

## **Land Use Leadership Alliance Training**

What do a town councilperson, code enforcement officer, planning board member, zoning board member, assessor, college professor, farm manager, town supervisor, county planner, vineyard owner, developer, village trustee, economic development director, lake shore property owner, farmer, real estate agent, community activist, grape grower, small business owner, watershed program manager, KLA officer, Finger Lakes Institute Director all have in common??

These backgrounds are but part of the profiles of the nearly 30 participants in the first training session for the Keuka Lake Watershed Land Use Leadership Alliance Training. They all share a deep passion for Keuka Lake and its watershed and share a desire to ensure that the watershed has a sustainable land use plan. The Keuka Lake Association is well represented in this training program with 30% of the attendees in this first class belonging to the KLA.

You may remember that in the December 2006 and the March 2007 Newsletters that Peter Landre wrote about this innovative pilot program that is being funded with a grant from the New York State Quality Communities Program and supported by the KLA, KWIC, Cornell Cooperative Extension, Cornell University Community and Rural Development Institute, Genesee Finger lakes Regional Planning Council, Pace University Land Use Law Center, Yates and Steuben Counties. The KLA provided an initial \$5,000 cash match to the project as part of the grant application process.

Since the approval of the grant, many people have been involved in developing the training curriculum, finding a location to conduct the training, selecting program participants and doing all of the necessary background work that is necessary to conduct a first class training program for a total of about 70 land use leaders from the eight towns and villages that surround Keuka Lake. Each of the two training classes will be conducted over a four day period over about a two month timeframe. The first group of program participants has now completed three of its four scheduled classes which are being held at Keuka College.

In addition to training land use leaders, the project participants will also develop practical concepts for land use in the Keuka Watershed. This plan will include a wealth of information tailored to the watershed including maps, assessments of local laws and gaps in those laws, best practice models, and laws/ordinances that local leaders can adapt for their municipalities. One of the key aspects of the program is the direct input from the participants regarding their local challenges and the level of importance of those challenges. During the first day of training all of the participants listed their challenges and as suspected, many municipalities are facing similar issues. Some of the issues leading the list were steep slope development, the tradeoff between agriculture and development, the

lack of full time regional governmental resources knowledgeable in development, preservation of the rural character of the region, lake quality, etc. The list is a page and a half single spaced.

Fundamental to land use training is an understanding of the laws that are the underpinnings of land use in New York State and how that power is delegated to the local municipal governments. The class has learned that without a current and up to date Comprehensive Plan, effective local zoning is next to impossible. Local land use laws must be in accordance with a comprehensive plan or at a minimum a well thought out plan. Comprehensive Plans need to be updated about every five to seven years.

*“Among the most important powers of local government is the responsibility to undertake comprehensive planning and to regulate land use to protect the public health, safety and general welfare.”*  
-N.Y. Town, Village, General City Law

One of the many keys of responsible land use is a term called Smart Growth. Its name alone alludes to its meaning. Fundamentally, it's identifying areas for growth and development, then focusing development on those areas. In addition, it includes designating and protecting areas for recreation, conservation and environmental protection. The class is also being taught about various land use tools such as clustering, stormwater management, floating zones, overlay zones and incentive zones. We also are receiving training in the methods for dealing with the inherent conflict that can arise during negotiations for development or subdivision of land and the importance of realizing that at times outside expertise may be required to assist in facilitation and mediation.

If you are interested in seeing some of the material to which the first class has been exposed, there are a couple of web sites that should be of interest. <http://counties.cce.cornell.edu/yates/LULA.html> is a site that is under construction but will be used to share information among the training participants. Some of the presentations have already been posted. More information will be posted as it is developed. <http://www.gflrpc.org/keuka.htm> is a web site that shows that local law gap analysis by municipality in lots of detail.

Effective and efficient land use is not a program but a process. It has no end point when local leaders and residents can say “we are done!” Land use has evolved from early law and will continue to evolve to meet the needs of the local and regional population. This training is just a beginning for about 70 people. The training will hopefully lay the foundation for building a process of implementing effective land use around the Keuka Lake and its watershed. Training is also a process, so look for additional updates on Land Use Leadership Alliance training and “Keuka Lake Looking Ahead – An Intermunicipal Land Use Action Plan” in future issues of the KLA newsletter and at the KLA's annual meeting on July 12, 2008.