



2005 ANNUAL REPORT TOMPKINS COUNTY ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

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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 Representative Katherine Luz Herrera served as the Legislature's liaison to the EMC in 2005.

Stephen Nicholson served a third term as Chair. He reported to PDEQ on the EMC's projects throughout the year and served as the group's primary liaison to the Legislature. Kenneth Christianson, Neha Khanna, and Steve Uzmans served as Vice Chairs.

Heather Filiberto served as the EMC Coordinator, providing organizational and technical assistance to the Council and coordinating EMC activities with other

governmental advisory boards, County departments, and the Legislature.

The *EMC News* was published for the twelfth year in 2005. The *News* is the EMC's forum to introduce resolutions, make announcements, provide committee reports and update members and other interested parties on EMC activities each month.

EMC members are appointed by the County Legislature to serve two-year terms. All twelve at-large seats were filled in 2005. Seven municipal members (out of sixteen) also served as representatives from the City of Ithaca, the Towns of Caroline, Danby, Lansing, Newfield, and Ulysses, and the Village of Lansing. Twelve associate members were appointed to participate on EMC committees. Members have a variety of backgrounds and levels of expertise. Municipal representatives provide an important link between countywide and local issues.

EMC members participate on the Council by attending monthly general meetings, working in task-oriented committees, and serving as liaisons to other organizations. Six committees were formed at the organizational meeting at the beginning of 2005: Education, Energy, Environmental Review, Open Burning, Unique Natural Areas, and Website. Members also served as liaisons to four other organizations in 2005.

MAJOR ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Model Wind Tower Ordinance

To encourage the development of clean renewable energy sources and reduce our dependence on fossil fuels, the EMC developed a model ordinance help guide the siting of utility-scale wind energy facilities. The ordinance can be used as a resource by municipalities within Tompkins County to adopt their own ordinances for large-scale wind energy projects. Specific environmental issues such as aesthetics and visual impacts, noise, and safety, are addressed by the model ordinance.

Paper or Plastic, No Thank You!

To reduce natural resource consumption and promote environmental awareness, the EMC launched a bag-less shopping campaign in 2005 offering re-usable plastic shopping baskets and sturdy canvas bags for sale. The EMC does not profit from the sale.



Website

The EMC launched a new website in 2005 to serve as a central location for Tompkins County legislators, EMC members, and the public to learn about EMC accomplishments and current projects. Visit us at www.tompkins-co.org/emc.

Backyard Burning is A Serious Health Hazard If you're Smellin' it, you're Breathin' it!

In October 2005 the Tompkins County Board of Health amended the County Sanitary Code to prohibit the open burning of household waste countywide after a year long campaign initiated by the EMC. Members provided background information on the health impacts of open burning and facilitated public debate on this issue.

The EMC received the 2005 first place award for outstanding project by the New York State Association of Environmental Management Councils for their campaign. Special thanks to Dan Winch, Peter Penniman, John Andersson, and the Board of Health for your support and assistance.



RESOLUTIONS

The EMC passed two resolutions in 2005. The first was passed in January, recommending the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation maintain the existing parameters of Cornell University's Lake Source Cooling Monitoring Plan for the duration of the existing State Pollution Discharge Elimination System (SPDES) Permit. On February 15th, the County Legislature adopted the same resolution. The Town of Ithaca and the City of Ithaca also passed similar resolutions. The EMC was instrumental in facilitating a public dialogue about water quality in Cayuga Lake and Cornell's contribution to that data.

The second resolution passed in September, accepting a model utility-scale wind tower ordinance. The EMC forwarded this model ordinance to all Tompkins County municipalities for their consideration in planning and siting wind turbines in the county.

PRESENTATIONS AND DISCUSSIONS

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

- An economic analysis of petroleum and military security in the Persian Gulf presented by Neha Khanna (EMC member and Associate Professor of Economics and Environmental Studies, Binghamton University).
- An overview of the health effects of open burning presented by Chris Neurath (American Environmental Health Studies Project).
- A review of the Cornell Wind Study presented by Lanny Joyce (Manager of Engineering, Planning, and Energy Management - Cornell University).
- A presentation about three pollutant cancer risk factors: dioxin, arsenic in pressure treated wood, and diesel engine exhaust presented by Donald Hassig (Cancer Action New York).
- A virtual tour of solar homes by Steve Nicholson (EMC member).
- A review of Cornell University's transportation and demand management system and transportation-focused Generic Environmental Impact Statement presented by Bill Stebbins (Transportation Planner) and David Lieb (Public Information).
- An overview of the history of the Southern end of Cayuga Lake presented by Roger Yonkin (EMC member).
- A presentation on the hydrogeology study of Hillview Landfill by Dan Karig.
- A presentation on Snow and Ice: The Art and Science of Clearing Highways, The Case for Using Salt presented by Roger Yonkin (EMC member).

The EMC also scheduled quarterly municipal reports in 2005 to give municipal representatives an opportunity to report on activities or concerns in their respective municipalities. The reports facilitated communication on environmental issues and gave municipalities an opportunity to utilize the skills and resources of the EMC.

Minutes from the monthly EMC meetings and presentation materials are posted on the EMC website at www.tompkins-co.org/emc.

OTHER ACTIVITIES

The EMC participates in the adopt-a-highway program maintaining a portion of New York State Route 13 between Warren Road and Route 366. Three clean-ups were held in 2005. The third annual Golden Hard Hat Award was presented to the program liaison and EMC member, Scott Doyle, for his unwavering commitment to keeping our highway clean.

EMC members facilitated a community-wide discussion on Redbud Woods, the proposed site of a 176-space parking lot on Cornell's West Campus. Community members, students, faculty, and Cornell University representatives were in attendance.

The EMC remained active with the New York State Association of Environmental Management Councils (NYSAEMC). EMC members attended the annual NYSAEMC-sponsored Department of Environmental

Conservation update in Albany in June and the annual meeting of the association in October. Steve Nicholson served as an at-large director of NYSAEMC and EMC associate member Mikel Shakarjian served as president.

EMC participates in local festivals

The EMC was active in local festivals in 2005. Members staffed a display at Earthday with information highlighting the County's Local Action Plan to Reduce Greenhouse Gas Emissions and information about the environmental impacts of backyard burning. Members also rolled out the EMC's bag-less shopping campaign at the Ithaca Festival where they marched in the annual parade and sold reusable bags and baskets sporting the EMC logo. The Energy Committee also presented information about the County's Local Action Plan at the Sustainability Fair held in conjunction with the Ithaca Festival. Finally, members promoted bag-less shopping at the America Recycles Day event at the Pyramid Mall.



COMMITTEE & LIAISON ACTIVITIES

Education

The Education Committee did not hold an official meeting in 2005, but members were involved in presentations with other committees.

Energy

2005 was another busy year for the Energy Committee. Members monitored implementation of the County's Local Action Plan to Reduce Government Emissions - part of the International Council on Local Environmental Initiatives' Cities for Climate Protection Campaign. The County entered into a contract with Johnson Controls to implement over \$2 million in energy efficiency improvement measures in 2005 and 2006.

In the spring, the committee experienced a dramatic increase in public attendance at its meetings as a result of the Cornell Wind Resources Study and the announcement of a feasibility study to locate wind turbines on Mount

Pleasant. The Energy Committee provided a forum for discussion of the potential project. The committee assisted with EMC tabling events at Earth Day and Ithaca Festival celebrations to increase public knowledge of energy and environmental issues.

The committee's big project in 2005 was the development of a model large-scale wind ordinance that was distributed to county municipalities to assist in developing a process for the siting of utility-scale wind turbines.

The committee continues outreach efforts to find local partners in energy reduction and alternative energy measures. They signed up as a partner with Cornell Cooperative Extension's EnergySmart program and worked with the Tompkins Renewable Energy Education Alliance (TREEA) to develop programs for energy education in Tompkins County.

Environmental Review

The Environmental Review Committee (ERC) reviewed and commented on projects that could potentially impact the environment in Tompkins County.

The year began with the continuation of a discussion about Lake Source Cooling. The ERC penned an opinion piece in the Ithaca Journal entitled 'Environmental Review Committee opposes Cornell University request to reduce monitoring sites for Lake Source Cooling.' The ERC also brought a resolution to the EMC that was subsequently passed by the County Legislature opposing Cornell's request to reduce monitoring sites as well as sending a letter to the DEC requesting the same. ERC discussion led to similar resolutions by the Town and City of Ithaca and renewed discussion between Cornell and the County's Water Resources Council.

The ERC discussed the Cornell wind turbine study and the Tompkins County public safety communication system project. They also participated in meetings with the Tompkins County Airport regarding an obstruction removal project that will continue in 2006. The ERC sent out the following letters:

- Response to the Tompkins County Department of Public Works request providing recommendations for eliminating the pigeon roosting problem in the public works garage.
- Comments to NYS DEC on the draft all terrain vehicle policy for public ATV access to recreational programs on the state lands. The ERC did not support expanding the legal use of ATVs on public land.
- Comments to NYS DEC on the proposed oil and gas lease on State lands. The ERC recommended a no surface occupancy lease in the Potato Hill State Forest.

The EMC is a formal part of the County's administrative policy to comply with the New York State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQR). All County agencies must refer Unlisted and Type I Actions to the EMC for

review and comment. The ERC commented on the following County actions:

- Disposition of County land on Trumansburg Road to the Town of Ithaca.
- Adoption of the Cayuga Lake Waterfront Plan.
- Ithaca-Tompkins Regional Airport action extending parallel Taxiway Phase III.
- Disposition of Finger Lakes Trail lands and Fleming Meadow vacant land to State Parks.
- Tompkins County Public Safety Communication System.

Open Burning

After a decade of failed state legislation, the Open Burning Committee successfully campaigned to ban open burning of household hazardous waste locally, in Tompkins County. Their campaign included:

- Presentations to three legislative committees and the County Board of Health.
- A pamphlet about the environmental effects of backyard burning that was widely circulated.
- A public information meeting where several expert speakers made presentations on the negative health effects of open burning.
- Several letters to the editor of the local paper and an editorial by a legislator entitled, *If you're smelling it, you're breathing it!*

In October 2005, the Tompkins County Board of Health voted to amend the County Sanitary Code to prohibit open burning of household solid waste.

Unique Natural Areas

The UNA Committee informally worked on a protocol for revisions to the UNA Inventory. Last updated in 2000, the Inventory contains information on nearly 200 sites determined to contain significant ecological, biological, geological, or aesthetic characteristics in Tompkins County.

Website

The committee designed and implemented a new website for the Tompkins County EMC. Its purpose is to serve as a central location for Tompkins County legislators, EMC members, and the public to learn about EMC accomplishments and current projects.

The new website was completed in June, and is located at <http://www.tompkins-co.org/emc>. The site contains a lot of information including details about current and past EMC projects, agendas, minutes, EMC newsletters, educational materials, presentations from EMC meetings, awards and accomplishments, resolutions, EMC events, history and description of the EMC, and links to

relevant websites. Based on data from the Tompkins County web server log, the new EMC website gets nearly ten times as much traffic per month as the old EMC website on the Tompkins County server!

EMC Liaisons

EMC members served as liaisons to the Agriculture and Farmland Protection Board, Cornell Lake Source Cooling Data Sharing Group, and Tompkins County Water Resources Council. Liaisons attended and participated in meetings, and reported back to the EMC. The liaison position for the Intermunicipal Organization for Cayuga Lake Management Plan remained vacant in 2005.

2005 EMC MEMBERSHIP ROSTER

Appointed At-Large Members

Kenneth Christianson	Dan Lamb
Scott Doyle	Ashley Miller
Karen Edelstein	Gary Stewart
Herb Engman	Steven Uzmann
Keith Epstein	Mark Whitmore
Neha Khanna	Roger Yonkin

Associate Members

Walter Buble	Daniel Pearlstein
Barbara Ebert	Susan Kerns Robinson
David Filiberto	Tania Schusler
Joyce Gerbasi	Mikel Shakarjian
Peter Harriott	Robert Wesley
Dooley Kiefer	Jeni Wightman
Nancy Ostman	

Appointed Municipal Members

Glynn Bebee - City of Ithaca
Stephen C. Nicholson - Town of Caroline
Robert Roe -- Town of Danby
Larry Sharpsteen -- Town of Lansing
Cindy Schulte -- Town of Newfield
David Lessinger -- Town of Ulysses
John Dennis - Village of Lansing

Legislature Liaison

Kathy Luz Herrera

EMC Staff

Dariele Drake -- Principal Account Clerk
Heather Filiberto -- Coordinator
Kathy Wilsea -- Secretary