

NY RISING COMMUNITY RECONSTRUCTION PROGRAM

NYRCR TIOGA

NY RISING COMMUNITY RECONSTRUCTION PLAN

MARCH 2014

The Susquehanna River, one of the longest rivers on the east coast, flows across the southern-most portion of Tioga County from east to west. The river flows for 464 miles through three states, starting in Upstate New York (Cooperstown), and proceeding west through the Southern Tier, across rural southeastern Pennsylvania, finally terminating in the Chesapeake Bay in Maryland. Since record keeping began nearly 200 years ago, the U.S. Weather Service has reported flooding along the main stem of the Susquehanna River every 15 years, on average. This, coupled with localized flash flooding that occurs annually on smaller tributaries, led to the Susquehanna River Basin being identified as one of the most flood-prone watersheds in the country³.

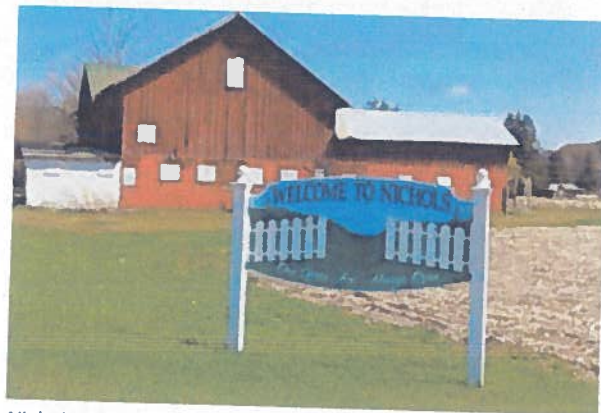
While the towns and villages that compose the Tioga Community share their borders with the Susquehanna River, they are very different in their geographic size, population, and their local economies, which range from primarily agrarian to a dense village center with a wide mix of uses. A snapshot of each of the riverine municipalities is provided below.

Table 1.1 Tioga Community Overview

Municipality	Land Area in Sq. Mi.	2010 Population
Tioga County	523	51,125
Town of Owego	106	19,883
Town of Tioga	59	4,877
Village of Owego	2.7	3,896
Town of Nichols	34	2,525
Village of Nichols	0.25	512

i. Town and Village of Nichols

The Town of Nichols is a rural community located in the Southern Tier Region of New York State. The Town, established in 1824, encompasses approximately 34 square miles and shares its entire northern border with the Susquehanna River and its southern border with Bradford County, Pennsylvania. The Town is easily accessible by the Southern Tier Expressway (NYS 17/I-86), Main Street (NYS Route 282), and East and West River Roads. Major employers in the Town of Nichols are the Best Buy Warehouse/Distribution Center and Tioga Downs Casino, Racing and Entertainment (Tioga Downs). Other key employment includes the agriculture and gravel mining industries⁴.



Nichols Gateway.

The Town has experienced a relatively stable population during the past decade, which has helped to preserve the small-town feel of the community. In 2010, the U.S. Census reported the population of the Town of Nichols as 2,525 residents. This represents a 59-person decrease from the 2,584-person population reported in 2000. The median age of community residents was 41.6 years, slightly less than the 42.6 years of

Section II: Assessment of Risk and Needs

The Tioga Community assessed risk to high-value assets to understand what measures were needed to protect them and ensure long-term economic growth. With critical insight from the public, needs and opportunities were identified that guided the planning process while addressing six recovery support functions.

A. Description of Community Assets and Assessment of Risk

i. Description of Community Assets

The Tioga NYRCR Planning Committee evaluated risks to community assets to help identify, support, and prioritize projects. The first step was to prepare an asset inventory beginning with acquiring existing digital asset datasets from multiple municipal, State, and Federal agencies. These asset datasets were cross-referenced and supplemented with aerial imagery and address locators to pinpoint each asset's location within the study area. Supplemental information was collected and entered into the inventory for each asset: asset name, address, geographic coordinates, risk area, asset class (economic, health and social services, housing, infrastructure systems, natural and cultural resources, socially vulnerable populations), critical facility, and community value. Landscape attributes are also assigned to each asset. Landscape attributes are features of the landscape that lie between the asset and the source of floodwaters that may reduce the potential for flooding and erosion.

The Committee, with input from the public at engagement events, identified and evaluated 210 community assets. These assets included major employment centers like the Historic Owego Marketplace, Tioga Downs Casino, residences (especially those in neighborhoods with senior residents and other vulnerable populations), public infrastructure, and key human service and cultural assets. In evaluating the assets, the Committee considered:

Section IV: Implementation—Project Profiles

**Revitalization Plan
Town of Nichols**

Project Type. Featured

Project Description. Many businesses in the Town and Village of Nichols are struggling to recover after the flooding associated with Hurricane Irene and Tropical Storm Lee. Rising flood and groundwater severely damaged buildings and merchandise, and caused businesses to close their doors temporarily during storm clean up. To increase economic development and tourism opportunities in the Town and Village, this project would prepare and implement a Revitalization Plan.



Tioga Downs will be linked by a multi-use trail.

The Town and Village of Nichols are conveniently located off NYS 17 (future I-86). They are accessible from NYSR 17 at the same exit as the popular Tioga Downs Casino, Racing, and Entertainment. To increase economic development opportunities within the Town, this recovery project seeks to increase public awareness of the natural, cultural, and historical resources available in the Town and Village of Nichols, as well as connect visitors to the Casino to the recreation and commercial amenities available in the community.

This project proposes that the Town of Nichols collaborate with the Village and Tioga Downs Casino to enhance tourism and economic development in Nichols. Project components include streetscape enhancements, beautification enhancements to two existing NYS DEC boat launches located on East and West River Roads, and development of a 5-mile multi-purpose trail along the shore of the Susquehanna River that connects Tioga Downs to the boat launches, restaurants, retail establishments, and the Kirby Park recreation area located in or near the Town Center.



Existing DEC boat launch located along East River Road.



Example of one of the restaurants located in the Village of Nichols' commercial district.

The project also proposes that the Town undertake a Community Marketing and Branding campaign to promote its trails, scenic vistas, waterways, historical structures, and local restaurants and shops. Wayfinding signage, featuring the Town brand and a list of available restaurants and services, should be installed at both

NYS 17/I-86 Exit 62 (Nichols/Tioga Downs) and Exit 63 (Lounsberry) to increase visitor awareness of the resources available in the Town and Village of Nichols.



The proposed multi-use trail will connect Tioga Downs Casino visitors to existing recreational and cultural resources such as Kirby Park and Cady Library.

Project Cost. The estimated cost to develop all phases and components is approximately \$3.0 million.

Project Benefits. Benefits of the project include:

- **Economic Benefits.** The purpose of the Nichols Revitalization plan is to create jobs and increase tourism opportunities, and to create an improved commercial center that supports increased business activity.
- **Health and Social Benefits.** The project will provide increased outdoor recreational opportunities for residents and tourists, providing new facilities for physical activity.

Cost-Benefit Analysis. Developing a revitalization plan that combines community beautification with a strategy to increase tourism will provide public awareness to invigorate a community affected by flood damage. Based on available information and preliminary plans, enhancing the community streetscapes and developing a recreational trail to increase connectivity to the **Tioga Downs Casino will economically benefit the Town and Village of Nichols through increased awareness of historical, cultural, and recreational resources and local businesses.** The new trail will also provide a recreational focal point for residents. The economic benefits created by increased tourism and jobs created will help restore and maintain the Town and Village of Nichols as a sustainable community. Additionally, using the methodology from the U.S. DOC ESA report,³⁵ the \$3.0 million project would create an estimated 21 construction jobs. The potential benefits of this project are considered to outweigh the \$3.0 million investment required to plan, design, and construct the recreational trail and prepare a marketing strategy.

Table 5.3 Assets and Risk Assessment

Asset Information		Landscape Attributes										Risk Assessment (100-year event)					Risk Assessment (500-year event)				
Asset	Risk Area	Asset Class	Asset Subcategory	Critical Facility	Community Value	Descriptive flood protection measures	Asset elevation below base flood elevation	Freewall elevation less than top of above BFE	Asset near peak of combustion	Asset near stormwater system discharge	Asset within fringe and adequate vegetated buffers	Landscape Attributes Score (Max=4.5)	Hazard Score	Exposure Score	Vulnerability Score	Risk Score	Hazard Score	Exposure Score	Vulnerability Score	Risk Score	
NYSEG Substation (Owego, Taylor Rd)	N/A	D	Power Supply	Yes, FEMA	High	0.5	0	0	0	0	0.5	1	3	N/A	3	0	4	N/A	3	0	
Owego Downtown Center (Business)	High	A	Downtown Center	No, Locally Significant; Committee	High	0.5	0.5	0.5	0	0	0.5	2	3	3	3	27	4	3	3	36	
Owego Downtown Center (Housing)	High	C	Single Family Residence	No, Locally Significant; Committee	High	0.5	0.5	0.5	0	0	0.5	2	3	3	3	27	4	3	3	36	
Owego Elementary School	Extreme	B	Schools	Yes, FEMA	High	0.5	0.5	0.5	0	0	0.5	2	3	4	3	36	4	4	3	48	
Owego Flats Neighborhood	Extreme	C	Single Family Residence	No, Locally Significant; Committee	High	0.5	0.5	0.5	0	0	0.5	2	3	4	3	36	4	4	3	48	
Owego Free Academy	Extreme	B	Schools	Yes, FEMA	High	0.5	0.5	0.5	0	0	0.5	2	3	4	3	36	4	4	3	48	
Owego Super Mart (Valero)	N/A	A	Small Business	No, Locally Significant; Committee	High	0.5	0	0	0	0	0.5	3	N/A	3	0	4	N/A	3	0	0	
Owego-Abolachin Middle School	Extreme	B	Schools	Yes, FEMA	High	0.5	0.5	0.5	0	0	0.5	2	3	4	3	36	4	4	3	48	
PROPOSED Infill Development	High	A	Small Business	No, LSF: Conceptual Plan	High	0.5	0.5	0	0	0	0.5	1.5	3	2.5	3	22.5	4	2.5	3	30	
Radius WEBO	Moderate	D	Telecommunications	No, Locally Significant; County Haz Mit Plan	High	0.5	0	0	0	0	0.5	1	3	1.5	3	13.5	4	1.5	3	18	
Ransom Park	High	E	Parks and Recreation	Yes, FEMA	High	0.5	0.5	0.5	0	0	0.5	2	3	3	3	27	4	3	3	36	
Riverview Manor Health Care Center	High	F	Elderly	No, Locally Significant; County Haz Mit Plan	High	0.5	0.5	0.5	0	0	0.5	2	3	3	3	27	4	3	3	36	
Route 98 Quikway Gas Station	High	A	Small Business	No, Locally Significant; Committee	High	0.5	0	0	0	0	0.5	1	3	2	3	18	4	2	3	24	
Savanna-Sci Corp.	N/A	A	Employment Hub	No, Locally Significant; Committee	High	0.5	0	0	0	0	0.5	1	3	N/A	3	0	4	N/A	3	0	
Schoolhouse Apartments	Moderate	F	Elderly	Yes, FEMA	High	0	0	0	0	0	0.5	0.5	3	1	3	9	4	1	3	12	
Seeley's Auto Body	N/A	A	Small Business	No, Locally Significant; Committee	High	0.5	0	0	0	0	0.5	0.5	3	N/A	3	0	4	N/A	3	0	
South Main Street Neighborhood	Moderate	C	Single Family Residence	No, Locally Significant; County Haz Mit Plan	High	0	0	0	0	0	0.5	0.5	3	1	3	9	4	1	3	12	
St. Patrick School	High	B	Schools	Yes, FEMA	High	0.5	0.5	0.5	0	0	0.5	2	3	1	3	9	4	1	3	12	
SL Rt. 434 E/W/T3 Site	N/A	A	Large Business	No, LSF: Conceptual Plan	High	0.5	0.5	0.5	0	0	0.5	2	3	3	3	27	4	3	3	36	
State Route 17C Tioga Center Neighborhood	High	C	Single Family Residence	No, Locally Significant; County Haz Mit Plan	High	0.5	0.5	0.5	0	0	0.5	2	3	N/A	3	0	4	N/A	3	0	
Sunnyside Road Neighborhood	High	C	Single-Family Residence	No, Locally Significant; County Haz Mit Plan	High	0.5	0.5	0.5	0	0	0.5	2	3	3	3	27	4	3	3	36	
The Homestead	N/A	F	Elderly	No, Locally Significant; County Haz Mit Plan	High	0.5	0.5	0.5	0	0	0.5	2	3	3	3	27	4	3	3	36	
Tioga Center Fire Department	N/A	B	Emergency Operations / Response	Yes, FEMA	High	0.5	0	0	0	0	0.5	1	3	N/A	3	0	4	N/A	3	0	
Tioga County Club	Moderate	A	Tourism Destinations	No, Locally Significant; Committee	High	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	0.5	3	4.5	4	0.5	3	6	

Section V: Additional Materials

Table 5.3 Assets and Risk Assessment

Asset Information		Landscape Attributes										Risk Assessment (100-year event)					Risk Assessment (500-year event)				
Asset	Asset Class	Asset Subcategory	Critical Facility	Community Value	Defensive Flood Protection Measures	Asset elevation below base flood elevation	Freshwater elevation less than two feet above BFE	Asset near point of confluence	Asset near stormwater system discharge	Asset within floodway fringe and without vegetated buffers	Land Use (Non-FLS) Score	Hazard Score	Exposure Score	Vulnerability Score	Risk Score	Hazard Score	Exposure Score	Vulnerability Score	Risk Score		
Tioga County Clerk	Moderate	Government and Administrative Services	No, Locally Significant: County Haz Mit Plan	High	0.5	0	0	0	0	0.5	1	3	1.5	3	13.5	4	1.5	3	18		
Tioga County Court Annex	Moderate	Government and Administrative Services	No, Locally Significant: County Haz Mit Plan	High	0.5	0	0	0	0	0.5	1	3	1.5	3	13.5	4	1.5	3	18		
Tioga County Historic Courthouse	Moderate	Historic Landmarks and Facilities	No, Locally Significant: County Haz Mit Plan	High	0.5	0	0	0	0	0.5	1	3	1.5	3	13.5	4	1.5	3	18		
Tioga County Office Building	High	Government and Administrative Services	Yes, FEMA	High	0.5	0.5	0	0	0	0.5	2	3	3	3	27	4	3	3	36		
Tioga County Public Works	Extreme	Public Works Facility	Yes, FEMA	High	0.5	0.5	0	0	0	0.5	2	3	4	3	36	4	4	3	48		
Tioga Downs Casino	High	Tourism Destination	No, Locally Significant: County Haz Mit Plan	High	0.5	0	0	0	0	0.5	1.5	3	2.5	3	22.5	4	2.5	3	30		
Tioga Opportunities, Inc.	High	Government and Administrative Services	Yes, FEMA	High	0.5	0.5	0	0	0	0.5	2	3	3	3	27	4	3	3	36		
Tioga State Bank (S/R 17C)	High	Banks and financial services	No, Locally Significant: Committee	High	0.5	0.5	0	0	0	0.5	2	3	3	3	27	4	3	3	36		
Tioga Town Hall	Moderate	Government and Administrative Services	Yes, FEMA	High	0.5	0	0	0	0	0.5	1	3	1.5	3	13.5	4	1.5	3	18		
Tireland USA	N/A	Small Business	No, Locally Significant: Committee	High	0.5	0	0	0	0	0	0.5	3	N/A	3	0	4	N/A	3	0		
Tops Plaza	High	Small Business	No, Locally Significant: Committee	High	0.5	0.5	0	0	0	0.5	2	3	3	3	27	4	3	3	36		
Town of Nichols Highway Garage / Water Well #1	High	Transportation & Water Supply	Yes, FEMA	High	0.5	0.5	0	0	0	0.5	2	3	3	3	27	4	3	3	36		
Town of Nichols Wastewater Plant / Water Well #2	Extreme	Wastewater & Water Supply	Yes, FEMA	High	0.5	0.5	0	0	0	0.5	2	3	3	3	27	4	3	3	36		
Town of Owego Highway Dept.	Extreme	Public Works Facilities	Yes, FEMA	High	0.5	0.5	0	0	0	0.5	2.5	3	4.5	3	40.5	4	4.5	3	54		
Town of Owego Offices/ Court/State Police Barracks	N/A	Government and Administrative Services	No, Locally Significant: County Haz Mit Plan	High	0.5	0	0	0	0	0.5	2	3	4	3	36	4	4	3	48		
Town of Owego Wastewater Plant (Broadway)	Extreme	Wastewater	Yes, FEMA	High	0.5	0.5	0	0	0	0	0.5	3	N/A	3	0	4	N/A	3	0		
Town of Owego Wastewater Plant (Main St)	Extreme	Wastewater	Yes, FEMA	High	0.5	0.5	0	0	0	0.5	2	3	4	3	36	4	4	3	48		
Treadway Inn Complex	High	Large Business	No, Locally Significant: Committee	High	0.5	0.5	0	0	0	0.5	2	3	4	3	36	4	4	3	48		
United Water Pump House / Water Well #2	Moderate	Water Supply	No, Locally Significant: Committee	High	0	0	0	0	0	0.5	2	3	3	3	27	4	3	3	36		
Verizon Office (Nichols)	Moderate	Telecommunications	Yes, FEMA	High	0	0	0	0	0	0.5	0.5	3	1	3	9	4	1	3	12		

C. Public Engagement Process

Overview of the Public Engagement Process

The public engagement process to develop the New York Rising Community Reconstruction (NYRCR) Tioga Plan was multi-faceted. An important goal of this planning process was to develop a regional approach to resiliency. The process was based on bringing the five municipalities of the Tioga Community together to work cooperatively to address hazard mitigation, economic development, and other related issues. At the same time, it was necessary to recognize that the communities also have unique concerns that reflect their varied characters, differing experiences during Hurricane Irene and Tropical Storm Lee, and distinct local organizational structures.

To accomplish these objectives, the NYRCR public engagement process included establishing the NYRCR Tioga Community Planning Committee (Committee), organizing three public engagement meetings (including the Regional Resiliency Summit), and organizing a series of Committee meetings.

Tioga Community Planning Committee

In July of 2013, the Committee was established and was tasked with the responsibility of preparing the Tioga Community NYRCR Plan, which serves as a guide to making flood-related decisions to ensure a more sustainable and resilient future for the Town and Village of Nichols, the Town and Village of Owego, and the Town of Tioga – the Tioga Community.



Planning Committee members at work.

The Committee includes representatives from each of the five municipalities that compose the Tioga Community plus key social service providers, representatives of county and regional government agencies, business owners, and community residents. The Committee also had a number of non-voting elected officials from each of the representative communities. By design, the Committee brings to the planning process a wide range of views from areas and groups throughout Tioga County.

A list of the Tioga Community Planning Committee members is provided on the inside front cover of this plan.

Planning Committee Meetings

The NYRCR Planning Committee conducted eight formal meetings. During these meetings, the members of the Committee developed a vision statement, identified strategies to support the vision, identified and shared potential project ideas being considered in each municipality, and considered ways in which inter-municipal cooperation and coordination could improve regional resiliency. Committee members openly discussed potential projects with their respective Boards and community residents and served as a conduit for input from the public.

Section V: Additional Materials

All meetings were open to the public, and advertised on the NYRCR website, local community websites, and via word of mouth. Several community residents, business owners and local elected officials attended Committee meetings and provided valuable input regarding project selection.

In addition to the formal meetings, members of the Committee met as smaller sub-committees to identify community assets, discuss potential projects and funding sources by community, and collaborate on a regional river initiative. Several Committee members organized a site visit to Corning, NY to learn more about their automated rain and stream gauge system. Those in attendance were given a tour of Corning's system as the Town and Village of Nichols and the Village of Owego are interested in installing a similar flood warning system in their communities.

The Committee has agreed to continue to meet on a regular basis, after the NYRCR Tioga Plan is submitted, to oversee project implementation and identify ways to increase regional resiliency.

Regional Initiative Meetings

As part of the planning process, the Committee recognized the need to think broadly about flood mitigation and prevention techniques. They understood early that what happens in one community can adversely affect another. Toward this end, the Tioga Community had a number of meetings with other NYRCR communities in the Upper Susquehanna River Watershed including Broome Community and the Village of Sidney. Each County's Soil and Water Conservation District and County Planning Office and the Upper Susquehanna Coalition also participated in the meetings. The result from the meetings was the development of the Regional River Initiative project aimed at reducing impacts from future flood events through natural mitigation techniques and public education.



Committee members evaluate proposed and featured projects.

Elan 3 Consulting