



2010 ANNUAL REPORT  
TOMPKINS COUNTY  
ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

<http://www.tompkins-co.org/emc>

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ORGANIZATION AND ADMINISTRATION

The Tompkins County Environmental Management Council (EMC) was created in 1971 by a resolution of the County Board of Representatives. 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.

Staff and equipment are shared between the EMC and the Tompkins County Planning Department. The EMC reports directly to the County Legislature's Planning, Development & Environmental Quality Committee (PDEQ). County Legislator Peter Stein served as the Legislature's liaison to the EMC in 2010.

Roger Segelken served as Chair. The Chair reports to PDEQ on the EMC's projects throughout the year and serves as the group's primary spokesperson and liaison to the Legislature. Katie Kelly, Dan Lamb and Gary Stewart served as Vice Chairs.



Scott Doyle, of the Tompkins County Planning Department, was the Tompkins County Planning Department staff member who served as Coordinator. He coordinated EMC activities with other governmental advisory boards, County departments, and the Legislature.

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



EMC members participate on the Council by attending monthly general meetings, working in task-oriented committees, and serving as liaisons to other organizations. Five committees were formed in 2010: Communication, Energy, Environmental Review, Unique Natural Areas. The former Gas Drilling Committee was organized in 2010 as a subcommittee of Environmental Review.

## PRESENTATIONS AND DISCUSSIONS

Special presentations and discussions at the regular monthly EMC meetings included:

- Early in the year, EMC learned about other *environmental initiatives in Tompkins County* during a visit from Gay Nicholson, of Sustainable Tompkins, and Peter Bardaglio, of Tompkins County Climate Protection Initiative.
- An overview of *Cayuga Inlet Dredging* was provided by Lisa Nicholas, City of Ithaca Planning Dept., and discussion on EMC Concerns re Dredging was led by Cliff Babson, EMC Liaison to the City of Ithaca Project Advisory Committee for Dredging.
- *Tompkins County Water Resources Council and Cayuga Lake Monitoring Partnership* were explained by Roxy Johnston, Vice Chair of WRC.
- *The Tompkins County 2020 Energy Strategy* was presented by Katie Borgella, Principal Planner at Tompkins County Planning Department.
- The July meeting was a “field trip” to *Finger Lakes ReUse*, where members learned from Director Diane Cohen how the center operates in its Triphammer Mall location.
- *Unique Natural Areas: Past and Future* was an opportunity for new members to learn and old members to brush up their knowledge about UNAs. Information was provided by Herb Engman, former EMC member; Katie Borgella, Tompkins County Planning Department staff member; and Karen Edelstein, EMC associate member and Coordinator of the UNA Update Committee.
- An Update on *Enfield Energy* was provided by Marguerite Wells at our October meeting.
- Members learned about the Town of Ithaca Draft *Stream Setback Law* when Sue Ritter, Assistant Director of Planning for the Town, visited in December.



## RESOLUTION

The EMC passed one resolution in 2010: Recommending that Tompkins County and Municipalities Sign Letter of Intent to Purchase Wind Power from Enfield Energy Wind Project.

## TOMPKINS COUNTY ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT COUNCIL 2010 MEMBERS

**AT-LARGE:** SARAH ADAMS, SPRING BUCK, CLEMENT CHOW, KENNETH CHRISTIANSON, BRIAN EDEN, ANTHONY GUARNERI, KATIE KELLY, DAN LAMB, JIM MCGARRY, HELEN SLOTTJE, GARY STEWART, ROGER YONKIN

**MUNICIPAL:** ERIC BANFORD (TOWN OF DANBY), MARTHA FERGER (VILLAGE OF DRYDEN), STAN MARCUS (TOWN OF DRYDEN), STEVE NICHOLSON (TOWN OF CAROLINE), ROGER SEGELKEN (VILLAGE OF CAYUGA HEIGHTS), ERIC VANEVRY (TOWN OF LANSING), KRISTINE SHAW (TOWN OF ITHACA), LUCIA TYLER (TOWN OF ULYSSES)

**LEGISLATURE LIAISON:** PETER STEIN

**ASSOCIATE MEMBERS:** CLIFF BABSON, KAREN EDELSTEIN, JOYCE GERBASI, PETER HARRIOTT, DOOLEY KIEFER, JOE KREITINGER, AMY RISEN, MARK WHITMORE

**STAFF:** SCOTT DOYLE (SENIOR PLANNER), KATHY WILSEA (SECRETARY)

*The Transportation Initiative of the Year Award was presented to Phase II of the Cayuga Lake Waterfront Trail Initiative at the October EMC meeting. Spring Buck, Rick Manning, Congressman Maurice Hinchey, Jean McPheeters, and Roger Segelken appear in the photo at right.*



## EMC FINDS A NEW HOME

Members of the Communication Committee examined the need for a new meeting place, based on access by transit and having a space that is unlocked during our meetings. So, after years at the Transit Center, EMC began meeting in its new “home” at 395 Pine Tree Road in September. Come visit!! It really is easy to find (just north of East Hill Plaza) and pleasant to use.

## OTHER ACTIVITIES

### Adopt-a-Highway

The EMC participates in the adopt-a-highway program, maintaining a portion of New York State Route 13 between Warren Road and Route 366. At the end of the year, the Golden Hard Hat Award was retained by Roger Segelken in recognition of his participation in cleanups.

### NYS Association of EMCs

The EMC remained active with the New York State Association of Environmental Management Councils (NYSAEMC). Steve Nicholson continued to serve as at-large director/treasurer of NYSAEMC. In 2010, the annual Conference on the Environment, co-sponsored by NYSAEMC, NYS Association of Conservation Advisory Councils, and Hudson Hills and Highlands Environmental Leaders Learning Alliance, was held in West Point in November. The 2010 theme was “Regional Approaches to Conservation”.





## COMMITTEE ACTIVITIES

### Environmental Review

*Members: Jim McGarry (Chair), Sarah Adams, Martha Ferger, Joyce Gerbasi, Dooley Kiefer, Helen Slottje, Lucia Tyler, Roger Yonkin*

This past year the Environmental Review Committee (ERC), responded to proposals, plans, and environmental impact statements regarding seven projects within the county.

*South Hill Estates:* We recommended the protection of the adjacent South Hill Swamp Unique Natural Area (UNA) with appropriate buffers, the installation of pedestrian ways to and from the development and along King Road, and the use of appropriate catch basins for storm water runoff, not the use of an existing vernal pond on the property.

*The selection of Southwest Park for dredging sediments:* This was a joint statement of the ERC and the entire EMC. We recommended against the selection of a dewatering site, separated from considerations of infrastructure required to use that site. We also questioned the need for dredging the quantities of sediment being proposed.

*Circle Apartments Expansion:* We recommended that the plan should include an investigation of the groundwater hydrology in the area where new construction would cut into a hillside that is part of the South Hill Swamp Unique Natural Area (UNA). We felt this necessary to be assured that no detrimental effects would accrue to the groundwater hydrology of this wet UNA. In addition we recommended seeking LEED certification for the new buildings to improve energy efficiency, and the installation of secure bicycle parking,

*Lansing Meadows Planned Development Area (PDA):* We were pleased with the incorporation of a pond/wetland habitat into the development. We recommended the installation of pedestrian access from the residential area through the wetland habitat to the mall buildings nearby, and the consideration of changing the parking and building locations so as to minimize night-time lighting in the residential area.

*Collegetown Terrace:* We recommended that the project be scaled down. There were a number of threats to the adjacent UNA designated gorge, and the large increase of persons and motor vehicles that the project would bring to that area of town made the project, in our view, undesirable as described.

*Black Oak Wind Farm Draft Scope:* We recommended that the project sponsor not assume that existing studies could satisfy the need for site-specific, recent, and comprehensive bird and bat studies. We were pleased to see post-construction avian monitoring included in the plan. However, we also strongly recommended that avian migration studies really needed to be completed prior to permitting and construction to allow the community to assess what measures might need to be taken regarding the operation of the wind farm during such potentially high migration periods.

*City of Ithaca Hard Fill Site Preliminary Plan:* We were pleased to see that the plan included several sedimentation ponds for water draining from this site. We recommended that the condition of VanOstrand Road leading to the site and its roadside drainage works be upgraded prior to accepting heavy truck traffic attendant to construction and use of this site for hard fill. Sediment is already shedding off this road and a tributary of Cayuga Inlet is directly downslope.

## Executive

*Members: Roger Segelken (Chair), Katie Kelly, Dan Lamb, Gary Stewart*

The Executive Committee met frequently in 2010 to plan meeting agendas and discuss long-term goals. In March they finalized a Review and Comment Procedures flow chart to help keep the Council focused on its goals.

Following the fall member recruiting cycle, the committee reviewed applications and forwarded recommendations for at-large appointments to the County Legislature's Planning, Development & Environmental Quality Committee for action.



## Gas Drilling

*Members: Martha Ferger (Chair), Helen Slottje, Lucia Tyler*

The Sub-committee submitted a letter to EMC at its meeting on May 12 which was approved, subsequently edited a bit and sent over the Chair's signature on May 14. The letter was addressed to Senator Antoine, Chair of the Senate Environmental Committee and other members of that Committee asking their support of S7592, which called for a moratorium on hydrofracking until 120 days after the EPA issues its final report. This action was taken at the request of the Water Resources Council.

Martha Ferger attended the EPA hearings about their proposed two-year study of hydrofracking water issues in Binghamton on September 15 and reported to EMC that same evening.

On October 29, the Sub-committee sent an e-mail on its own behalf to "stateforestplan" in response to requests for comment on allowing horizontal hydrofracking in state forests. We strongly opposed the proposal.



There were no communications to the County Legislature in 2010. Since many members of that body, especially Chair Martha Robertson, have been taking leadership roles in opposition to "fracking," there seemed to be no need for our input during the year.

## Unique Natural Areas Update

*Members: Karen Edelstein (Coordinator), Sarah Adams, Dooley Kiefer, Stan Marcus, Mark Whitmore*

This is an important time to be working on the Unique Natural Areas Inventory update, as it has been getting lots of attention at the municipalities in the last 18 months because of the interest in designating Critical Environmental Areas in response to threats from potential natural gas drilling in the area. At the July EMC meeting, the committee informed the Council that they were in the process of reviewing the 16-acre Hawthorn Orchard for its candidacy as a new UNA. This is the first candidate reviewed under the UNA Inventory Amendment Process adopted in 2007. The Council concurred with the committee's determination that the site has sufficient merit to be further explored to be established as an UNA and as such the UNA committee should continue following the established amendment process and prepare a report for EMC review.

The first hour of the September EMC meeting was devoted to sharing information about Unique Natural Areas, as the current council membership only includes a handful of people who were members during the 2000 update procedure. Herb Engman, former EMC member; Katie Borgella, former EMC Coordinator; and Karen Edelstein, committee Coordinator, provided information on the purpose of the document, how it was originally organized and updated, and the goals for the future. Meeting minutes are available on the EMC website. Later in the year, the Committee worked on revising a proposal for the Planning Department on the scale of the proposed update. Due to reduced funding and committee membership, the current proposal includes update work with approximately 20% of the UNAs. This proposal is scheduled for implementation in 2011.

Early in 2011, the Council voted to become lead agency for conducting the UNA Inventory update. This allows the update to become an action item in the revised Tompkins County Comprehensive Plan.

## Communication

*Members: Spring Buck (Chair), Clement Chow, Katie Kelly, Dan Lamb, Kristine Shaw, Gary Stewart*

The Communication Committee organized and presented the second annual Transportation Initiative of the Year Award to the Waterfront Trail Initiative. This award recognizes new or existing programs and/or organizations that have made a difference for the environment and area residents, and serve as a needed, progressive component in Tompkins County's transportation portfolio.



Community outreach efforts were successful with the Communication Committee organizing a float for the Ithaca Festival parade in 2010. Thank you to all the EMC members, and friends of the EMC, who contributed to our involvement.

The committee identified and organized a new meeting space for the EMC for the purpose of ensuring each meeting is open to the public and located in a facility accessible by public transit.

As the EMC reviews its priorities and goals for 2011, the Communications Committee looks forward to hosting a public event in March, collaborating with Tompkins County Solid Waste, aimed to help educate the community about the new single-stream recycling collection that is beginning this spring. The Communications Committee will continue to organize and present the TIY award, and is working to update the County invasive species list.

## Energy

*Members: Steve Nicholson (Chair), Eric Banford, Kenny Christianson, Anthony Guarneri, Peter Harriott, Dooley Kiefer*

Renewable Energy and Greenhouse Gas emission reductions were the main focus this year for the Energy Committee. The increasing pace of climate change continued to surprise even the most pessimistic scientists, and 2010 tied the all-time record for the warmest year ever recorded for the planet.

Tompkins County Library Photovoltaic array — The roof-mounted system has a power capacity of 186 kilowatts, and has made 886 megawatts since 2002, producing about 100

megawatts annually. A tour of the facility with professional installers from the local company Renovus revealed some visible degradation of the substrate on many panels, but it is unknown how this affects efficiency. There is some significant shading from plants and adjacent buildings. Weeds grow in the moisture below the supporting bricks, so will need to be pulled more often. All wiring and electronics appeared to be in good shape.

Windpower — Efforts were directed towards supporting the wind turbine project in Enfield. Meetings were held with project leaders and community members to determine appropriate ways the community can support and possibly invest in this project.



In October, Marguerite Wells from Enfield Energy gave a powerpoint presentation to the EMC on the Black Oak Wind Farm. They plan 20 turbines, each of 2.5 MW capacity, on a series of hilltops. The wind farm will provide enough power for 18,800

homes over the course of one year. They have chosen the southwest corner of the Town of Enfield, which is the windiest place in Tompkins County. A high voltage transmission line is already in place. The company has been gathering data for four years, and worked with the Town of Enfield to develop a local law for wind energy. The land is a combination of owned property and long-term leases. The Town is the lead agency for SEQR, and the Environmental Impact Statement is underway. Tompkins County Emergency Response has approved the locations, as there will be no interference with their emergency transmissions. Enfield Energy has applied to ISO, the grid operator that manages the marketplace of power, and has a queue position for interconnection.

In November, the EMC unanimously passed a resolution "Recommending That Tompkins County and Municipalities Sign Letter of Intent to Purchase Wind Power From Enfield Energy Wind Project." This will be presented to PDEQ for the County Legislature, and copied to municipalities. This is not a financial agreement, but shows support, which is why the term "non-binding" is used.

Greenhouse Gas Emission Reductions — The Committee is monitoring the action items, many of which are generic in scope, of the County Comprehensive Plan's Energy & Greenhouse Gas Emissions (EGGE) Element. The County is still a member of ICLEI, and updating data from 2008 was the final step in the Local Energy Action Plan. A final report on LEAP will be released soon. The committee would like to publicize the County's sustainability efforts.

In June, Katie Borgella, Principal Planner, and Jeanne Leccese, Senior Planner, Tompkins County Planning Department, introduced the County 2020 Energy Strategy. The EGGE element of the Tompkins County Comprehensive Plan includes 17 action items. The EMC and others encouraged interim strategies for reaching emissions goals. It can be done! But everyone needs to contribute toward the Energy Strategy's goal of cutting 277,512 metric tons of carbon dioxide emissions. Katie reviewed the wedges of the 2020 Energy Strategy, commitments of the parties involved, actions underway and actions planned.

The Committee met with the Department of Sustainability at Cornell and continues to interact with them concerning geothermal heat and other efficiency measures. Because the Finger Lakes are not in the highest geothermal zone, CU has not been successful in securing grants, but is very dedicated and continues to pursue funding. CU has decided to stop burning coal. 85% of their energy is coming from the new combined heat & power plant.



Minutes from the monthly EMC meetings, resolutions, and presentation materials are posted on the EMC website at [www.tompkins-co.org/emc](http://www.tompkins-co.org/emc).