



View from Stuttle Farm

2013 Environmental Management Council Annual Report

Introduction to the Environmental Management Council

The Tompkins County Environmental Management Council (EMC) was created in 1971 by a resolution of the County Board of Representatives and is an integral part of the County Charter. The EMC acts as an advisory body to the County Legislature on matters affecting the preservation, development and use of the natural features of the County. The EMC identifies problems, proposes priorities, and coordinates activities in the development and management of our natural resources. It provides a public forum to discuss issues related to the natural environment in Tompkins County.

The Tompkins County Planning Department provides staff support to the Environmental Management Council. In 2013, administrative support was provided by Kathy Wilsea and planning support by Scott Doyle, both of TCPD. The EMC reports directly to the County Legislature's Planning, Energy & Environmental Quality Committee (PEEQ).

EMC members are appointed by the County Legislature to serve two-year terms. Municipal members served as representatives from the City of Ithaca; the towns of Caroline, Danby, Enfield, Groton, Ithaca, Lansing, and Ulysses; and the villages of Dryden, Cayuga Heights and Lansing. Municipal representatives provide an important link between countywide and local issues by giving periodic municipal reports to the Council. EMC also has twelve at-large voting seats. Three associate members were appointed to participate on EMC committees. Members have a variety of backgrounds and levels of expertise.



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2013 Membership Roster

(*Executive Members)

Steve Bissen	Town of Dryden
John Dennis	Village of Lansing
*Brian Eden	Village of Cayuga Heights
Darrick Evensen	Town of Lansing
Martha Ferger	Village of Dryden
Pegi Ficken	Town of Groton
*Steve Nicholson	Town of Caroline
Lucia Tyler	Town of Ulysses
Vladimir Micic	Town of Ithaca
*Spring Buck	At-Large
Kenny Christiansen	At-Large
Kate Engler	At-Large
Jim McGarry	At-Large
*Carolyn Peterson	At-Large
Gary Stewart	At-Large
Ed Wilson	At-Large
Roger Yonkin	At-Large
Karen Edelstein	Associate
Peter Harriott	Associate
Dooley Kiefer	Associate



Council Meetings & Collaborations

The following presentations occurred in 2013. Minutes from monthly meetings are posted on the Tompkins County Planning Department website at: www.tompkins-co.org/emc.

February 14, 2013

- **The Future of Emerald Necklace Land Protection – Andy Zepp**

March 14, 2013

- **Tour of Lake Source Cooling Facility – Jim Adams & Bert Bland**

April 11, 2013

- **Presentation by the Hydrilla Task Force – James Balyszak**

May 9, 2013

- **Get Your GreenBack Tompkins – Karim Beers**

June 13, 2013

- **Cayuga Operating Company, Repowering Project Proposal – Jerry Goodenough**

October 10, 2013

- **Presentation on Cornell’s Solar Panel Project on Snyder Road – Bert Bland**

November 14, 2013

- **Cornell Master Plan Presentation – Mina Amundsen**

December 12, 2013

- **Finger Lakes Region, NYSOPRHP – Fred Bonn, Director**

ENERGY COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT (2013)

Members: Brian Eden, Chair, Kenny Christianson, Peter Harriott, Dooley Kiefer, and Steve Nicholson.

The Energy Committee was involved in the following activities in 2013:

- Invited Jerry Goodenough, Plant Manager, and Doug Roll, Repowering Project Manager, both from the Cayuga Operating Company, to present at the June 13 EMC meeting on their proposal to repower the existing coal-fired electrical generating units with natural gas.
- Sponsored a presentation by Joshua Berman, Attorney, Sierra Club, on the Future of Cayuga Generating Station: Repowering vs. Transmission Upgrades on July 2 for EMC members and municipal legislators.
- On July 29 Committee members provided oral testimony to the NYS Public Service Commission public statement hearing on the repowering proposal at Lansing Middle School.
- Sponsored a press conference on August 12 at the Town of Ithaca Hall to call attention to the deficiencies of the PSC Proceeding (12-E-0577); massive redactions of relevant environmental and economic documents submitted by the parties.
- In August the Committee participated in the formation of the Ratepayers and Community Intervenors group (<http://ratepayersgroup.com>) which became a formal party to the Proceeding to determine the future of this facility. Our objective is to ensure process transparency, advocate for ratepayers interests, and protect our environment from additional greenhouse gas emissions.
- Provided testimony in support of remote net metering legislation adopted by the Tompkins County Legislature on August 6. The legislation would permit MEGA municipal members including Tompkins County to procure Power Purchase Agreements with off-site Preferred Renewable Energy Providers for up to 2 MW of electricity.

- Developed a joint comment with the Environmental Review Committee on October 28 with regard to a Cornell University/Distributed Sun 2 MW Photovoltaic Energy Project on Snyder Rd. near the Tompkins County Airport.
- Brian represents the Committee and the Town of Ithaca on the Solar Tompkins Steering Committee (<http://www.solartompkins.org>). In September the Steering Committee submitted a grant proposal to the Park Foundation which was approved for \$80,000 in December. The focus of the grant funding will be to conduct public education and encourage volume purchasing to increase the rate of solar installations in the County. Our goal is 300 which will double the number of such installations. We intend that the program have positive impacts on local community residents and small businesses as well as the installers currently working in the local renewable energy sector. This project will also provide direct support to the County's 2020 Energy Strategy.
- Joined with municipal officials and planning staffs, code enforcement officers, and members of environmental organizations to form the Smart Energy Policy Initiative. We sponsored a workshop with CUNY/NY Sun at the Town of Ithaca Hall on December 3 to encourage local municipalities to adopt a unified solar permitting local law. The groups other objectives are to develop a Home Energy Rating and Disclosure Ordinance, an Energy Code Education Program for code enforcement staff as well as building contractors and Building Labeling for Multi-Family Rental Properties.

PLASTIC BAG USE REDUCTION COMMITTEE

Members: Spring Buck, Brian Eden, Steve Nicholson, Carolyn Peterson, and Tom Shelley

The Committee, a collaboration of the members of the Tompkins County Environmental Management Council, Town of Ithaca Board, and GreenStar Council, was formed, and has met monthly, since January 2013. A list of some of our activities is as follows:

- Earth Day Information Display (April)
- Co-sponsored BagIt Movie at Cinemapolis (April)
- EMC Resolution to the Legislature Recommending a Local Law to Address Issues of Check-out Plastic Bags Adopted (May)
- Presentation; Government Affairs Committee, Tompkins County Chamber of Commerce (June)
- Presentation; Planning, Energy, and Environmental Quality Committee (Provided draft Local Law and FAQ) (July)
- Presentation; Downtown Ithaca Alliance (August)
- Public Information Meeting co-sponsored by the DIA, Chamber of Commerce, and the EMC at the Tompkins County Public Library (September)
- Presentation; Lansing Rotary (October)
- Plastic Hurts Club (Youth Group); visits to retail stores; provide documents to managers (November)
- Presentation to Planning, Energy, and Environmental Quality Committee (Report on meetings with merchants and contacts with other adopting communities) (December)
- Print media articles; Ithaca Journal, Ithaca Times, Tompkins Weekly, Cornell Sun, The Ithacan, Lansing Star, Tompkins County Chamber of Commerce Chambergram

- Radio/TV; WHCU, WENY (Elmira), CNY Central (Syracuse)

167 U.S. municipalities with a combined population of nearly 10 million have adopted bans or fees legislation. We have contacted several of them to discuss their pre and post adoption experiences. We reported on these conversations at the PEEQ meeting on December 2nd. Also we have engaged in a dialog with the Food Industry Alliance, a state-wide organization of supermarkets and grocers. The development of a uniquely Tompkins County reusable bag logo and theme competition is in the planning stages.

We also prepared a partial list of questions raised by residents at local meetings, forwarded to us by others, and those identified in responses to surveys in the Ithaca Journal and conducted by the Downtown Ithaca Alliance. Some proposed responses were provided to PEEQ. This was a supplement to the previously provided Frequently Asked Questions document.

STATE OF THE ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

Members: Kate Engler, Chair, John Dennis, Brian Eden, Darrick Evensen, and Carolyn Peterson

The State of the Environment Report was prepared in 2012 to feature the strengths and weaknesses of the County Government and other local municipalities on a variety of environmental matters; air quality, climate change, energy and natural gas development, public health, transportation, solid waste, and water resources. Our efforts were intended to provide the public with a centralized information resource on these local activities. We also hoped to encourage local municipalities to review what other communities had accomplished and establish goals to expand their efforts in these areas.

Tompkins County government was updating their web site in 2013 and this delayed us in posting this report to our site. This report finally came on line in the fall of 2013 and is available at — <https://sites.google.com/site/stateofenvironment/home>

UNIQUE NATURAL AREA (UNA) COMMITTEE

Members: Steve Nicholson (Chair), Karen Edelstein, Katie Kelly, Scott Miller, David Weinstein, Robert Wesley, Brian Eden, Spring Buck, Carolyn Peterson, Dooley Kiefer

Robert Wesley and Karen Edelstein continue to serve as consultants with funding provided by the County to assist with UNA Update efforts.

Activity of the UNA Committee in 2013 included:

- Refinement of the proposed boundary changes to 42 existing UNAs. In response to concerns by the Cornell Plantations, the committee met with their representatives in March. Fine tuning and minor adjustments were made to several UNAs, and follow up was made to the Cornell Plantations.
- Consultants identified several existing UNAs that needed further site visits, and landowner permission letters were sent out. A spreadsheet of the proposed changes has been prepared, including justifications and additional data.
- In October the committee visited UNA-106 (Sapsucker Woods) to further assess an expansion which proposed adding almost 68 acres, a 33% increase, toward the west. Based on this fieldwork, the consultants and committee will likely revise the proposed expansion of this and other UNAs in 2014.
- The Committee hopes to provide the EMC the proposed UNA boundary changes in the summer of 2014 for their consideration.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW COMMITTEE (ERC)

Members: John Dennis (Chair), Brian Eden, Kate Engler, Darrick Evensen, Pegi Ficken, Dooley Kiefer, Jim McGarry

The ERC conducted reviews of several proposed state and local policies and projects. The committee's formal comments included the following:

- In March, ERC members Dooley Kiefer and John Dennis sent a letter to Robert Nicholas, Tompkins County Airport Manager, expressing concerns and recommendations regarding increasing the recovery and processing of aircraft deicing fluids during winter months at the airport. They recommended that the recovered fluids be processed at the Ithaca Wastewater Treatment Plant (IWWTP) rather than being trucked to Watertown NY. A three-year period of aircraft deicing fluids entering local waterways has subsequently ended and beginning in the fall of 2014, recovered deicing fluids will be processed at the IWWTP.
- In April, the ERC submitted comments on the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation's Twin Sheds Unit Management Plan. In April the ERC submitted a memorandum urging the Planning & Economic Development Committee of the Ithaca Common Council to adopt regulations to better regulate the development of steeply-sloped parcels.
- John subsequently voiced concern at two Division of Environmental Remediation meetings that the City needed to regulate development on steeply-sloped parcels with a proposal to develop a steeply sloped parcel at 130 E. Clinton Street being a case in point.
- In April, the ERC submitted comments on Tompkins County Multi-Jurisdictional All-Hazard Mitigation Plan Update. Town of Lansing Board approved the construction of the County's first 2MW photovoltaic project subsequent to the ERC discussing project design with project owners Cornell University and Distributed Sun and then voicing support for the project.
- The ERC liaised with Town of Lansing officials voicing support for the conversion of NYSEG's Bell Station parcel on Cayuga Lake to either a State Forest or Wildlife Management Area. In November, the Board passed a resolution in favor of the project.
- The ERC liaised with various stakeholders to learn why the City of Ithaca's ban on waterfowl hunting was not being enforced and to ascertain how wetland bird and waterfowl habitat might be improved at the south end of the lake.
- In mid-December, the ERC submitted comments to the DEC's Division of Environmental Remediation regarding proposed regulation of Liquefied Natural Gas arguing that the proposed regulations did not incorporate sufficient safeguards. John traveled to Albany to provide verbal comments on the regulations at a DEC hearing.

In late December, the ERC submitted comments to the DEC's Invasive Species Coordination Unit on proposed Invasive Species regulations, relying in part on guidance from Robert Wesley.

ERC Gas Drilling Sub-Committee

Members: Martha Ferger (Chair), John Dennis, Brian Eden, Darrick Evenson, Lucia Tyler

The Gas Drilling Sub-Committee actions in 2013 included making formal comment on the New York State's Department of Environmental Conservation's proposed draft High-Volume Hydraulic Fracturing Regulations.



You're Invited

We welcome visitors! Residents of Tompkins County are invited to attend meetings of the EMC and apply for EMC membership. The Environment Management Council meets at the Old Jail Conference Room (121 E. Court Street, Ithaca). Feel free to phone the Planning Department at 274-5560 about dates, or check our website. www.tompkins-co.org/emc.

2014 Meeting Dates

January 9, February 13, March 13, April 10, May 8, June 12, July 10, September 11, October 9, November 13, December 11

For more information about the EMC or how to apply for EMC membership, please contact the Tompkins County Planning Department at 274-5560 or planning@tompkins-co.org.