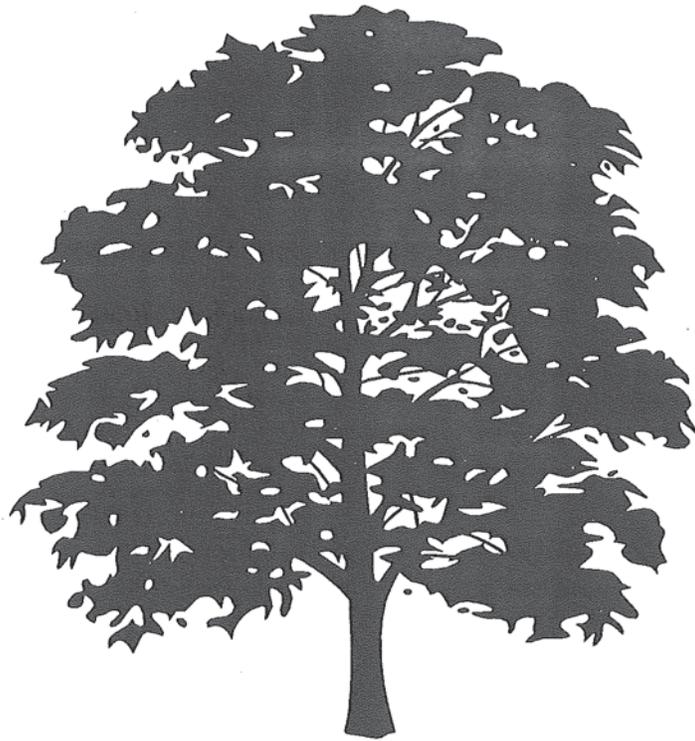


Tompkins County
Environmental Management Council
1995 Annual Report



Tompkins County
ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

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April 25, 1996

Stuart Stein
Chair, Tompkins County Board of Representatives
Tompkins County Courthouse
Ithaca, NY 14850

To the Honorable Stuart Stein:

I am pleased to submit to the Tompkins County Board of Representatives the Environmental Management Council's 1995 Annual Report.

During 1995, the EMC continued to provide the public and the County Board of Representatives technical assistance and advice on local environmental issues and policy. 1995 was a productive year for the EMC, with publication of its first ever Tompkins County Environmental Directory, adoption of a Tompkins County Environmental Policy, field work and database work on the Inventory of Unique Natural Areas in Tompkins County, extensive outreach and development / distribution of educational materials on the issue of open burning, and participation in the County's official review of the Wal-Mart documents under SEQR.

As in 1995, the EMC is looking forward to providing timely, complete information to the County Legislature in 1996. Drawing on the wide variety of talents among the EMC's members and associate members, the EMC plans to provide the County Board with the best possible environmental advice, so that the Board is able to protect and enhance the natural environment of Tompkins County.

Respectfully submitted,



Edward Cope
Chair, Tompkins County EMC

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Organization

In Tompkins County, the EMC is housed in the County Planning Department, with the EMC receiving its funding from the County Board of Representatives. A close working relationship exists between the Planning Department and the EMC, with shared staff and joint office space. Both of the organizations study the environment of the County, and advise the Board of Representatives on issues involving the environment. During 1995, the EMC reported directly to the Health and Environmental Quality Committee of the Board of Representatives.

The structure of the EMC is built around active member participation on task-oriented committees. To allow members to concentrate on environmental issues through the committees, business meetings are only held every other month. The State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQR) Committee is only standing committee of the EMC. The monthly EMC newsletter, the *EMC News*, fills the gap between meetings and updates all members and interested parties on the activities of the EMC. This newsletter is an important avenue of communication, as committee reports are no longer given at the general meetings. Finally, the category of associate membership, which was established in 1994, has produced great results. There have been anywhere from 10 to 20 associate members on the EMC roster since the category's creation, with many members making significant contributions to the activities of the EMC.

EMC Resolutions

In 1995, the EMC passed 5 resolutions and formally adopted a County Environmental Policy. The first resolution, passed in April, was titled

"Recommendation to Transfer County-owned Land, Danby Tax Parcel No. 18-1-16, to the Finger Lakes Land Trust." This resolution supported protection of a parcel of land containing parts of two Unique Natural Areas. The Board of Representatives voted to support the resolution (BOR Resolution No. 317), and transferred title of the land to the Finger Lakes Land Trust for inclusion in the Land Trust's biodiversity preserve, which will be used for chemical prospecting and recreational enjoyment.

The second resolution, "Support of the railbanking provisions of the National Trails System Act," was passed in July, and urged the United States Congress (and in particular the New York delegation) to oppose any changes to the railbanking provisions of the National Trails System Act. Later that same month, the Board of Representatives also passed a resolution in support of the railbanking provisions (BOR Resolution No. 161). In January, 1996, Representative Maurice Hinchey wrote a letter of thanks to both the EMC and the County Board for passing the resolutions, and stated that the final version of the bill that was enacted at the end of December did not contain language affecting railbanking.

"Recommendation of Carolyn Long for NYSAEMC Board of Directors Seat" was the third resolution passed in 1995. This resolution was passed in September, and Carolyn Long was elected to the position shortly thereafter. The Tompkins County EMC feels fortunate to be so well represented on the State Association of EMCs Board of Directors.

After devoting much time and discussion to the topic over the course of several meetings, the EMC passed a "Resolution in Support of the

Public Access Southwest Natural Area Proposal." This resolution was prompted by a park proposal made by the City of Ithaca Conservation Advisory Council. It supported the permanent protection of an area in the southwest corner of the City and encouraged the acquisition of the area by the City, Town and County. This resolution was passed in September.

In November, the EMC passed its final resolution of the year, entitled "Resolution in Support of Assembly Bill (A.7736, JOHN) to Prohibit Open Burning of Solid Waste." This resolution built on the work of the Outreach Committee of the EMC, which had spent a full year studying and discussing the health effects of open burning. In the resolution, the EMC outlined the health and quality of life impacts on people living downwind of burn barrels, and requested that New York State Senators representing Tompkins County sponsor the bill in the Senate. The Health and Environmental Quality Committee recommended that the Board of Representatives pass a similar resolution, however the motion was tabled by the Board in February, 1996.

Finally, in November, the EMC formally adopted the "Tompkins County Environmental Policy," which was prepared by the Long Range Environmental Planning Committee and extensively discussed by the full EMC. The Committee stated that the policy was meant to serve as a touchstone for the Board in its actions in the future, and it was hoped that the Policy would spur more long range planning in the County. In December, the Board of Representatives adopted a slightly modified version of the policy (BOR Resolution No. 313).

As a final note, the Board of Representatives passed a County Land Policy (BOR Resolution No. 317) in December of 1995. Such a policy was encouraged in an EMC resolution that was passed in July, 1994. The EMC was pleased to see such a policy enacted.

Committee Activities

Environmental Directory Committee

After over a year of hard work by committee members, interns and staff, the first ever *Tompkins County Environmental Directory* was published and distributed in January, 1996. The Directory contains 115 listings of local agencies, organizations, businesses, and individuals that have an environmental focus or service available to the public. The purpose of the Directory is to provide readily accessible information to residents of Tompkins County about locally available environmental resources. An extensive subject index (meant to assist users in finding organizations that handle their particular areas of concern) and appendices on environmental hotlines, Tompkins County Municipal Governments, and additional state, regional and national organizations make the Directory a valuable resource to the community. The Directory was distributed to all public and private schools and libraries in the County, as well as to all the municipalities and key environmental and educational organizations.

Long Range Planning Committee

During the months of April, May, June, and July, the full EMC listened to presentations made by the Long Range Planning Committee on the details of its work on the "Framework for Long Range Environmental Planning in Tompkins County." Many members had questions and suggestions on the draft document, and the committee spent considerable time incorporating those changes into the Framework. Finally, in February of 1996, the EMC voted to adopt the report to guide them in long range planning efforts. The document consists of a Tompkins County Environmental Vision Statement, Quality of Life Recommendations, Environmental Issues and Objectives, and a series of position papers on topics which the committee felt qualified to discuss in greater detail (these topics are: Outline for a Natural Resource Inventory for Tompkins County, A Biological Corridor for Tompkins County, Transportation Options for Tompkins County, and Citizen Participation in Long Range Planning for Tompkins County.

While the committee worked on revisions to the Framework, they also developed a one page "Tompkins County Environmental Policy." The Policy, which was developed to assist the EMC and the County Board of Representatives in creating a long term vision of the County, was adopted by the EMC in November and by the Board of Representatives in December. Several times during the development of the Framework and Policy, the committee and staff met with key members of the County Planning Department and Board of Representatives to get feedback and advice on the reports.

State Environmental Quality Review (SEQR) Committee

The review of SEQR documents remains a key job of the EMC. Often, construction activities are proposed that will cross town borders or strongly influence a municipality other than the one directly experiencing the development. In these cases, as well as many others, the EMC fills an essential role in voicing any and all environmental concerns. The goal of the EMC is to identify and promote the least environmentally damaging option of any necessary development. The Council brings a wide variety of perspectives to bear on its reviews of projects. Through this perspective, the Council tries to enlighten the community members and managing officials as to the possibilities for producing environmentally sound development.

The project which consumed the majority of the SEQR Committee's time in 1995 was the proposed Wal-Mart store in the City of Ithaca. Due to the fact that the County owned land on the proposed retail site, both the County and the EMC played a special role in the review process. Both the Chair of the EMC (Ed Cope) and the Liaison to the EMC from the Board of Representatives (Dooley Kiefer) were appointed to a special ad-hoc Board Committee to review the Wal-Mart Environmental Impact Statement, and the SEQR Committee advised the Board Committee on technical matters during the

review process. Much time at the March EMC meeting was devoted to discussion of the potential impacts of the this project, with many members of the general public voicing their concerns to the EMC. The EMC received a "laurel" from the editor of the *Ithaca Journal* for the thoroughness of the comments submitted to the City: "To the Tompkins County Environmental Management Council for its thorough job of analyzing the proposed Wal-Mart site, in a report released this week. Lending some needed analysis beyond the philosophical pro-and-con rhetoric, the Council's work reflected something we've seen in all government-related work on this project--doing what is right for the city, its environment, businesses and residents."

Other efforts over the past year included:

- The Committee Chair attended an informational meeting on the Tompkins Cortland Community College - Facility Renovation, Rehabilitation and Construction project. The project is a three phase renovation and addition to TC3, involving resurfacing of roads, walkways and parking areas; building a 3,000 square foot addition to the main college building; and constructing a new 350,000 gallon water holding tank. From the description of the proposed work, the committee could see no significant potential environmental impacts, and therefore concurred with the negative declaration.
- The Committee reviewed the Interim Reports (Results of the 1995 Investigation, and Environmental Investigation and Assessment) of the Cayuga Lake Source Cooling project. The EMC will continue to communicate with Cornell staff as the project moves into the Environmental Impact Statement phase.

Outreach Committee

The stated goal of the Outreach Committee is to provide more educational services to the residents of Tompkins County on topics of local environmental concern. Topics which the committee explored in the 1995 included: open burning, lawn

fertilizers and pesticides, and general information on the EMC.

An EMC intern (Melissa Carey) assisted with the open burning campaign as well as with creating a large, mobile educational display that includes information on the EMC, a map of the County's Unique Natural Areas, and information on the health effects of open burning (complete with examples of toxic items frequently burned in outdoor barrels). This display was an effective educational tool at the Cayuga Nature Center's Fall Festival and at the Forum on Open Burning that was also held in the fall.

The committee also produced, in collaboration with Cornell Cooperative Extension, a series of 30-second radio public service announcements on using lawn fertilizer and pesticides safely and effectively. Nine announcements were recorded and were rotated on the AM and FM station owned by WHCU. They reportedly received airplay of about 2-5 times per hour.

The main educational campaign conducted by the Outreach Committee revolved around the public health issues associated with backyard burning. In 1995, the committee prepared an informational packet that was distributed to all EMC members, all municipalities, and concerned members of the public. The packet consists of the following items: 1) a research paper on current policies and practices regarding open burning in Tompkins County, New York State and New England, 2) a brochure entitled, "Backyard Burning, Not Without Costs", 3) an information sheet prepared by the Tompkins County Department of Health on open burning regulations in Tompkins County, and 4) a series of 4 fact sheets that detail the health effects of breathing air that contains combustion products from common trash in modern society. Copies of the brochure were made available to the public by placing quantities of them in town halls.

The committee also focused on making it easier for citizens to register complaints and to know which officials to speak to when they have prob-

lems with open burning. The County Planning and Health Departments were also made more aware of how to handle calls of this nature. At the Forum on Open Burning (which was sponsored by the EMC, the Cayuga Nature Center and Cornell Cooperative Extension) local Fire and Health officials spoke about the regulations currently in place, a Cornell professor spoke about the toxics that enter the air from both large and small scale incinerators (such as burn barrels), State Assemblyman Marty Luster spoke about the need to pass a statewide ban on open burning, Outreach Chair Gay Nicholson spoke about the recent research and educational efforts of the EMC on open burning, and EMC member Lynn Leopold spoke about ways to reduce, reuse and recycle.

In March, the committee arranged for a citizen activist, Michael Whaling, to speak to the EMC at one of its regular meetings. He encouraged the EMC to continue its work on public education, and to work towards providing meaningful alternatives for trash disposal in rural areas, and to make it easier for citizens to anonymously make complaints, and to keep track of those complaints for statistical purposes.

Finally, the committee wrote 5 public service announcements on open burning and recorded them for play on local radio stations.

Airport Committee

The Chair of the Airport Committee was appointed by the Board of Representatives to serve on the Technical Advisory Committee to help guide the development of the twenty year master plan for the airport. The committee was invited to review all relevant documents during the planning process, and the Chair attended several TAC meetings as well as general public meetings on the alternative layouts of the airport. One committee member visited the site with the consultants to determine the existence of rare plants on the site.

Unique Natural Areas (UNA) Committee

In 1994, the UNA Committee began an ambitious effort to correct and expand the UNA database, and to improve the layout of the document in order to make it more useful to people using the *Inventory of Unique Natural Areas in Tompkins County*. The UNA Committee accelerated its work with the County Planning Department to make changes in the database, so that it is updated, corrected, and put in a more informative format. The committee reevaluated some of the terms and classification schemes used in the *Inventory*, and supplied the updated information to the Planning Department for incorporation into the new database design. These changes should make the *Inventory* more consistent with other forms and classifications widely used in the fields of planning and biology. Additionally, during the summer and fall of 1995, two botanists hired by the County, and overseen by the committee, surveyed ten sites in the County. Many of these sites were identified as "Future Sites" in the 1990 *Inventory*, but not surveyed due to time and money constraints. In addition, a number of wetlands were included in the *Inventory* simply because they were designated as state wetlands, and not necessarily because they have unique qualities. The Committee decided to reexamine several of these wetland sites in order to determine the merits of including them in the UNA report. The consultants reviewed background information on the sites, conducted field visits, and evaluated the environmental sensitivity and status of each of the sites. The Committee spent many hours obtaining permission slips from landowners, to allow the consultants to visit the sites.

Special Meetings

The EMC had several special meetings and presentations outside of the scope of any one committee during 1995. In February, the Greenway Coalition presented the highlights of their research and discussions on creating greenways and biological corridors in Tompkins County, and in July, the EMC invited all of the Conservation Advisory Councils in the County to its regular meeting to exchange ideas and update one another on what

was being work on by the CACs and EMC in the County.

Finally, the EMC held a Saturday morning retreat at the Cayuga Nature Center in October, 1995. Sixteen members gathered to discuss the general, but important, issues of how effectively the EMC was addressing environmental concerns in the County and how the Council's work could be improved in the future. There was a sense that the EMC was communicating better within a limited scope of people and groups, but that it could play more of a role in communicating and coordinating its work with the work of other organizations and Town Boards. Most members felt that the existing committee structure was effective.

1995 EMC Membership Roster

EMC Members

Brent Alspach	At-Large, youth
Bob Beck	At-Large
Ron Beloin	Town of Enfield
Elizabeth Brauner	Town of Groton
Susan Brock	At-Large
Ed Cope	At-Large
Candace Cornell	At-Large
Herb Engman	At-Large
Janet Hawkes	Town of Ithaca
Bruce Johnson	Village of Freeville
Lynn Leopold	Village of Lansing
Jeff McDonald	Village of Trumansburg
Peter McDonald	City of Ithaca
Patricia Meinhardt	Village of Cayuga Heights
Gay Nicholson	Town of Lansing
Nancy Ostman	At-Large
Elizabeth Owens-Roe	Town of Danby
Peter Penniman	At-Large
Kevin Petrik	At-Large, youth
Alex Rachun	Town of Ulysses
John Schwartz	At-Large
Dennis Swaney	Town of Dryden
Nick Vandam	Town of Caroline
David Weinstein	At-Large
Robert Wesley	At-Large

Ex-Officio Members

John Andersson	Commissioner of Health Liaison
Paul Bonaparte-Krogh	Cooperative Extension Agent
James Hanson	Commissioner of Planning
Dooley Kiefer	Co. Board of Representatives Liaison
William Mobbs	Commissioner of Public Works
Henry Thiesen	County Attorney

Associate Members

Don Barber	David Boyd
Kevin Bernier	Wendy Eidelberg
Karen Fox	Noel Gurwick
Lee Kass	Kate Kelley-Mackenzie
Cynthia Loker	Carolyn Long
Paul Stevenson	Geri Tierney
Amy Waterman	

EMC Staff

Katherine White	EMC Coordinator
Dariele Drake	EMC Secretary

Health & Environ. Quality Comm

Charles Evans, Chair	Dooley Kiefer
Eric Lerner	Frank Proto
Nancy Schuler	