



THE WATERFALL CENTER

FOR BIOREGIONAL LEARNING

SENSE OF PLACE - BIOREGION PROMPTS/QUESTIONS

First Impressions & Feeling

- What was your first feeling when you encountered this valley?
- When you return after being away, what do you notice first?
- How does your body respond to being here (relaxed, alert, grounded, restless)?
- If this place had a mood or temperament, what would it be?

Belonging & Identity

- When did this place start to feel like home, if it does?
- Where do you feel the strongest sense of belonging here?
- How has this place shaped who you are?

Sensory Experience

- What sounds define this place (wind, traffic, birds, silence)?
- What smells instantly bring you back here?
- How does the light look at different times of day or year?
- What textures (soil, air, water, built environment) stand out to you?

Landmarks & Orientation

- What features do you use to orient yourself, formally or intuitively?
- Is there a place you return to again and again? What draws you there?
- What's a "hidden" or overlooked place that feels meaningful to you?
- Where would you take someone to help them understand this place?

Time & Change

- How does this place feel different at different times of day?
- What changes mark the passage of seasons in a subtle way?
- What has stayed the same here, even as other things change?
- When do you feel most aware of time passing in this place?

Personal Meaning & Memory

- What personal memory is inseparable from this place?
- Is there a moment when this place surprised you?
- What place here holds strong emotion for you (joy, grief, awe)?
- How do your memories of this place differ from how it is now?

Intangible Qualities

- What is something about this place that's hard to put into words?
- Does this place feel sacred, ordinary, wild, cultivated, or something else?
- What stories or myths (personal or cultural) seem to live here?
- If you had to describe the "spirit" of this place, what would you say?



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Relationship & Reciprocity

- What do you receive from being in this place?
- What do you give back to it, if anything?
- How do you care for or show respect to this place?
- What responsibilities come with knowing this place well?

Movement & Perspective

- How does this place change depending on how you move through it (walking, driving, biking)?
- What do visitors often misunderstand about this place?
- How would you describe this place to someone who has never been here?
- How does your experience differ from others who share this region?

Imaginative Prompts

- If it had a voice, what would it say to you?
- What color, sound, or piece of music represents this place?
- If you could preserve one feeling about this place forever, what would it be?



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CONSERVATION & STEWARDSHIP QUESTIONS & PROMPTS

Personal Stewardship & Responsibility

- When did you first feel responsible for a piece of land or water?
- Tell a story about someone who quietly cares for the creek, what motivates them?
- What does “taking care” of a watershed look like in everyday life?
- Describe a moment when you realized the land was depending on human choices.

Restoration & Repair

- A damaged stretch of creek is being restored, tell the story from the first shovel to the first sign of life returning.
- What does success look like in a restoration project, and who decides?
- Tell a story where restoration doesn't go as planned. What's learned instead?
- Imagine uncovering an old map that reveals how the creek once flowed, what happens next?
- How do people rebuild trust with a landscape after harming it?

Community & Collective Action

- A small town must come together to protect its water, who leads, who resists, and why?
- Tell a story about unlikely allies (farmers, scientists, kids, elders) working to protect the creekshed.
- What happens when conservation efforts clash with local traditions or livelihoods?
- Describe a community meeting where the future of the creek is debated.
- Who gets to make decisions about the land, and who should?

Land Use & Ethical Tension

- A farmer must choose between short-term survival and long-term conservation, what do they do?
- A new development promises economic growth but threatens the watershed, how does the community respond?
- What does “sustainable” really mean when applied to this landscape?
- Tell a story about a family whose relationship to the land changes over generations.
- Where is the line between using the land and protecting it?

Learning from the Land

- What lessons do beavers, wetlands, or forests teach about stewardship?
- Tell a story where humans change their behavior by closely observing the creek.
- How does the land “push back” when it's not cared for?
- Describe a moment when nature corrects a human mistake.
- What would it mean to manage the creekshed as the ecosystem would?



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Intergenerational Stewardship

- A young person inherits responsibility for protecting part of the creekshed, what challenges do they face?
- What knowledge is at risk of being lost between generations?
- Tell a story about an elder passing down ecological wisdom.
- How do values around conservation shift over time?
- What does it mean to be a “good ancestor” in this place?

Policy, Power & Justice

- A conservation policy is proposed, who benefits, and who bears the cost?
- Tell a story about land access: who can enjoy or protect the creekshed?
- How do issues of equity show up in environmental stewardship?
- What happens when outside organizations try to “save” the landscape?
- Who speaks for the creek when decisions are made?

Future Stewardship

- Imagine a future where the Schoharie Creekshed is a model of successful conservation, what changed?
- What new roles or jobs exist in a stewardship-based economy?
- How does climate change reshape conservation priorities in the region?
- Tell a story about a long-term project that takes decades to show results.
- What traditions emerge around caring for the watershed?

Emotional Dimensions

- What does it mean to love a landscape enough to protect it?
- Tell a story where stewardship is an act of grief, healing, or hope.
- How do rituals or seasonal practices connect people to conservation?
- What does the creek ask of those who live near it?
- Can stewardship be a form of belonging?



INVASIVE SPECIES QUESTIONS & PROMPTS

Personal Connection

- Tell the story of a specific place along the creek you return to. What has changed there over time, and how has that change affected you?
- When did you first learn that a species could be called “invasive”? Did that idea shift how you see the land?
- Describe a moment when you felt out of place in nature. How does that mirror the presence of invasive species?
- What plant, fish, or animal feels most tied to your identity here? Has its presence grown, faded, or been replaced?
- Share a memory of someone teaching you about the land, what would they notice if they came back today?

Close Observation

- Spend time with one patch of land or streambank. What species dominate it? What’s missing?
- Describe how an invasive plant changes the feel of a place, light, movement, smell, sound.
- Watch how water moves through an area crowded with invasive growth. What’s different?
- What signs tell you a landscape is in transition rather than balance?
- Follow one species (plant, insect, or fish) through a day. What interactions does it have, with natives, with humans, with the creek?

Ecology

- What relationships between species seem disrupted here? Which ones persist despite change?
- Describe a chain reaction: how does the arrival of one invasive species ripple outward through soil, water, and wildlife?
- Where do you see resilience in the ecosystem, unexpected survival, adaptation, or coexistence?
- How do seasonal cycles (spring floods, summer droughts, winter freeze) shape the spread or control of invasive species?
- If you traced the path of an invasive species through the watershed, what natural forces helped it move?

Human Impact

- Tell the story of someone whose daily life has been changed by a shifting landscape, farmer, angler, gardener, or land steward.
- Where do human decisions intersect with ecological change, roads, bridges, flood control, development?



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- Describe a conflict between what's economically practical and what's ecologically healthy.
- What does “damage” look like here, and who defines it?
- Share a moment when you realized people are part of the ecosystem, not separate from it.

Restoration

- Tell a story about a time you (or someone you know) tried to restore a piece of land. What worked? What didn't?
- Describe the physical act of restoration, pulling roots, planting natives, watching for regrowth. What does it feel like in the body?
- What motivates people to care for this watershed over long periods of time?
- Where have you seen small signs of recovery that others might overlook?
- Imagine returning to a site years after restoration began, what has changed, and what still resists healing?

Bridging Themes

- Describe a single place in the creekshed across three points in time: past, present, and a hoped-for future.
- What does it mean to belong to a place that is constantly changing?
- How do you decide what should be protected, removed, or allowed to adapt?
- Tell a story where observation leads to action, what did you notice, and what did you do next?
- What would it take, not just ecologically, but emotionally, for this watershed to feel “whole”?



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FORESTS, TREES, PLANTS & FUNGI QUESTIONS & PROMPTS

Memory & Place-Based Prompts

- Recall the first time you noticed a forest as more than just “trees.” What shifted in your perception?
- Describe a walk along one of your favorite trails in the Schoharie bioregion after heavy rain. What smells, textures, and sounds linger?
- What plant or tree species feels like a “guardian” of this region to you? Why?
- Write about a childhood memory involving mud, moss, or fallen leaves.
- When have you felt most “at home” outdoors in this bioregion?
- Describe a specific tree you could return to again and again, what has it witnessed?

More-Than-Human Perspectives

- Tell a story from the perspective of a mycelial network beneath the forest floor.
- If a patch of moss could remember every footstep, what stories would it tell?
- Write as a hemlock tree watching centuries pass along the creek.
- Imagine a conversation between fungi and tree roots during a drought year.
- What would the forest say about the people who pass through it?
- Tell a story from the viewpoint of a decomposing log becoming soil again.

Seasonal & Temporal Shifts

- Describe the forest in late autumn when decay is most visible, what beauty emerges?
- Write a story that spans 200 years of seasonal cycles in one small patch of forest.
- How does the forest feel at the threshold between winter and spring?
- Imagine the same place in the forest during four different centuries.
- What changes, and what remains constant, through cycles of disturbance and regrowth?

Speculative & Future Imaginings

- Envision the Schoharie Creekshed 100 years from now if forests are fully restored and protected.
- Imagine a future where humans can communicate with plant life, what changes?
- What would a forest designed by fungi look like?
- Write about a community that organizes its governance based on forest ecology.
- Imagine a “forest memory bank” where stories are stored in living trees.

Disturbance, Resilience & Healing

- Tell the story of a forest recovering after logging, storm damage, or fire.
- What does resilience look like from the perspective of a seedling?
- Write about an invasive species entering the ecosystem, how do native species respond?
- Imagine a healing ritual led by forest beings after ecological harm.
- What does grief look like in a forest, and how is it transformed?



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Cultural & Human Relationships

- What stories have been lost or forgotten about this land, and how might they be remembered?
- Write about a multigenerational family connected to the same forest.
- How do different communities experience and relate to this watershed?
- Imagine a gathering where humans and more-than-human beings share stories.
- What responsibilities come with belonging to a bioregion?

Sensory & Poetic Sparks

- Write using only textures found in the forest (spongy moss, rough bark, slick stones).
- Describe the color green in ten different ways as seen in this region.
- What does silence sound like in a dense forest?
- Capture the moment just before a mushroom emerges.
- Write a story guided entirely by scent.

Deep Imagination & Myth

- Create a myth about how moss first came to blanket stones in the creek.
- Tell a story where fungi are the keepers of time.
- Imagine an ancient pact between trees and water.
- What hidden worlds exist beneath the forest floor?



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ANIMALS, BIRDS & WILDLIFE

Grounded in Place - Observation & Sensory Prompts

- Describe the first bird you hear at dawn along the creek, what does its call feel like in your body?
- What animal signs do you notice before you see the animal itself (tracks, scat, rustling, shadows)?
- Write a scene from the perspective of the creek itself watching the wildlife come and go over a single day.
- How does the forest smell differently after rain, and which creatures emerge because of it?
- Pick one season, what animals define that time in the creekshed, and how do they shape the mood?

Memory & Personal Connection

- Recall your earliest memory of encountering a wild animal in this region, what stayed with you?
- Have you ever felt watched in the woods? Imagine who or what was observing you.
- Write about a time an animal surprised you, what changed in your understanding of the place?
- Which bird or animal feels like a “companion species” in your life here? Why?
- Tell a story about a creature you haven’t seen in years, where did it go?

Animal Perspectives - Empathy & Voice

- Write from the perspective of a migrating bird returning to the Schoharie Creekshed after many years, what’s different?
- Imagine a fox narrating a winter night along the creek.
- A turtle has lived in the same bend of the creek for decades, what has it witnessed?
- Tell a story from the point of view of an animal that avoids humans, what myths does it have about us?
- A chorus of frogs debates whether the ecosystem is thriving or in danger, what do they say?

Interconnection & Ecology

- What invisible relationships exist between species in the creekshed (pollinators, predators, fungi, water)?
- Imagine a day when one species disappears, how does the entire system respond?
- Write about a quiet partnership between two unlikely animals.
- How does the creek connect distant lives, upstream and downstream?
- What role do birds play as messengers in this ecosystem?



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Change Over Time - Past & Present

- What animals were once common here but are now rare or gone? Tell their story.
- Imagine the creekshed 200 years ago, what wildlife dominated the soundscape?
- How has human activity altered animal behavior along the creek?
- Write about a species adapting in unexpected ways to new conditions.
- A longtime resident notices subtle changes in wildlife patterns, what do they reveal?

Imaginative & Speculative Futures

- In 50 years, what new species might appear in the creekshed, and why?
- Imagine animals evolving new abilities to survive environmental change.
- The creek becomes sentient, how does it protect its wildlife?
- A child discovers they can communicate with birds, what do they learn about the future?
- Climate shifts reshape migration routes, what stories unfold from these new crossings?

Myth, Folklore & Wonder

- Invent a local legend about a mysterious animal seen only at twilight.
- Write about a bird that carries memories between generations.
- A hidden species reveals itself only to those who are lost, what happens next?
- Create a myth explaining how a particular animal came to live in this region.

Reflection & Meaning

- What do the animals of this creekshed teach about resilience?
- If the wildlife here could speak to humans, what would they ask for?
- What does it mean to belong to a place shared with so many non-human lives?
- How do animals mark time differently than humans in this landscape?
- What responsibility comes with witnessing this ecosystem?



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GEOLOGY & LANDFORM PROMPTS & QUESTIONS

Deep Time & Ancient Landscapes

- Imagine standing in the Schoharie Valley when it lay beneath a shallow inland sea. What creatures swam above what is now your hometown? What traces did they leave behind?
- A fossil is found along Schoharie Creek that doesn't match any known species, what story does it tell about a forgotten era?
- If the bedrock beneath your feet could speak, what would it remember about glaciers, floods, and tectonic shifts?

Karst Mysteries & Hidden Worlds

- The limestone beneath the region has dissolved into caves, sinkholes, and underground streams. What lives in these unseen spaces?
- A sinkhole suddenly opens in a familiar field, what is revealed beneath, and how does it change the community?
- In the caves of Howe Caverns, a hidden passage leads somewhere unexpected, another time, a lost ecosystem, or a buried story.
- Imagine a future where the karst aquifer becomes the most precious resource, who protects it, and who threatens it?

Water, Flow, and Transformation

- Follow a drop of rain as it travels from hillside to creek, then disappears into the karst system, what journey does it take underground?
- During a great flood, Hurricane Irene Flooding reshapes the land. Tell the story from the perspective of the creek itself.
- A child discovers that certain springs only appear under specific conditions, what secret do they reveal about the land?

Memory, Place, and Belonging

- Write about a place along the creek where the land feels alive with memory, what geological features hold those memories?
- How have the hills, escarpments, and valleys shaped generations of families living here?
- A longtime resident claims the land "moves" over time, what do they mean, and are they right?

Imaginative Futures & Speculative Landscapes

- In a future shaped by climate change, how does the Schoharie Creekshed transform? Do karst systems expand, collapse, or become sanctuaries?
- A mapmaker begins charting not just surface features but underground rivers and voids, what new geography emerges?
- What if the karst system becomes sentient, communicating through springs, collapses, and echoes?



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Fossils, Rocks, and Stories in Stone

- A student finds a fossil embedded in limestone that resembles something modern, how is that possible?
- Each rock collected along the creek tells a different story, write a series of short vignettes from their perspectives.
- A quarry reveals a layered history of the region, what happens when one layer doesn't belong?

Intersections of Ecology & Geology

- How do plants and animals adapt to the thin soils and drainage patterns of karst terrain?
- A rare species is discovered living only in sinkholes, what makes these microhabitats unique?
- Imagine a symbiotic relationship between humans and the karst landscape, how do they coexist sustainably?

Personal Reflection & Sensory Prompts

- Describe the sound of water moving through unseen underground channels.
- What does the air feel like near a cave entrance, and how does it change your sense of time?
- Recall a moment when you noticed the shape of the land, how did it influence your emotions or decisions?



WATER & WATERSHED PROMPTS & QUESTIONS

Memory & Personal Connection

- When was the first time you touched water from the Schoharie Creek or one of its smaller tributaries? What did it feel like?
- Describe a childhood moment near a stream, culvert, or roadside runoff that feeds the creekshed.
- Who taught you about the water here? What did they say, and what did they leave unsaid?
- Recall a flood, drought, or storm. How did the creeks change afterward?
- What smells, sounds, and textures define “creek” to you in this region?

Tributaries & Hidden Waters

- Follow an unnamed trickle of water from a hillside until it meets a larger stream. What does it pass along the way?
- Imagine a conversation between two tributaries before they merge, what stories do they exchange?
- What secrets are held in culverts, drainage ditches, or seasonal streams that only flow in spring?
- Write about a map that reveals forgotten or buried streams beneath roads or farms.
- If each tributary had a personality, how would they differ across the creekshed?

More-than-Human Perspectives

- Tell a story from the perspective of a brook trout navigating changing water temperatures.
- What would a beaver say about how the creekshed has changed over generations?
- Imagine a heron who returns every year, what patterns does it notice in the water?
- Write from the viewpoint of a droplet of water traveling from mountain rain to the Mohawk River.
- How do fungi, roots, and soil “listen” to water underground?

Deep Time & History

- What did this creekshed look like before roads, dams, and farms?
- Tell the story of water during a major historical moment, perhaps tied to the American Revolution in the Schoharie Valley.
- Imagine the creeks remembering every footprint, hoofprint, and paddle stroke over centuries.
- What stories would sediment layers tell if they could speak?
- How did glacial melt shape the paths of today’s tributaries?



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Community & Culture

- Write about a community gathering at a swimming hole, what brings people together there?
- How do farmers, residents, and wildlife share (or compete for) water in this creekshed?
- Describe a local ritual or tradition centered around water, real or imagined.
- What does “home” mean when defined by a watershed rather than a town boundary?
- How do upstream decisions affect downstream lives?

Change, Loss & Resilience

- Tell the story of a creek that dries up, and what remains in its absence.
- Imagine a future where the creekshed has healed, what changed to make that possible?
- Write about a flood that reshapes not just land, but relationships.
- What does resilience look like for a small tributary under pressure from development or climate change?
- If the water could ask humans for help, what would it say?

Speculative & Future Visions

- In 100 years, how might the Schoharie creekshed look if restoration efforts succeed?
- Imagine technology that allows humans to “hear” water, what truths emerge?
- What if each tributary had legal rights and a voice in governance?
- Describe a future where children are taught to navigate by watersheds instead of roads.
- What new species might emerge, or return, if the creeks run clean and cold again?

Myth, Spirit & Imagination

- Create a myth about how a particular tributary was formed.
- What if every bend in the creek was a portal to another time?
- Write about water that carries dreams between people living miles apart.
- What stories do stones tell as water moves over them year after year?



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FARMS, AGRICULTURE & FOOD SYSTEMS PROMPTS & QUESTIONS

Grounded in Place: Memory & Lived Experience

- What is your earliest memory of food grown or gathered near the Schoharie Creek?
- Describe a meal that could only exist because of this creekshed, what ingredients came from nearby soil, water, or forest?
- Who taught you how to grow, forage, fish, or cook in this region? What did they say that still stays with you?
- What does the land smell like during planting season? During harvest?
- Tell the story of a single farm stand visit that changed how you see food.

Farms & Farmers: Then and Now

- Imagine a day in the life of a farmer along the Schoharie Valley in 1920. What's different? What's the same?
- What does resilience look like for a small farm after a flood, drought, or economic hardship?
- Tell a story from the perspective of a multigenerational farm deciding whether to continue or sell.
- What hidden labor, human or ecological, makes a successful harvest possible here?
- What is one crop that defines this region, and how has its meaning changed over time?

Water, Soil, and Climate

- If the Schoharie Creek could speak, what would it say about farming practices along its banks?
- Describe a year when the weather reshaped everything, what happened to farms, food, and community?
- How do farmers read the soil here? What signs tell them it's healthy, or struggling?
- Tell a story about rebuilding after a major flood event. Who shows up? What gets lost? What gets restored?
- Imagine a future where regenerative practices have fully healed the land, what does it look like?

Food Systems & Community

- Trace the journey of a single ingredient, from seed to plate, within the creekshed.
- What role do neighbors, markets, and mutual aid play in feeding people here?
- Describe a community meal where everyone brings something grown within 20 miles.
- What tensions exist between local food traditions and modern supply chains?
- How does food connect newcomers to long-time residents?



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Indigenous & Historical Perspectives

- What food traditions predate modern farming in this region, and how might they be honored today?
- Imagine a story told by the land before European settlement, what foods sustained people then?
- How have past land-use decisions shaped today's farms and ecosystems?
- What histories are missing from dominant narratives about agriculture here?

Future Imaginings

- What does farming look like in the Schoharie Creekshed in 2075?
- Imagine a cooperative, community-owned food system, how does it function day to day?
- What new crops or techniques emerge as the climate shifts?
- How might technology (or the rejection of it) reshape farming here?
- Tell a story where young people return to the creekshed to reinvent agriculture.

More-than-Human Perspectives

- Tell a story from the perspective of a dairy cow, a soil microbe, or a pollinator in this region.
- What does a migrating bird notice about farms and fields along the creekshed?
- How do forests, wetlands, and farms "negotiate" space and resources?
- Imagine a council of non-human beings deciding how land should be used.

Culture, Ritual, and Identity

- What harvest rituals or seasonal celebrations define this region?
- Describe the sounds of a late-summer evening on a farm here.
- What recipes carry the identity of this place across generations?
- How do people mark the end of a growing season, and the start of winter?

Conflict & Change

- Tell a story about a proposed development that threatens farmland, who speaks, and what's at stake?
- What happens when outside investors reshape local agriculture?
- How do farmers balance tradition with innovation?
- Describe a moment when a community must choose between economic survival and ecological health.



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Creative Constraints

- Write a story that takes place entirely within one acre of land over 100 years.
- Tell a multi-generational story through a single apple tree.
- Write a dialogue between a farmer and the creek during a storm.
- Create a “future artifact” (journal entry, recipe, map) from a transformed food system.



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COMMUNITY & CULTURE - LIVING WITH THE LAND PROMPTS & QUESTIONS

Belonging & Identity

- What makes someone “from here”? Is it lineage, time, care for the land, or something else?
- Tell the story of a person whose identity is deeply tied to the creek or valley.
- How do newcomers become part of the community?
- What does “home” mean in a place shaped by both beauty and risk?

Everyday Community Life

- Describe a moment when the community came together, what sparked it, and what held it together?
- Who are the informal leaders here (not elected, but trusted), and what do they do?
- Tell a story about how neighbors rely on each other in ways that might not exist elsewhere.
- Where do people gather, and what kinds of conversations happen there?
- What’s something outsiders wouldn’t understand about how this community functions?

Living With the Creek

- How has the creek shaped daily life, work schedules, home placement, traditions?
- Tell a story of someone who learned to respect the water.
- What knowledge about the creek gets passed down, and what has been forgotten?
- How do people talk about the creek: as resource, threat, companion, or something else?
- Describe a time when the creek brought people together, or pushed them apart.

Hardship, Loss & Resilience

- Tell the story of a flood or storm through the eyes of one household or family.
- What does rebuilding look like, not just physically, but emotionally and socially?
- How have economic changes (farming, new industries, tourism, etc.) reshaped lives here?
- Who left, and who stayed? What were those decisions like?
- What quiet struggles exist beneath the surface of this community?

Work, Tradition & Change

- What kinds of work have sustained families here across generations?
- Tell the story of a skill or tradition that is fading, or being revived.
- How have people adapted their livelihoods to changes in land, water, or economy?
- What does a “good life” look like here, according to different generations?
- Describe a person who bridges old ways and new realities.



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Culture in Practice (Food, Ritual, Expression)

- What foods feel inseparable from this place, and where do they come from?
- Tell the story of a seasonal ritual, planting, harvest, hunting, gathering, or celebration.
- How do people mark time here, by calendar, weather, water levels, or something else?
- What local sayings, humor, or ways of speaking reflect this landscape?
- Describe a gathering where culture is expressed without anyone naming it as such.

Human–Nature Relationships (Through Culture)

- How do people show care (or lack of care) for the land in their daily actions?
- Tell a story where nature directly changed someone’s perspective or life path.
- What beliefs or values guide how people interact with the creek and surrounding land?
- How do different generations view conservation, use, and stewardship differently?
- Describe a conflict between human needs and the needs of the ecosystem.

Memory & Generational Stories

- What stories do elders tell about “how things used to be”, and how do others respond?
- Tell a story that has been passed down in your family or community about this place.
- What has changed so much it feels almost unrecognizable, and what hasn’t changed at all?
- How do memories of past disasters or successes shape present-day decisions?
- What do younger people misunderstand about the past, and what do older people misunderstand about the present?

Tensions & Contradictions

- Where do values clash in the community (development vs. preservation, tradition vs. change)?
- How do people navigate differences while still depending on each other?
- Describe a moment when the community felt divided, and what came after.

Thriving & Possibility

- What does it look like when this community is at its best?
- Tell a story of something that has flourished here against the odds.
- Who is working to sustain or reimagine the future of the creekshed?
- What gives people hope about staying or returning?
- Imagine a future where the community and creek are in better balance, what had to change?



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Story Starters (Character-Driven)

- A lifelong resident refuses to leave after repeated floods, why?
- A young person returns after years away and sees the creek differently.
- Two neighbors disagree about how land along the creek should be used.
- A family farm adapts to a changing climate in unexpected ways.
- A community gathering reveals hidden histories tied to the water.



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SCIENCE & EDUCATION QUESTIONS & PROMPTS

Water, Memory, and Change

- Tell the story of a long-time resident who joins a citizen science water monitoring project. How does their understanding of the creek evolve over time?
- How does citizen science bridge personal memory with scientific observation? How does monitoring water quality change how people care for the creek?
- Imagine a young person taking their first measurements of turbidity or pH in the creek. What unexpected patterns do they discover?
- What lessons come from direct observation versus classroom learning? How does contributing to real research shape a sense of ownership over the watershed?
- Write from the perspective of the creek itself after a storm or drought. What does it “remember” and “teach”?
- How can storytelling complement citizen science to make ecological changes visible and meaningful to the community?

Agriculture as a Living Classroom

- A local farm participates in a citizen science soil health initiative. What discoveries are made about nutrient cycles, erosion, or biodiversity?
- How does farm-based research empower both farmers and scientists? What tensions arise between traditional practices and new experiments?
- Describe a season where weather, pest patterns, and soil conditions become part of a community-driven science experiment.
- How does participatory science deepen understanding of place? How do farmers act as both stewards and scientists in their own fields?
- Imagine a future where every farm in the creekshed contributes to a shared citizen science database. What kind of knowledge emerges and how is it used?
- How can local collaboration scale to broader environmental impact?

Hidden Science in Everyday Life

- A resident begins documenting wildlife sightings, water insects, or plant growth as part of a community science program. What patterns or surprises do they notice?
- Where does science exist in everyday life? How can citizen-led observation reveal environmental changes that formal research might miss?
- Follow the journey of a single soil or water sample collected by citizen scientists to a local lab. What stories does it tell about the health of the creekshed?
- How does data collected by volunteers create real change in understanding ecosystems?
- Neighbors collaborate to solve a local environmental problem, like erosion, invasive species, or water quality issues, using simple measurements and shared observation.
- How does collective learning foster community resilience? Who counts as a scientist in this context?



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Community Knowledge & Intergenerational Learning

- A grandparent and child engage in citizen science together, tracking seasonal bird migrations or water quality. What knowledge is passed along, and what is discovered anew?
- How does participation in science strengthen intergenerational bonds? How is local knowledge validated and amplified through citizen observation?
- A group of long-time residents documents ecological changes over decades and shares it with community science networks. What patterns do they uncover?
- How do lived experiences complement structured scientific research? How do stories of change motivate collective action?
- When younger and older generations disagree about land use or environmental priorities, how can citizen science projects provide common ground?
- Can participatory science help communities make shared decisions about land and water stewardship?

Education & Research Anchors in the Creekshed

- A student from SUNY Cobleskill conducts hands-on research in the creekshed. How does working directly with the watershed transform their understanding of science?
- How do regional institutions connect formal research with local knowledge and practice?
- A community workshop through Cornell Cooperative Extension brings together farmers, families, and students. What knowledge is exchanged, and what unexpected insights arise from blending academic and local experience?
- How do outreach programs make science accessible, actionable, and meaningful?
- Imagine a collaborative project where students, residents, and educators co-design citizen science monitoring for water, soil, or biodiversity. What discoveries emerge?
- How can participatory research empower community stewardship? How do local observations complement laboratory science?

Imagining the Future of the Creekshed

- In 2050, the Schoharie Creekshed functions as a “living laboratory” powered by citizen science. How does everyday life reflect this integration of observation and action?
- What would it mean for the creekshed to be resilient, adaptive, and widely studied by its own community?
- A watershed-wide citizen science network tracks biodiversity, water health, and climate impacts. What decisions change as a result?
- How can long-term community monitoring inform governance, land use, and climate adaptation?
- Imagine a storytelling archive that combines science, memories, and imagination, capturing the past, present, and potential future of the creekshed. What stories are preserved?
- How does narrative intersect with data to create a richer understanding of place?



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HIKING & OUTDOOR RECREATION QUESTIONS & PROMPTS

Personal Memories & Experiences

- Describe your most memorable hike in the Schoharie Creekshed. What made it unforgettable?
- Think of a trail that surprised you, through scenery, wildlife, or solitude. What did you discover?
- Share a moment when the weather, light, or seasons transformed a familiar trail into something magical.
- Which local outlook, ridge, or high point offered you the most breathtaking view? How did it make you feel?
- Have you ever encountered other hikers, families, or strangers in these woods in a way that became part of the story of your hike?

Nature & Place-Based Reflections

- If the trails and forests of the Schoharie Creekshed could “speak,” what stories would they tell about the people who visit them?
- Describe a stream, waterfall, or ridge that always draws you back. Why does it hold your attention?
- What small, overlooked corners of the local parks reveal the character of this bioregion?
- How does the changing season, from spring blooms to autumn foliage, affect your experience on local trails?
- What wildlife encounters (birds, deer, insects) have made you pause or reflect while hiking?

Imagination & Future Possibilities

- Imagine a new trail or lookout that doesn’t exist yet, what would it showcase about the Schoharie Creekshed?
- If you could lead a night hike through the region, what sights, sounds, or stories would you highlight?
- What hidden adventures or secret spots do you wish more people could experience responsibly?
- Imagine a future in which the local parks are even more connected, through trails, rivers, or wildlife corridors. What would that experience feel like?
- If you were writing a story set in this bioregion 50 years from now, what adventures or challenges might hikers face?

Sensory & Reflective Prompts

- Close your eyes and imagine the soundscape along a favorite trail. What do you hear, wind, water, birds, footsteps?
- Describe the smell of the forest, creek, or wet earth after rain. How does it connect you to the place?



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- Recall the first time you reached a summit or overlook here, what was going through your mind?
- How does the physical exertion of hiking in this terrain transform your sense of self or connection to nature?
- Which natural feature (rock formation, creek bend, hilltop) feels like it holds a story of the land itself?



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HUNTING & FISHING QUESTIONS & PROMPTS

Personal and Family Memories

- What is your earliest memory of fishing or hunting in the Schoharie Creekshed? Describe the place, the people, and the feeling.
- Who taught you how to fish or hunt? What lessons about nature did they pass on?
- Have you or your family ever followed seasonal patterns for hunting or fishing? How did those patterns shape daily life or celebrations?
- Describe a time when a fishing or hunting trip didn't go as planned. What did you learn from it?

Local Wildlife and Ecosystem Connections

- Which fish, birds, or game species have been most important to people in this area? How have they changed over the years?
- How did your activities in the creekshed help you notice patterns in nature, like migration, spawning, or seasonal plant growth?
- Describe a moment when you observed a surprising interaction in nature while hunting or fishing (e.g., a predator-prey encounter, a rare bird, unusual weather).
- Have you noticed changes in the populations of fish or game over time? How do you think this reflects the health of the ecosystem?

Cultural and Community Stories

- Are there stories, songs, or traditions in your community related to hunting and fishing?
- Can you describe a community event, feast, or gathering centered around a successful hunt or fishing trip?

Imaginative Futures

- Imagine the Schoharie Creekshed in 50 years: what might fishing and hunting look like in a changed climate or with new conservation practices?
- If the rivers and forests could speak, what would they tell us about how we've treated wildlife and land over generations?
- Invent a "new species" that might thrive in the Schoharie Creekshed in the future. How would humans interact with it?
- Imagine a day where a young child discovers hunting or fishing for the first time in this bioregion. What lessons would nature teach them?



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Environmental and Ecological Reflections

- How does hunting and fishing influence the balance of the local ecosystem?
- Describe how plants, fish, and animals in the creekshed are connected. How does removing one species affect others?
- How have conservation efforts, protected areas, or sustainable practices changed the way people fish or hunt here?
- Can you recall a moment when you realized the importance of preserving water quality, wetlands, or forests while hunting or fishing?

Sensory and Place-Based Storytelling

- Describe the sights, sounds, and smells of a favorite fishing spot at sunrise or sunset.
- What is the texture of the water, soil, or vegetation that makes the Schoharie Creekshed unique?
- How does the changing season, spring thaw, summer heat, autumn leaves, winter snow, affect wildlife and human activity?
- If you could bottle the feeling of the creekshed for someone far away, what moments would you include?



HUMAN HISTORY QUESTIONS & PROMPTS

Awareness of Local History

- Are you aware of any stories, events, or people from the past that shaped life in this area?
- What do you know about the earliest human presence along the creek? How did people interact with this land?
- Have you heard of families, communities, or groups who lived here generations ago? What stories come to mind?
- Are there moments in history in this region that you feel are often overlooked or forgotten?

Life Along the Creek

- How do you imagine life might have been for people living along the creek hundreds of years ago?
- What kinds of work, travel, or daily routines do you think people carried out here in the past?
- Are there places along the creek that feel especially historic or meaningful to you? Why?

Memory & Community

- Do you know any stories passed down in your family or community about this area?
- Are there traditions, festivals, or gatherings you've heard about from earlier generations?
- Have you ever heard a story that connects the people of the past to the landscape today?

Change and Resilience

- How has the land or community changed over time in ways that stand out to you?
- Are there moments of struggle, survival, or triumph in local history that you've learned about?
- How have people in this area adapted to challenges, whether social, political, or environmental?

Imaginative Reflection

- If you could speak to someone who lived here 200 years ago, what would you ask them?
- What stories might the creek itself tell about the people who have lived along it?
- Imagine the future of this place, what traditions or histories would you hope are remembered?
- Are there "hidden" histories or stories you wish more people knew about in this region?



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Intergenerational & Personal Connections

- Have you noticed ways in which the past shapes your experiences in this landscape today?
- Do you feel connected to the history of this area, and if so, how?
- Are there objects, buildings, or natural features that remind you of stories from the past?



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NATURAL HISTORY PROMPTS & QUESTIONS

Deep Time – The Formation of the Land

- Imagine the Schoharie Creekshed 12,000 years ago, just after the glaciers receded. What would the landscape have looked like? What animals roamed here?
- How did rivers, hills, and valleys form in this region? What stories do the rocks and soils tell?
- Find a rock, fossil, or sediment along the creek. What does it reveal about the history of the land?
- Describe a natural event in the distant past (glacial melt, flood, landslide). How did it shape the land we see today?

Ecosystems and Interconnections

- Walk along a stream, forest, or wetland in the creekshed. List all the plants, animals, and signs of life you notice. How do they rely on each other?
- What native trees, plants, or wildlife are unique or defining to this bioregion? Tell their story from their own perspective.
- How does the land filter water, hold soil, or provide habitat? What might happen if one part of the system changed?
- Describe a moment when you noticed a natural pattern (migration, seasonal change, predator-prey interaction) in the creekshed.

Human-Nature Interaction

- How have humans historically used the land and water of the Schoharie Creekshed? Think beyond buildings, farming, fishing, foraging, and resource management.
- Can you identify signs of past human impact in the landscape? How does nature respond or recover?
- Describe how a local ecosystem supports human life today. Which plants, animals, or natural processes are most important for water, food, or shelter?
- Tell a story of coexistence with wildlife, what has nature taught you about living in this place?

Investigating and Observing

- Pick a small area of the creekshed and observe it for an hour. Record what changes you notice, what species appear, and how the land behaves. What story emerges?
- Interview someone about their knowledge of the local ecology, what insights or surprising facts do they share?
- How does the creek move through the land? Follow its path and note changes in terrain, vegetation, and wildlife.
- Find evidence of past floods, erosion, or glacial activity. What does it tell you about the creek's natural history?



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Imagining the Future

- Imagine the creekshed in 50 or 100 years. How might climate, wildlife, and human activity reshape it?
- If the creek or forest could speak to future generations, what advice or warning would it give?
- Invent a scenario where humans and nature thrive together in the creekshed. What choices make this possible?
- Which species or habitats need protection to ensure the future health of the region? How could their stories be told?

Personal Natural History Stories

- Share a moment when the landscape revealed a hidden history to you (fossil, old tree, unusual rock formation).
- Recall a time you felt connected to the natural processes in the creekshed, water flow, soil richness, wildlife behavior.
- How has your understanding of the land changed over time? How do you see your role in its future?
- Describe a natural feature (creek bend, hilltop, forest clearing) and imagine the centuries of life and change it has witnessed.



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FORAGING & HOMESTEADING QUESTIONS & PROMPTS

Personal Memories & Reflections

- Describe your earliest memory of gathering food from the land, plants, fruits, nuts, or wild edibles, within the Schoharie Creekshed. How did it feel to connect with the land?
- Who taught you about the plants, herbs, or wild foods in this region? What stories did they share about the land?
- Recall a time you foraged or gardened and something unexpected happened, a wild animal encounter, a surprise harvest, or a lesson learned.
- Think of a family or community tradition around seasonal harvests in the region. How did those practices shape your sense of place?
- Tell a story about a “hidden spot” in the creekshed where the land seemed alive or magical while foraging or tending a homestead.

Nature & Ecology of the Region

- What plant, tree, or wild edible do you feel most represents the Schoharie Creekshed? Why?
- Imagine the creek or forest speaking, what story would it tell about human interaction, survival, or stewardship over the years?
- Describe the changing seasons in the bioregion and how they shape foraging practices and homesteading routines.
- Are there invasive species or changes in the land that have transformed how people gather or garden? What do those changes mean to you?

Skills, Tools, and Techniques

- Share a memory of learning a specific skill tied to self-sufficiency: basket weaving, mushroom identification, preserving fruits, making herbal remedies, or tending livestock.
- If you had to teach someone to live off the land in the Schoharie Creekshed, what three essential skills or tips would you pass on?
- Tell a story where improvisation or resourcefulness was key in foraging or homesteading.

Community & Connection

- Who were the mentors, neighbors, or elders in the community that shaped your understanding of living with the land? What advice or stories do you still carry with you?
- Describe a community event or gathering that centered on food, harvest, or local craft. How did it reflect the character of the region?
- Have you witnessed or imagined a barter or trade network for wild foods, seeds, or homestead products within the creekshed? What did it look like?



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Challenges & Lessons

- Describe a time nature challenged your plans, flood, frost, drought, or pests. How did it affect your homestead or foraging?
- What is a lesson the land has taught you about patience, resilience, or cycles of life?
- Share a “failure turned discovery” story where something went wrong in foraging, gardening, or animal care.

Imagination & Future Possibilities

- Imagine a thriving future homestead in the Schoharie Creekshed. What crops, wild foods, or ecological practices define it?
- Picture a day in 2050 where humans and nature live in harmony in the creekshed. What role do foraging, gardens, and small-scale farming play?
- Invent a mythical or legendary creature of the creekshed and tell a story about its interaction with foragers or farmers.
- If the land could grant a single gift to homesteaders of the future, what would it be? How would that change life in the bioregion?

Sensory & Experiential Prompts

- Describe the taste, smell, and texture of a wild edible or garden harvest from the region. What memories or feelings does it evoke?
- Tell a story that begins with a sound in the landscape, a creek, a bird, the wind in the trees, that leads you to a discovery.
- Recall the feeling of hands in soil, water from the creek, or walking barefoot through a wild patch of plants. How does that shape your sense of belonging?



FOLKLORE & FOLKLIFE QUESTIONS & PROMPTS

Folklore and Legends

- What is the oldest story you've heard about the Schoharie Creek or its surrounding hills? Who told it, and how did it shape your understanding of the land?
- Are there local ghosts, spirits, or mysterious creatures said to inhabit the creeks, forests, or hills? Describe a sighting or encounter.
- Have there been tales of hidden treasures, secret caves, or lost homesteads along the waterways? What might have happened there?
- Which festivals, rituals, or seasonal celebrations were tied to old beliefs about the land or water?
- Imagine a folktale set 200 years from now in the Schoharie Creekshed. What creatures or spirits might inhabit it, and how do humans interact with them?

Life Along the Water

- How did people historically use the creek, fishing, ferrying, milling, or recreation? What stories emerge from those uses?
- Have floods, droughts, or other natural events inspired cautionary tales or superstitions?
- Can you describe a moment when the creek "spoke" to someone, through its sounds, moods, or changing nature?
- Imagine a day in the life of someone living on the creek hundreds of years ago. What sights, smells, and sounds define their day?

Crafts and Traditions

- What handcrafts or artisanal skills have been passed down in your family or community (weaving, basket-making, woodcarving, pottery, quilting, etc.)? Can you tell the story of one special object?
- Are there traditional foods, recipes, or preservation techniques unique to the Schoharie Creekshed? How did they connect people to the land?
- Were there particular festivals or fairs where crafts, music, or dance played a central role? Describe them.
- Imagine a lost craft or tradition being revived today. How might it evolve to reflect modern life while honoring its roots?



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People and Place

- Who were the most memorable characters, real or legendary, who lived along the creek? What made them remarkable?
- How did settlers, Indigenous communities, and newer arrivals interact with each other and the land? Are there stories of collaboration, conflict, or shared traditions?
- Can you recall a story of a place in the Schoharie Creekshed that “felt alive” or full of personality? Describe its quirks and mood.
- Imagine a future inhabitant of the creekshed. What values, customs, or stories do they inherit from today’s traditions?

Nature and the Environment

- Are there local plants, trees, or animals that feature in stories or superstitions?
- Did people have special names for certain landmarks, groves, or parts of the creek? What do those names reveal about their relationship with the land?
- Think of a time when nature seemed to “intervene” in human life. How did people explain or respond to it?
- Invent a myth explaining why a particular feature of the creek exists, a bend, a waterfall, or a pool.

Memory and Imagination

- What is your earliest memory connected to the creek or its surrounding lands? Can you imagine telling that memory as a story for future generations?
- If you could create a new festival celebrating the Schoharie Creekshed, what traditions, stories, and symbols would it include?
- Imagine a magical object hidden somewhere in the creekshed that grants insight into the past. Who finds it, and what do they learn?
- Create a “time traveler’s tale” from one era of the creekshed to another, showing how life, stories, and crafts evolved over time.



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ART, MUSIC & FILM QUESTIONS & PROMPTS

Personal Memories and Experiences

- What is the earliest memory you have of music, dance, art, or film in this bioregion?
- Have you ever captured the Creekshed on video, film, or even in photographs? What story did you try to tell?
- Can you recall a performance, festival, or craft demonstration here that felt unforgettable? Describe it in detail.
- Were there family or community traditions around making art, music, crafts, or even home movies?

Community and Cultural Connections

- Are there local filmmakers, videographers, or artists whose work captures the essence of the Schoharie Creekshed?
- How do local traditions, festivals, or rituals inspire visual storytelling or music videos here?
- Can you share a story of a collaboration in film, music, or crafts that brought people together in the Creekshed?
- How does the local community contribute to preserving stories through art, film, and music?

Sensory and Environmental Inspiration

- Imagine the Creekshed as a living film set, what sounds, colors, textures, and movements would you capture?
- If you were making a short film about the Creekshed, which locations or natural features would be your main “characters”?
- What wildlife, seasonal changes, or flowing water movements inspire a visual story, music, or craft?
- How might you use natural materials or landscapes as props or textures in a film or art piece?

Imaginative Futures and Storytelling

- Imagine a film festival celebrating the Schoharie Creekshed, what types of short films, music videos, or visual art pieces would be featured?
- Create a short storyline for a film set entirely in the Creekshed. Who are the characters, and what challenge or story unfolds?
- If the Creekshed could tell its story through music, art, and film, what would its first scene look and sound like?
- Invent a mythical character or spirit from the Creekshed and describe how you would bring it to life on film or through animation.



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- How might future generations document the Creekshed using film, sound, and crafts in ways we haven't imagined yet?

Reflection and Meaning

- How does experiencing or creating art, music, crafts, or film in the Creekshed deepen your connection to the land?
- Have you ever felt a "flow" like the creek while filming, painting, making music, or crafting? Describe it.
- Which local stories or natural elements feel most important to capture on film or in art?
- Can you think of a piece of art, music, or film that truly represents the spirit of this place?

Hands-On Creative Exercises

- Soundscape Film: Record the sounds of the Creekshed in different seasons, then edit a short audio-visual piece.
- One-Minute Story: Make a one-minute film capturing a day in the life of the creek. Focus on movement, light, and sound.
- Craft-to-Film: Create a craft or sculpture using local materials, then film it in the environment it represents.
- Music Video of Nature: Compose a short piece of music inspired by the creek, then create a visual accompaniment.
- Mythical Creekshed: Film a short narrative imagining the creek as a character or mythical being interacting with people or wildlife.



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SPIRITUALITY & FAITH QUESTIONS & PROMPTS

Personal and Ancestral Connections

- Can you recall a moment in this creekshed where you felt the presence of something greater than yourself? What did the land look like in that moment?
- Were there particular rituals, prayers, or spiritual practices that your family or community performed near the creeks, forests, or fields?
- How did your ancestors or elders interpret the land spiritually or morally? Are there stories or teachings they passed down?
- Are there specific trees, stones, waterways, or other natural features that have spiritual significance for you or your community?

Interfaith and Cross-Cultural Reflections

- How do different faith traditions in the Schoharie Creekshed express reverence for the natural world?
- Can you share a story of a spiritual encounter that transcends formal religion, something felt in nature rather than in a building or ritual?
- How do festivals, ceremonies, or seasonal rituals in your tradition connect with the cycles of the creekshed, spring floods, harvests, or winter stillness?
- Have you noticed moments when people from different spiritual paths share a common awe or reverence for the land?

Nature as Teacher and Sanctuary

- What lessons has the land taught you, about patience, change, or resilience?
- Where in the creekshed do you go when you need spiritual renewal or quiet reflection? Can you describe what makes that place sacred to you?
- Have you ever witnessed or imagined the land “speaking” or guiding you in a spiritual way?

Stories of Healing, Ceremony, and Ritual

- Can you tell a story of a ceremony, prayer walk, or meditation that happened in the creekshed?
- Have you experienced moments where water, wind, or other elements played a spiritual role, perhaps in cleansing, blessing, or transformation?
- Are there old or forgotten rituals tied to the creekshed that you remember hearing about or participating in?



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Imaginative Futures

- If the creekshed could “speak” to future generations, what spiritual guidance might it offer?
- Imagine a festival or ritual in the creekshed that unites all traditions and beliefs, what does it look like?
- How might future communities honor the spiritual heritage of the creekshed while living sustainably?

Reflection and Legacy

- What spiritual values or practices would you want to pass on to the next generation connected to this land?
- Have you ever felt the creek, the forests, or the hills “remember” the prayers or stories of people who lived here long ago?



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RESILIENCY QUESTIONS & PROMPTS

Past – Roots and History

- Think back to your earliest memories of the Schoharie Creek or its surroundings. What sights, sounds, or activities stand out, and how did they shape your understanding of this place?
- What stories of survival, adaptation, or resourcefulness from the Schoharie Creekshed's past inspire you? Consider floods, farming, small communities, or local industries.
- How have traditions, festivals, or local practices in this region reflected a relationship with the land and waterways?
- What environmental or social changes have you witnessed in the Schoharie Creekshed over the years? How did the community respond?

Present – Observations and Engagement

- When you spend time in the Schoharie Creekshed today, what moments make you feel connected to the land, water, and community?
- Are there initiatives, projects, or individuals currently working to restore, protect, or sustainably manage the creek and its surroundings? How have these inspired you?
- What environmental or social issues in the Creekshed worry you most today? Think about water quality, flooding, wildlife, agriculture, or community resilience.
- How do you personally contribute to sustainability in this region, through gardening, volunteer work, community advocacy, or lifestyle choices?

Future – Hopes, Fears, and Imagination

- Imagine the Creekshed in 20–50 years. What would a thriving, resilient, and sustainable community look like to you?
- What lessons from the past should guide the next generation in caring for the Creekshed?
- Are there new ideas, technologies, or practices that could help the Schoharie Creekshed adapt to climate change, population shifts, or environmental pressures?
- If you could leave a story, a lesson, or a piece of advice for future residents of this region, what would it be?



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Emotion and Reflection

- Describe a moment in the Creekshed that gave you hope or reminded you of human and environmental resilience.
- Have you experienced loss or change in this region, whether personal, environmental, or communal? How has it shaped your understanding of sustainability?
- What does the Schoharie Creekshed mean to you personally? How do these feelings influence your choices or storytelling?
- Think of a time when nature surprised you in the Creekshed, for better or worse. How did that experience impact your perspective on our environment?