2011 was quite a year for regional work, both within the STC region and beyond.

The new Southern Tier Network, created by a partnership of Chemung, Schuyler, and Steuben Counties, Corning Incorporated, and STC, will build state-of-the-art optical telecommunication infrastructure for our three counties. When complete, the network will provide the highest speed broadband connectivity available in the three-county region. Read more about it in this report.

The Susquehanna-Chemung Action Plan project involved two regions—Southern Tier Central and Southern Tier East—to present a unified vision for the region’s water resources.

Also covering two regions, and funded in late 2011, the NYSERDA (New York State Energy Research and Development Authority) “Cleaner Greener” project seeks to increase economic competitiveness while reducing energy use and carbon emissions. The project involves extensive public participation throughout eight counties.

STC staff served on workgroups for the most widely-known cross-regional project, the Southern Tier Regional Economic Development Council, with particular focus on addressing the region’s infrastructure and downtown development needs.

Covering three regions, adding Southern Tier West to Central and East, is a new NYS Appalachian Regional Commission Strategic Plan that combines ARC goals with the needs of NYS and was prepared with input from all three regions.

STC is also partnering with Genesee/Finger Lakes Regional Planning Council and the Finger Lakes Institute to prepare a watershed management plan for restoring and protecting water quality in Seneca Lake.

The trend toward increased regionalism fits our mission, and STC is pleased to participate in these efforts and contribute to the success of each.
In 2011, STC implemented an Appalachian Regional Commission Pre-Application in order to make the ARC process as simple as possible for applicants. The pre-application was made widely available, and ten pre-applications were submitted to STC. Following review and rating by the STC Economic Development Policy Committee and the STC Board, applicants with the highest ranking projects were asked to complete full applications. Six projects were forwarded to the state level of the Appalachian Regional Commission for $493,600 of ARC funding toward $1.3 million in project costs:

- Unified Telecommunication System Project at Schuyler County (Schuyler Hospital Inc.)
- Seneca Lake/Seneca Canal Waterfront Development Plan (Schuyler County Partnership for Economic Development)
- Village Square Wastewater Planning Project (Village of Hammondsport)
- B&H Railroad Bridge Timber Deck Replacement (Steuben County Industrial Development Agency)
- Digital Water/Sewer Infrastructure and Mapping Accessibility Project (Southern Tier Central Regional Planning and Development Board)
- Route 21 Sewer Extension (City of Hornell)

The Southern Tier Network (STN) will provide the highest speed broadband connectivity available in the region, creating opportunities for economic development, public safety, education, healthcare, and more. It will bring fiber further into the rural areas; and it will assist service providers in expanding their telecommunications business throughout the region. It will connect public safety towers and 911 offices and allow telemedicine and educational advancements.

A collaboration among STC, Corning Incorporated, and the three counties, STN is a not-for-profit corporation overseen by a board of directors representing industry, healthcare, education, planning, public safety, and each of the 3 counties that established and funded it. STC Executive Director Marcia Weber is the first Chair of the STN board of directors. She comments, “This network will make us globally competitive, and the region’s benefits will include economic development and quality of life issues. We are fortunate to have our partners in this exciting venture.”

Every year, STC develops a Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) that presents data, analysis, goals, and proposed projects for improving the economic wellbeing of the region. In 2011, the CEDS was completely updated. The new Strategy is much more concise, contains better maps, and includes a more accessible narrative section. The CEDS includes recommendations of the STC Economic Development Policy Committee, identifies vital projects for each county, and documents regional support for proposed projects.
The Tourism Economy and Potential Impacts of Natural Gas Drilling

As the state evaluated the impacts that new natural gas drilling techniques might have on the environment, STC considered the impacts on tourism. Tourism is an important and diverse sector of the region’s economy, and understanding the potential impacts of gas drilling on the tourism industry is important for business owners, elected officials, and planners concerned with economic development.

STC engaged a consultant to conduct a study entitled “Natural Gas Drilling in the Marcellus Shale: Potential Impacts on the Tourism Economy of the Southern Tier.” In addition to assessing the potential impacts of gas drilling, the report identifies policies and strategies to mitigate those impacts, allowing the tourism industry to prepare for and work with possible development. This study was funded by the Appalachian Regional Commission.

The 2011 annual report has been funded in part by the following Federal and State agencies: Appalachian Regional Commission; U.S. Department of Commerce Economic Development Administration; NYS Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC); NYS Department of State; and U.S. Environmental Protection Agency through Section 604(b) of the Clean Water Act and the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (administered by NYSDEC). The report has also been funded in part by Chemung, Schuyler, and Steuben Counties.
In order to prepare for changes in the STC region, many local governments are interested in updating their comprehensive plans or writing new plans. It is recommended that these plans be updated every 10 years, and many municipalities are overdue. STC helped the Town of Corning kick off a master plan update that will address changes associated with a new hospital and the potential for new student housing. The process started with STC facilitating a series of focus group meetings to identify key issues.

**Master Planning Activities**

The 2011 training conference at Corning Community College went off without a hitch! The conference had record attendance with participation from 75 of the 76 municipalities in the STC region. The conference featured 32 classes throughout the day. The most popular was a Marcellus Shale workshop taught by the Township Supervisor for Athens, Pennsylvania. A total of 30 businesses and agencies displayed their products at the vendor trade show.

The conference opening program featured Mr. Mark Alger, Steuben County Administrator, as the keynote speaker and Member of Assembly Phil Palmesano as a lunchtime speaker. This wonderful conference was made possible by the Appalachian Regional Commission, sponsorship by Three Rivers Development Corporation, and a total of $5,900 in other private sponsorship. In addition, an outstanding team of presenters contributed time and expertise.

**Planning Assistance**

Five municipalities contract with STC for planning assistance (partially supported by the Appalachian Regional Commission). Highlights of the accomplishments supported by STC include:

- **Town of Caton**: Completed a zoning map update that was submitted to the Town Board for consideration.

- **Town of Corning**: Began working with the Corning Hospital on planning board requirements and site plan evaluation for the new hospital site in East Corning.

- **Village of Painted Post**: Considered and reviewed a report evaluating the Village’s options for consolidation of services and dissolution.

- **Village of Riverside**: Conducted training with the Village Planning Board and began to discuss requirements for a comprehensive plan.

- **Village of Addison**: Working closely with Corning Enterprises and the Village, wrote and was awarded a NYS Main Street grant that will begin in 2012.

**Energy Planning Guide**

Many municipal officials recognize the need to plan ahead for the impacts of natural gas development or other large-scale energy projects, such as wind farms. However, they are also uncertain about what they can (and can’t) do to be prepared. To address this need, STC and planners from Chemung, Schuyler, and Steuben Counties assembled information about planning and land use tools as they relate to energy development. The “Municipal Guide for Energy Impacted Communities” provides local officials with an understanding of the short- and long-term implications of energy development and provides guidance about how land use plans and regulations can be used to manage those impacts. (Available at [www.stcplanning.org](http://www.stcplanning.org).)
DATA SERVICES AND TECHNOLOGY

STC Technology Assistance Program

STC has provided affordable technology assistance to local governments for more than two decades (partially subsidized by the Appalachian Regional Commission). STC staff guides the use of computers to accommodate day-to-day needs and the ever-changing demands of governmental operations. Long-term relationships have enabled STC to facilitate the evolution of technology for the Villages of Hammondsport, Painted Post, and Watkins Glen. Each village has replaced legacy equipment, upgraded software, established networks, and maintained computer security. They call on STC to maintain the system, troubleshoot problems, and customize desktop applications.

STC hosts a data warehouse that provides a central location for storing and accessing map-based data for the three counties. The GIS server for this system was upgraded with larger hard drives in order to accommodate numerous requests for incorporating additional data.

In order to enable web-based access to information in the data warehouse, STC has created custom map viewers for each county and for STC projects. For example, the Susquehanna Chemung Data Atlas (created for the Susquehanna-Chemung Action plan; and available at http://www.stcgis.org/scatlas/) enables seamless viewing of datasets for a 9-county region, with hyperlinks to additional resources.

STC also creates digital maps for projects, including extensive mapping for the Southern Tier Network, and provides technical expertise to assist municipal and county entities with GIS data management.

The next steps for the STC data warehouse are to create the processes and procedures, as well as the infrastructure, to allow users from outside STC to update and load data. Currently data has to be sent to STC staff to be included on the server.

GIS is becoming an increasingly important tool for critical operations and decision making in local governments.

HUMAN SERVICES

STC and its Regional Human Services Committee (RHSC) reviewed three projects in 2011 for Appalachian Regional Commission funding:

■ The Unified Telecommunication System Project at Schuyler Hospital, also reviewed by the Economic Development Policy Committee, was recommended for funding. This project involves a technology upgrade that builds on previous work completed with an ARC grant.

■ The RHSC also recommended approval for the Schuyler Child Care Center, noting the need for additional child care options such as extended hours for working parents in Schuyler County. $150,000 in ARC funding was awarded.

■ The application is in process for a Regional Career Literacy Project spanning all fourteen counties of Appalachian New York.

In addition, the three county human services committees engage in discussions and planning to facilitate cost savings and efficiencies in providing high-quality services to the region.

“My Place, A Play and Learning Center,” offers a range of child care services in Schuyler County, with start-up funds from the Appalachian Regional Commission.
Flood Assistance Program

Tropical Storm Lee served as a vivid reminder that flooding is a fact of life in the Southern Tier; and that an ongoing commitment to flood damage prevention should be a way of life in this region. STC provides technical assistance to support proactive efforts to reduce future flood damages. This assistance included:

- Following tropical storm Lee, STC staff supported flood recovery efforts in the Village of Wellsburg by providing information and assistance related to rebuilding in the floodplain.
- STC is serving as the local contact for FEMA’s project to develop new floodplain maps for the Cohocton and Chemung River Watersheds. This assistance included reviewing draft maps, identifying available data, facilitating communication, and other efforts to promote the development of high quality mapping products.
- STC developed tools to support improved flood warning operations for the 3-county region (by the non-profit Environmental Emergency Services).
- STC actively promotes improved federal policy related to flooding. As Chair of the Public Policy Committee of the NYS Floodplain and Stormwater Managers Association, STC drafted correspondence for the Association and a position paper entitled “Rethinking the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP).”
- STC’s Certified Floodplain Manager provides information and technical assistance with flood mitigation and floodplain management.
- STC prepared a successful grant application for a project entitled “Strategy for a Flood Resistant Southern Tier Central Region,” which will enable STC to provide increased assistance with floodplain management, planning, and public education.

Susquehanna-Chemung Action Plan

The Susquehanna-Chemung Action Plan is finished! This watershed management plan encompasses the portions of New York State that drain into the Chesapeake Bay. An ecosystem-based management approach was used to integrate environmental quality, community well-being, and economic vitality into a plan for the region’s water resources.

This action plan addresses eleven key issues: Water Quality & Quantity, Economic Development, Land Use, Streams & Rivers, Flood Hazards, Runoff, Roads, Agriculture & Forestry, Plants & Wildlife, Outdoor Recreation, and Education & Research. It presents information and recommendations for each of these issue areas. In addition to the plan itself, supporting resources and links are available on the project website. An online data atlas was created as a mapping tool for government agencies, nonprofits, municipalities, and interested residents. STC also developed informational guides about “Steep Slopes and Land Use Decisions” and “Flood Attenuation Opportunities.”

Now the task at hand is implementation. STC will continue to work with the region’s stakeholders to secure funding and act on the plan’s recommendations.

The final plan, data atlas, and informational materials can be found on the project website at www.susquehanna-chemung.org.
STC assists with local efforts to protect water resources by participating in all three County Water Quality Coordinating Committees. This assistance included developing resource information about lake-friendly living, preparing a new water quality brochure for Steuben County, providing information about natural gas development, and assisting with annual reports for the Chemung and Steuben County Water Quality Committees.

STC also participates in the Chemung County Stormwater Coalition and the three-county Rural Stormwater Coalition. Activities that support improved drainage included: mapping of culverts for local highway departments, education using a hands-on stormwater-floodplain model, and training about new green infrastructure requirements.

The “2010 Chemung County Water Quality Annual Report” describes water quality issues in the county, activities of the Chemung County Water Quality Strategy Committee, and priority projects for future implementation.

STC is collaborating on a plan for protecting and restoring water quality in Seneca Lake. Supporting data for this plan was compiled in a watershed characterization report that documents existing conditions in the lake and the condition of natural resources and the built environment on the surrounding lands. The next step is an assessment of local laws, programs, and practices that affect water quality. This process started with the collection of municipal regulations. The planning process also includes numerous outreach and education events throughout the watershed.

More information about the project and the draft “Watershed Characterization and Subwatershed Evaluation” are on the project website at www.senecalakeplan.info.

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*STC recognizes that healthy water systems are vital to the quality of life in the region, both now and for future generations.*
2011 STC Board of Directors

Chair, Joseph Hauryski
Chair, Steuben County Legislature

Vice Chair, Dennis Fagan
Chair, Schuyler County Legislature

Mark Alger
Steuben County Administrator

Theodore Bennett
Chemung County Legislator

John Burin
Municipal Representative

Donald Creath*
Steuben County Legislator

Amy Dlugos
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James Griffin*
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Ernest Hartman
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Danielle Hautaniemi
Schuyler County Planning

Timothy Hicks*
Environmental Representative

Shawn Hogan
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Robert Nichols
Agricultural Representative

Timothy O’Hearn
Schuyler County Administrator

Mark Ryckman
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Thomas Santulli
Chemung County Executive

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*left during the year

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2011 County Local Share Leveraged
More Than $8 Million for STC Region

Local Share for STC $205,000
Federal, State & Other Grants for STC $770,569
Funds Secured for Region $7,454,500

Other $1,200,000
State $1,920,928
Federal $4,333,571
County $142,753