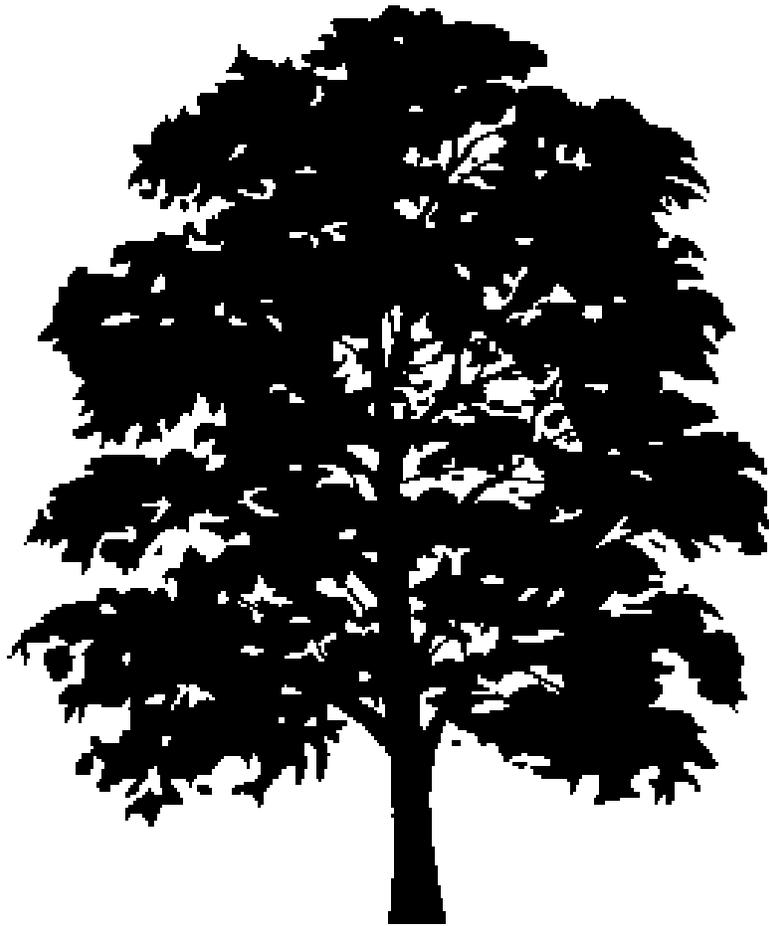


**TOMPKINS COUNTY
ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT COUNCIL
1999 ANNUAL REPORT**



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Organization and Administration



The Tompkins County Environmental Management Council was created and is funded by the County Board of Representatives (BOR). Staff and equipment are shared between the EMC and Tompkins County Planning Department. In 1999, the EMC reported directly to the BOR's Planning and Intermunicipal Relations and Education Committee (PIRE). County Representative Michael Lane served as the BOR's liaison to the EMC.

In 1999, Ed Cope served as Chair of the EMC, and he was the group's primary liaison to the BOR. Mr. Cope reported monthly to the PIRE Committee on the EMC's activities and goals for the year.

After his seventh consecutive term as EMC Chair, Mr. Cope, a long-term member of the EMC, resigned his position at the end of 1999. The EMC wishes to thank Mr. Cope for all his hard work and time spent on behalf of the EMC. Mr. Cope served on the EMC for fourteen years beginning in 1986, continuing through 1999. During this time, as an active member and then as Chair, Mr. Cope provided substantial leadership on important issues such as solid waste management and air quality, and he always strove to promote coordination and a working relationship with municipalities.



After serving as the EMC Coordinator for six years, Katie Borgella took a new position in the County Planning Department. During her time as coordinator, she helped the EMC accomplish many things, including hosting the 1998 Conference on the Environment, producing the *1996 Environmental Directory*, and completing the revisions of the *1990 Unique Natural Areas in Tompkins County*. The EMC wishes to thank Ms. Borgella for all her effort on behalf of the EMC during her many years of service. In April 1999, Mikel Shakarjian began working for Tompkins County as the Environmental Planner and EMC Coordinator.

The *EMC News* completed its sixth year of publication in 1999. The *News* is used to update members and interested parties on the activities of the EMC. It also contains resolutions and certain official correspondence.

EMC members participated on the Council by attending monthly general meetings and working in task-oriented committees that met separately. Seven committees were formed in 1999: Environmental Review, County Towers, Unique Natural Areas, Executive, Chair-Nominating, NESTS, and Education.



Major Accomplishments



EMC Structure and Communication

The PIRE-EMC subcommittee finalized its work during 1999, initiating several new changes through Resolution No. 295 that improved the structure of the EMC and its communication with the Board of Representatives and municipalities. Changes include municipal seats for Conservation Advisory Council (CAC) or Conservation Board (CB) members, or an appointed individual, if a CB or CAC does not exist; at-large replacements for vacant municipal seats; quarterly reporting by municipal representatives to the EMC and the municipalities; and the staggering of membership terms. To establish staggered membership terms beginning in 2000, the BOR passed Resolution No. 322, assigning half of the EMC one-year appointments for 2000. After 2000, all seats will return to a 2-year term, with half of the membership expiring in any given year.

The PIRE-EMC subcommittee discussions lead to several administrative changes that will help facilitate communication. The EMC mailing list was expanded to include all municipal officials. The EMC adopted "*Communication Guidelines*" establishing primary and secondary spokespersons, and setting policy for releasing and distributing EMC correspondence. In addition, the EMC began scheduling municipal reports in 1999, so EMC municipal representatives could report on activities or concerns in their respective municipalities. The

EMC hopes these actions will continue to foster communication on environmental issues and give municipalities an opportunity to use the skills and resources of the EMC.

Membership Drive for 2000

All EMC members' terms expired in December of 1999. A recruitment drive to gain new members and fill vacant municipal seats began in September 1999. Executive committee members attended town board and other community meetings to encourage new at-large or municipal representatives to apply. Letters, brochures and flyers were mailed to municipalities, advisory boards, libraries, environmental organizations, and many other groups listed in the 1996 *Environmental Directory*. During the recruitment drive, the EMC implemented its "Procedure for Appointments," established in January 1999, to guide the process of selecting nominees for at-large positions. The recruitment drive was very successful, filling several long-vacant seats and attracting many new members. As of April 2000, almost half of the EMC membership can be considered new (serving less than six months in 1999).



Unique Natural Areas Inventory

One of many duties of the EMC is to advise the County BOR on matters affecting the County's long-range planning for its natural resources. This is a lofty goal for a volunteer organization, and after many years of hard work and collaboration between the EMC, Cornell Plantations, and the County Planning Department, "*The Unique Natural Areas Inventory of Tompkins County, Revised 2000*" was completed at the end of 1999. This document identifies areas in Tompkins County that contain outstanding examples of natural environments, characterized as environmentally sensitive for a variety of reasons. The UNA Inventory was funded, researched and developed primarily as a specialized land-use planning tool. It is the hope of the EMC that the identification of these areas will serve as the first step towards their protection.

The 600-page document includes specific site information for each of the 192 UNA sites, as well as a map of each UNA's location. The document will be distributed to each municipality and public

library in the County. This project was funded in part by the County Board of Representatives. Specific information on each UNA is stored in a database, and spatial information is contained in a GIS (Geographic Information System) coverage, which accurately displays the location and size of each UNA. The EMC will provide municipalities with orientation sessions on the UNA Inventory to encourage its use in planning efforts.

Resolutions and Correspondence



The EMC sent two official letters in 1999. The first letter was sent to the Commissioner of the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC) and the Regional Administrator of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Region 2. It expressed concern that the NYSDEC did not disclose information regarding mitigation options proposed by EPA regarding Cornell University's Lake Source Cooling Project and that the NYSDEC seemed reluctant to evaluate these options.

The second letter, drafted on behalf of the EMC by the Environmental Review Committee, requested a written response from Cornell University to questions pertaining to the Radiation Disposal Site (RDS) Feasibility Study. The BOR's PIRE Committee also submitted several questions for inclusion in the letter. Most of the nine questions focused on the ratings system used to evaluate the proposed RDS remediation alternatives, the standards used to judge impacts on human health and the environment, and short- and long-term monitoring of the site.

The EMC passed one resolution, Resolution No. 1-99, entitled "Resolution Recommending Integrity of State Forests be Prime Determinant in Master Plan" in June 1999. The resolution recommended to the NYSDEC that the integrity of the lands be the most important consideration when determining what recreational activities are permitted and where.

Committee Activities



Chair-Nominating Committee

The Chair-nominating committee, chaired by Bruce Johnson, was established to identify and nominate a new EMC Chair to serve starting in January 2000, to replace Ed Cope. The Committee solicited nominations from the EMC membership, recommended a slate of candidates to the EMC and forwarded the nomination of Susan Brock to the BOR as EMC Chair.

County Towers Committee

Tompkins County is in the process of developing a countywide wireless communication system to be used by all emergency service providers (police, sheriff, fire and EMS) and the 16 municipalities in the County, as well as numerous school districts and other entities. In 1998, the County began to consider a plan proposed by a system vendor in which the County would build seven new towers and cease using most of its current towers. The vendor believed the new towers were necessary for the County to obtain the desired geographical coverage and system performance. Concern over the number of new towers, as well as their heights and placement, prompted the EMC to form a County Towers Committee, chaired by Susan Brock, to examine the issues and work with the County on this matter.



The EMC advocated for, and the Board of Representatives ultimately hired, an independent consultant to review the numbers and heights of the proposed towers and to explore co-location opportunities. ("Co-location" means the placement of antennas, microwave dishes, and other equipment on an existing tower or other structure, thereby eliminating the need to build a new tower.) The EMC was represented on a 3-person Task Group formed by the Board of Representative's Public Safety Committee to select the consultant. Susan Brock, the EMC member on the Task Group, working in coordination with other EMC

Towers Committee members, helped draft the County's Request for Proposals for the consultant. To assist the consultant, the EMC created a countywide inventory of towers and other tall structures. Because cellular telephone providers have proposed and built a number of new towers in the County over the past few years, the EMC also provided this list to the 16 municipalities in the County to help them identify potential co-location sites when they review applications for new towers.

The consultant submitted a report to the County in November of 1999. The report states that the number of towers proposed is necessary. It identifies some existing towers where the County might be able to co-locate its equipment, although there are problems with these sites. The Towers Committee is continuing its efforts on this matter in 2000, by working with the appropriate BOR committees and helping to identify environmental issues related to siting the communication system.

Education Committee

Although the total EMC membership remained relatively constant during 1999, several essential members of the Education Committee resigned their positions, including the Chair, Carolyn Long. Therefore, the majority of work focused on designing and preparing information for the web page. Some of the items prepared for posting included: EMC agendas, *EMC News*, an explanation of the purpose and goals of the EMC and its various committees, and contact information. The web page will also contain the complete *1996 Environmental Directory*, and text from the EMC's backyard-burning brochure entitled, "*Backyard Burning... Not Without Costs.*" Much of the general information to be posted on the web page is ready and will be available on the web site in 2000, after undergoing review by the County's Web Site Team.



Environmental Review Committee

The Environmental Review Committee, chaired by Barbara Ebert for the third consecutive year, was very busy in 1999. Meeting monthly, the committee worked on the letters and resolutions mentioned above, in addition to numerous project reviews.

The committee reviewed many different projects, beginning in January with the Army Corps of Engineers permit application for recovering an exposed gas pipeline in Buttermilk Creek. Also under review was the expansion of the Paleontological Research Institution. A report was made on the potential for development in the South Hill Swamp area.



In February, the committee discussed the proposed shoreline changes at Myers Point. March was devoted to the Environmental Assessment Form for the Tompkins County Household Hazardous Waste facility. A preliminary look at the Cornell University Radiation Disposal Site (RDS) Feasibility Study Report and comments on Confined Animal Feeding Operations (CAFOs) also occupied the committee's agenda.

Commissioner of Planning Jim Hanson and community development planner Karl Heck spoke to the Environmental Review Committee in April 1999, regarding the history and plans for the Portland Point development. The committee continued its discussion on Cornell's RDS proposal, the Finger Lakes National Forest oil and gas lease proposal, and the Region 7 Recreation Master Plan for State Forests. As a result of this latter discussion, Resolution No. 1-99 was drafted.

At the June meeting, the Environmental Review Committee responded to a letter drafted on the Portland Point project. In August, the committee prepared a list of questions to ask the guest speaker on Cornell's RDS project at the next full EMC meeting. The group also discussed the available information on wetlands mitigation banking, and began review of the proposal for the Four Directions Center in the Town of Caroline.

Old business dominated September and October 1999 committee meetings, as the RDS Feasibility Study Report and the Four Directions Center Long Environmental Assessment Form received further consideration. In November the committee assisted in drafting a letter to Cornell asking questions about the RDS proposal. In addition, the committee asked that the Town of Ithaca be appointed as lead agency on the Paleontological Research Institution expansion project.

Executive Committee

The Executive Committee spent much of its time making administrative changes. One example of this work is the *Communication Guidelines*, adopted by the EMC in November. Additionally, starting in September 1999, the Executive Committee requested each municipal member provide the EMC with a verbal report on activities in their municipality. This effort was very successful and reporting will continue into 2000. The committee also interviewed several new at-large applicants appointed during the year and guided the Fall 1999 recruitment process. Using the *Procedure for Appointments* established in January 1999, the Executive Committee followed the guidelines to interview new applicants and submit nominees to the BOR. Members also attended municipal meetings to encourage municipal boards to appoint an EMC representative.

NESTS Committee

The NESTS committee reviewed the County's *Northeast Subarea Transportation Study's* (NESTS) Draft Recommendations. EMC members were encouraged to look at the documents and provide feedback to the committee. The EMC heard directly from Fernando De Aragon (Municipal Planning Organization Director), Scott Sears (Community Dispute Resolution Center) and Martha Robertson (citizen organization) on NESTS. The committee researched and debated the issues associated with NESTS; however, it chose not to take action or issue recommendations to the EMC. The NESTS debate

is ongoing, and the committee will be active as necessary in the future.



Unique Natural Areas Committee

The UNA Committee, co-chaired by Bruce Johnson and Lynn Leopold, worked feverishly to finish the revision of the 1990 Inventory. Committee members Nancy Ostman and Robert Wesley (Cornell Plantations) worked with County staff to survey and update UNA boundaries for the Geographic Information System (GIS). The committee sought outside technical assistance when reviewing the special geologic features and species present in some UNAs. The committee also played a critical role in reviewing the text and making recommendations for the final update of the UNA Inventory. Many thanks go out to the members of this committee for their dedication to completing the UNA Inventory.

In addition, UNA committee members reviewed proposed projects near UNAs in the County and made recommendations to reduce or mitigate impacts that might occur. The committee also worked with the County to determine if significant resources existed on foreclosed lands before being considered for auction by the County.



EMC Liaisons



Flood Hazard Mitigation Oversight Committee

Robert Roe served as the EMC's liaison to the Tompkins County Flood Hazard Mitigation Committee, as well as its Chair. During the 1999 fiscal year, the Oversight Committee received requests for funding that totaled over \$100,000. After reviewing submitted proposals, the Oversight Committee forwarded to the Tompkins County Board of Representatives five projects for funding consideration. These projects were in the municipalities of Caroline, Danby, Dryden, Newfield, and Varna. Total funding recommendations for the 1999 projects were \$25,000, with individual project requests totaling between \$2,222 and \$7,340.



Water Resources Council

During 1999, the EMC participated on the Tompkins County Water Resources Council through a non-voting liaison position, filled by Kristin Rowles. The most significant accomplishment of the year for the WRC was the completion of its *Water Quality Strategy Plan*. The EMC participated in the development of this plan by submitting two letters of comment during the review process identifying issues such as: plan implementation, WRC membership, watershed planning and management, and alternative disinfection technologies for water and wastewater treatment systems.

In addition to serving on the WRC, Kristin Rowles also participated on a subcommittee formed by the Tompkins County Board of Representatives' Planning and Intergovernmental Relations Committee (PIRE) to review WRC membership. The subcommittee's recommendations were finalized in January 2000, suggesting changes in the structure and makeup of the WRC membership to help the group operate more efficiently and effectively.



Other Activities



Special Meetings and Presentations

March 10: Mary Oltz and Esther Dotson, both members of the Town of Danby Building Committee, asked for support and advice from the EMC regarding the acquisition of 50 acres, including UNA-172 Danby Fir Tree Swamp.

May 12: Sylvia Hurlbut, Town of Ledyard Supervisor and Chair of the Intermunicipal Organization for the Cayuga Lake Watershed Management Plan (I.O.), discussed the purpose of the group and its goals.

June 9: Martha Robertson, representing a citizens' group, spoke about the concerns of her group regarding NESTS and shared a petition opposed to a new road in the northeast.

July 14: Scott Sears (Facilitator, NESTS Working Group) and Fernando de Aragon (Director, Municipal Planning Organization) reported to the EMC about the NESTS recommendations.

July 14: Lanny Joyce, Pat McNally and Bob Bland (Cornell Lake Source Cooling Project) reported to the EMC about the Lake Source Cooling project, data collection and mitigation efforts.

September 8: Donna Connery (Project Manager for the Cornell University Radiation Disposal Site) reported on the recommendations for containing and mitigating the migration of radiation from the contaminated site.

October 13: Marshall Ballard (Toxics Targeting Inc.) reported on a study conducted by his company that identified nonpoint source pollution on four major tributaries (Fall, Cascadilla, Six Mile Creeks, and Cayuga Inlet) in the County and mapped them using GIS.



1999 EMC Membership Roster

Appointed EMC Members

Bob Beck	At-Large
Ed Cope	Town of Caroline
Donna Jean Darling	Town of Newfield
Barbara Ebert	City of Ithaca
Herb Engman	At-Large
Jean Foley	Town of Ulysses
Joyce Gerbasi	Town of Dryden
Walter Groman	Village of Dryden
Kara Hagedorn	Town of Ithaca
Roxana Bahar Hewertson	At-Large
Bruce Johnson	Village of Freeville
Lynn Leopold	Village of Lansing
Carolyn Long	At-Large
Pat Meinhardt	Village of Cayuga Heights
Susan Kerns Robinson	At-Large
Robert Roe	Town of Danby
Kristen Rowles	At-Large
Larry Sharpsteen	Town of Lansing
Dick Taylor	At-Large
David Weinstein	At-Large
F. Robert Wesley	At-Large
Roger Yonkin	At-Large

Associate Members

Ron Beloin	Nancy Ostman
Susan Brock	Nick Vandam
Dooley Kiefer	
Gay Nicholson	

Ex-Officio Members

Sharon Anderson	Cornell Cooperative Extension
Rick Erb	Acting Commissioner of Public Works
Jim Hanson	Commissioner of Planning
Michael Lane	Board of Representatives Liaison
Steve Maybee	Department of Environmental Health
Henry Thiesen	County Attorney

EMC Staff

Katherine Borgella	EMC Coordinator
Mikel Shakarjian	EMC Coordinator
Dariele Drake	EMC Secretary
Erin Wilson	EMC Intern