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Contact: Phillip J. Wajda  
(518) 388-8394 / 857-8601 (cell)  
[wajdap@union.edu](mailto:wajdap@union.edu)

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## **Climate Change Impact on Mohawk Watershed**

SCHENECTADY, N.Y. – The Mohawk Watershed Group at Union College will host the first conference on the physical aspects of the Mohawk River Watershed on Friday, March 27, in the College's Olin Center.

A presentation entitled: "*Current trends and future possibilities: monitoring for the future and how watershed dynamics may be affected by global climate change.*" by Jaclyn Cockburn, PhD, a watershed hydrologist in the Geology Department at Union College will present on the changes seen throughout the watershed in the 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> centuries. These changes have been especially apparent in the last decade.

The climate in NY State has changed over the last decade and a key challenge for watershed management and ecosystem dynamics is to understand those changes that have occurred that those that will be dramatic in the future.

Current discharge records show a higher variability in discharge (amount of water flowing through the rivers and streams), and the southern part of the basin now has a greater annual volume of water than it has had in the past. This trend might mean that we would expect more frequent flooding, enhanced bank erosion, and increased scour and sediment transport in small tributaries in the watershed. It is unclear if this recent wet period is related to global climate change or whether it is driven by regional shifts in precipitation patterns.

Incremental changes in mean annual temperature may be currently too subtle to detect directly, but the trend in mean winter temperatures is towards milder winters and this affects ice cover in the basin. As temperatures warm, there might be dramatic impacts on the aquatic ecosystems.

Flooding and droughts are expected to impact aquatic ecosystems and changes to the hydrological cycle will certainly be severe and the most dramatic problem that we face as climate change impacts the Mohawk Watershed.

Understanding the magnitude of the issues we face is limited due to the current network of gaging and weather stations and real-time monitors throughout the watershed. This network and additional monitoring is needed in order to establish baseline properties of the watershed, which will further facilitate an understanding of the impacts of future change and possibly contribute to management and mitigation solutions.

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Contact: Phil Wajda - Director of Media & Public Relations  
Contact Person: J.I. Garver, Geology Department, Union College  
Company Name: Union College, Schenectady NY  
Telephone Number: 518-388-6770 (Garver) or (518) 388-8394 / 857-8601 (cell) (Wajda)  
Fax Number: 518-388-6417  
Email Address: [gaverj@union.edu](mailto:gaverj@union.edu)

Web: [http://minerva.union.edu/garverj/mohawk/symposium/2009\\_Mohawk\\_symposium.html](http://minerva.union.edu/garverj/mohawk/symposium/2009_Mohawk_symposium.html)