS

- Catskill/Upper Delaware: Bilateral Agreement
  - Partnerships between local groups, government agencies, and environmental groups
  - Comprised of agricultural, land acquisition, and stream management program components
  - Modern approaches to water treatment

- Scituate Reservoir: Collective Action
  - Land Acquisition with focus on forest management
  - Identification of key resources for land use planning and zoning
  - Forest preservation as a means to control invasive species

- Statewide—Colorado: Instream Buybacks
  - New Appropriations preserve the natural environment
  - Water Acquisitions allow Colorado access to water rights by purchase, lease, donation, or exchange
  - Water Rights Protection is enforced by monitoring stream flows

BILATERAL AGREEMENTS

- New York City
  - 92% of identified large farms participate in a voluntary, incentive-based approach which reduces agricultural pollution
  - New York City and New York State combined own and manage over 387,000 watershed acres, the preservation of which contributes to safe drinking water and benefits the local community
  - The city’s $1.5 billion investment in watershed protection prevented the city from building a filtration plant costing $10 billion or more

COLLECTIVE ACTION

- Providence, Rhode Island
  - Focus on forest management minimizes erosion, promotes filtration, traps pollutants, and provides habitat for threatened species such as bobcats, bald eagles and rabbits
  - The Scituate Reservoir Watershed Greenspace Project united various groups to identify key areas of cultural, natural, and recreational resources to aid in land use planning and zoning
  - Forest preservation encourages plant diversity which limits invasive species and protects against weather or fire disturbances

INSTREAM BUYBACKS

- Colorado
  - Instream Buybacks are the purchase of water rights with the intention of leaving the water instream to restore natural flows and supply
  - Colorado has established instream flow rights on over 8,500 miles of stream and 486 natural lakes in the state
  - Instream flow and natural lake rights provide legal protection for the natural environment through a reach of stream, not just at a bypass point
  - Water rights held are used to protect riparian zones, wildlife habitat, and fisheries

Each example above emphasizes the importance of protecting vegetated buffers as a tactic to filter pollutants, reduce runoff and encourage recharge of natural waterways.

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