



Planning in Delaware County

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The Value of a Soil Profile Analysis

A Soil Profile Analysis, commonly referred to as "Soils Tests" is an effective means of determining soil suitability of a parcel of land and therefore is an integral part of a local municipality's subdivision review process.

Soil suitability is a general term that can apply to a wide range of soil characteristics, such as a soil's ability to support structural improvements and a parcel of land's ability to properly treat sewage by means of a sub-surface waste disposal, or septic system.

Determining soil characteristics is an exact science and a task most appropriate for a licensed engineer or soil scientist. The subdivision regulations within your municipality most likely require that a soil profile analysis be performed by one of these professionals and their respective reports presented as part of an official application for subdivision review. This information is required to ensure that any new lot being proposed can be demonstrated to support on-site septic treatment and any proposed structural improvements. If this is the case, the parcel is therefore in this respect "buildable".

If an applicant cannot demonstrate that a proposed lot can support on-site septic treatment, the creation of that lot may be prohibited based upon the adopted subdivision review regulations.

A soil profile analysis typically involves two parts: a deep test pit and a percolation test. A deep test pit provides a variety of information pertaining to soil suitability including the depth to bedrock or fragipan (very hard layer of soil or "hard pan"), the type of soils encountered above the fragipan, and a depth to water when applicable. State regu-

lations require that a deep test pit be dug to the bedrock or fragipan or six (6) feet, whichever is encountered first.

A percolation test is used to determine a soil's rate of absorption as it applies to proper treatment of sewage. This is performed by digging a hole of a specified depth, saturating it with water, and taking a series of timed measurements to determine the rate of absorption. Acceptable results depend on the type of absorption system being planned and on local regulations. State-wide absorption rate standards have been adopted and are available from New York State Department of Health. Water absorbed too quickly is evidence of very permeable soils and would likely exceed the allowed rate for adequate sewage treatment. This scenario results in untreated sewage traveling greater distances increasing the potential for the contamination of onsite or neighboring water bodies and/or drinking water supplies. A percolation rate slower than the state standard also creates a problem of sewage treatment and the operation of a septic system.

Some communities require that more than one series of soils tests be performed on any proposed lot; some municipalities only require that a percolation test be performed. However, in the event that these tests are not completed at the time of subdivision review any proposed improvements for the lot would require that these same tests be conducted prior to the issuance of a building permit.

Scenarios may arise in which applicants for subdivision review do not feel that a soil profile analysis is necessary for a proposed subdivision; it is important to adhere to the municipality's regulations to avoid

making special exceptions. In applications where a proposed parcel is of a significant acreage or the owner states that they have no plans to build a dwelling on a proposed lot, often the Planning Board will have to explain to the applicant the reasoning for requiring the soil profile analysis. This is also sometimes the case when a subdivision is being proposed as part of a land acquisition proposed by either the New York City Department of Environmental Protection (NYCDEP) or another land trust involved in similar acquisitions. Another scenario may occur when a hunting/game club is acquiring lands to expand their territory.

The reasoning behind requiring the soil profile analysis for each of these scenarios is uniform: change over time. At some point in the future, ownership and intentions for use of a parcel may change. For example, the dissolution of a hunting club could lead to the transfer of lands to new owners that may want to build a residence. Any parcel of land purchased by a municipal entity or a not-for-profit could also be developed or sold in the future. The proposed buyer of the newly created lot or the intended use as something other than a dwelling or business has little bearing on the applicability of soils tests during a subdivision review.

Soils tests are a valuable tool for both the planning process and the applicant. They give both parties a relative guarantee that there is at least one acceptable home site on a parcel of land; a benefit to the owner, any prospective buyer, and the municipality.

Delaware County



Snowmobile Trails

Delaware County was approved for 363 miles of trail for the 2010-2011 Snowmobile Grant that is funded by the New York State Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation Office. The County will receive \$120,780.00 to disperse amongst the eight clubs that maintain the State snowmobile trails in Delaware County.

ZBA TRAINING:

On May 24th, the Delaware County Planning Department and the Southern Tier East Regional Planning Development Board will be hosting a ZBA overview session at the Delaware County Public Safety Building, located at 280 Phoebe Lane in Delhi from 6-9 PM.

Pre-registration is required.

To pre-register call Jessica at 607-746-2944, or email: jessica.ulmer@co.delaware.ny.us

DELAWARE COUNTY PLANNING DEPARTMENT

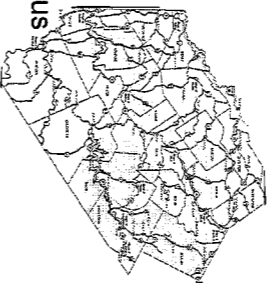
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Delaware County Flood Buyout Programs Progress

The Hazard Mitigation Grant Program funded through the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and the New York State Emergency Management Office (SEMO) is currently in its final stages. Since the Program started in 2006, Delaware County has purchased and demolished twenty-one flood damaged homes voluntarily sold to the County. The Planning Department is now working with the municipalities to adopt flood re-use plans that will regulate and propose uses of the flood prone parcels. The Department is also working with the municipalities to transfer ownership of the parcels from the County to the municipalities. The total cost of the project was \$2,091,428.01; however, only \$2,075,941.00 was reimbursed by FEMA and SEMO.

The Greater Catskill Flood Remediation Grant Program funded through the New York State Department of Housing and Community Renewal (NYS DHCR) started in 2008 and was available for homes damaged in any flood that occurred in the years 2004-2008. Eight property owners participated in the Program. The homes were purchased by Delaware County in May and June of 2009. Demolitions were completed in the Spring of 2010. These vacant parcels will be transferred to the municipalities by the end of the Program and re-used as public space. The total cost of the project was \$ 1,004,220.88; however, only \$988,096.14 was reimbursed by NYSDHCR.