



2008 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 Legislator Carol Chock served as the Legislature's liaison to the EMC in 2008.

Stephen Nicholson served a sixth 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. Ashley Miller, Kenny Christianson and Dan Lamb served as Vice Chairs.

Kathy Wilsea, of the Tompkins County Planning Department, provided administrative services to the Council and coordinated EMC activities with other governmental advisory boards, County departments, and the Legislature.

The *EMC 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. The *News* was published for the fifteenth year in 2008.

EMC members are appointed by the County Legislature to serve two-year terms. All twelve at-large seats were filled in the beginning of 2008, and two were vacated by resignation during the year. Thirteen municipal members (out of sixteen) also served as representatives from the City of Ithaca; the towns of Caroline, Danby, Dryden, Enfield, Ithaca, Lansing, Newfield, and Ulysses; and the villages of Dryden, Cayuga Heights, Groton, and Lansing. Municipal representatives provide an important link between countywide and local issues by giving quarterly municipal reports to the Council, either verbally or in the *EMC News*. Five 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. Eight committees were formed at the organizational meeting at the beginning of 2008: Air Quality, Consumer Products, Education, Energy, Environmental Review, Invasive Species, Unique Natural Areas, and Website.

PRESENTATIONS AND DISCUSSIONS

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

- Lisa Nicholas and JoAnn Cornish, of the City of Ithaca Planning Department, provided a status report on the Cayuga Inlet dredging project.
- EMC member Dr. Neha Khanna presented An Economist's Perspective on the Carbon Tax versus Tradable Permit Debate at our April meeting.
- Cornell University's chemical disposal site and radiation disposal site (both located near the airport) were topics of discussion when Olaf Gustafson visited in May.
- Phil Metzger joined us to discuss the functions of the Central New York Resource Conservation & Development Council and how Tompkins County can participate and benefit.
- Dominic Frongillo, a member of the Town of Caroline council, shared his experiences from the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Bali.
- EMC was invited to participate in the development of the draft Energy and Greenhouse Gas Emissions Element of the Tompkins County Comprehensive Plan when Leslie Schill, of the Tompkins County Planning Department, visited in April.
- Roxy Johnston, a member of the Tompkins County Water Resources Council, and Joan Jurkowich, of Tompkins County Planning Department staff and also a member of WRC, provided information on the draft Monitoring Plan for the Southern Basin of Cayuga Lake.
- EMC member Dr. Mark Whitmore did a presentation on the Emerald Ash Borer, an invasive species that is headed toward our region.
- The draft Energy and Greenhouse Gas Emissions Element of the Tompkins County Comprehensive Plan was presented to EMC by Katie Borgella and Leslie Schill, Planning Department staff members. Further comments from EMC were solicited.
- Perspectives on Gas Drilling from a Local Landowners Group was the topic when Linda Adams, a member of the Town of Caroline council, visited in October. She provided information on how she and her neighbors are interacting with gas exploration companies.
- Dr. Caren B. Cooper, a trainee from Al Gore's *The Climate Project*, joined us in November for a presentation entitled: Is This Climate Change Story True?
- In December, County employees Barb Eckstrom, Linnett Short and Kat McCarthy provided information on Successes and Initiatives at Tompkins County Solid Waste, and Tompkins County Public Works Administrator Cheryl Nelson updated us on Tompkins County Government's Sustainability Team.

At the request of County legislators, the EMC examined the call for a resolution of support from the Climate Change Action Group of Central New York (CCAG). CCAG feels there is a need to end carbon offset trading and change to a federal carbon tax. The Council learned about the current system and how a federal carbon tax would work. Information was provided at meetings and in the *EMC News* by EMC members Neha Khanna and Kenny Christianson, as well as by email links to news articles on the topic. EMC passed a resolution in May ("Recommending County Support for a Federal Carbon Tax"). The County Legislature passed a resolution with differing recommendations in June.

In November, some EMC members attended a forum on gas exploration that was organized for members of Tompkins County advisory board members. Speakers were Susan Riha, NYS Water Resources Institute at Cornell University; Rick Kessy, Fortuna Energy; and Bill Kappel, United States Geological Survey.

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

RESOLUTIONS

The EMC passed three resolutions in 2008. The first was passed in May, "Recommending County Support for a Federal Carbon Tax" (see report of the Energy Committee, page 4).

The second resolution passed in July, "Supporting the Water Resources Council-Cornell University Lake Monitoring Partnership's Strategic Monitoring Plan and Supporting Continuation of DEC's Lake-Source Cooling Permit Required In-Lake Monitoring". The County Legislature adopted a similar resolution in October.

The third resolution passed in July, "In Support of the Energy and Greenhouse Gas Emissions (EGGE) Element of the Tompkins County Comprehensive Plan". EGGE was adopted by the County Legislature in December.

The EMC also supported participation of Tompkins County in Earth Hour. Michael Koplinka-Loehr, Chair of the Tompkins County Legislature, issued a proclamation that 8:00 to 9:00 PM on March 29 was Earth Hour in Tompkins County. Citizens were encouraged to participate by turning off lights during that hour.

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. Two clean-ups were held in 2008. At the end of the year, the Golden Hard Hat Award was granted to Roger Segelken for 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, EMC Chair, attended the annual NYSAEMC-sponsored Department of Environmental Conservation update in Albany in June. Steve Nicholson continued to serve as at-large director/treasurer of NYSAEMC.

TRIBUTE TO A SPECIAL MEMBER

Retiring Jersey #10

For recordkeeping purposes, the EMC at-large seats are numbered. As a special tribute to Herb Engman as he completed twenty-nine continuous years of service to EMC, his number was retired. He was presented with a tee-shirt with number 10 on the back. He will continue to serve as an associate member. Thanks, Herb!!

COMMITTEE & LIAISON ACTIVITIES

Air Quality

Members: Glynn Bebee (chair), Dan Lamb, and Roger Segelken

Although there were enough members signed up to form this committee for 2008, they did not carry through and meet during the year.

Consumer Products

Members: Amy Risen (chair), Cliff Babson, Kenny Christianson, Dooley Kiefer, Jacie Spoon and Lucia Tyler

A new committee was created in 2008 to address concerns about toxics in products. Our committee decided to use a "life cycle" approach to evaluate products and has spent the year exploring ways we might advise consumers in our county on choosing products to buy and disposal methods.

We began by examining mercury in compact fluorescent light bulbs. We looked for brands that offer low mercury CFLs and discussed disposal and recycling options. We discussed future products to examine for responsible disposal methods, including pharmaceuticals and electronics.

Many members in this committee had other obligations towards the Environmental Review Committee, so we had to temporarily suspend meetings during the second half of 2008. We all look forward to picking up where we left off and continuing to build this committee in 2009.

Education

Members: Ashley Miller (chair), Kenny Christianson, Dan Lamb, Kiwi Mackie-Cunningham, Jacie Spoon and Gary Stewart

In 2008, the committee continued to support bagless shopping, and considered EMC participation in Earth Day Celebration, Ithaca Festival, and America Recycles Day.

Energy

Members: Kenny Christianson (chair), Cliff Babson, Peter Harriott, Dooley Kiefer, Kiwi Mackie-Cunningham, Mike Miles, Steve Nicholson, Amy Risen and Marissa Weiss

The Tompkins County Environmental Management Council's Energy Committee met seven times during 2008. The committee was chaired by Kenny Christianson for the eighth consecutive year.

The first six months of 2008 committee work focused on a carbon tax resolution brought to the EMC in January by the Climate Change Action Group. Because EMC members asked for clarification on the issues, the committee spent the next few months educating EMC members about the concepts involved. The committee submitted several entries to the EMC News in March and April to educate EMC members about the merits of a carbon tax versus a cap-and-trade system to reduce carbon emissions. The EMC passed a carbon tax resolution in May that supported the carbon tax system but also endorsed the idea of cap-and-auction as a secondary choice. The Tompkins County Legislature also passed a resolution in support of a federal greenhouse gas limiting system. To the disappointment of many EMC members, the Legislature did not follow the EMC's advice in supporting a cap-and-auction system. The paragraph of the EMC resolution that was removed in the version passed by the Legislature stated, "*RESOLVED, . . . if a carbon tax becomes politically or economically infeasible, the Tompkins County Legislature declare its support for a cap-and-auction system as a next-best alternative. Polluters should pay for the right to pollute, using auctions not allotments, and should not be given permits at zero cost. The cap-and-auction should be implemented as far upstream as possible, with auction via a single open market that is national not global, and with public monitoring to ascertain the validity of the system. The system should be strictly national; offsets would not be allowed; a significant penalty should be imposed for fossil-fuel use without allowances. A "hard cap" should*

be set for all large users of fossil fuels together, reduced every year, and reach 80% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions (as CO2 equivalents) by 2050."

In June, the Energy Committee met at Stewart Park to celebrate our 50th meeting.

In September, the committee met with Katie Borgella and Leslie Schill from the Planning Department to discuss the Energy and Greenhouse Gas Emissions (EGGE) addition to the Tompkins County Comprehensive Plan. The committee wrote a resolution supporting the EGGE element that was passed by the EMC. Finally, in November we met with Cheryl Nelson to discuss the fantastic work being done by the County's Sustainability Team. The team has been active in finding ways for county employees to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions both at work and at home.

Throughout the year, the committee continued to monitor the output of the library solar panels, the county's Local Action Plan, and the recently-formed county Sustainability Team.

As we enter 2009, the Energy Committee faces new challenges with a new president who is committed to energy reform and new leadership of the committee.

Environmental Review

Members: Amy Risen and Lucia Tyler (co-chairs), Kenny Christianson, Herb Engman, Joyce Gerbasi, Dooley Kiefer, Larry Sharpsteen and Mark Whitmore

Many development projects in Tompkins County have been reviewed for their environmental impacts. Most have merited written comment from the committee. It has been a challenging year with four projects up for review in one month. The following report gives a short synopsis of the comments provided on environmental issues for the projects.

- Department of Health Sanitary Code
To: Tompkins County Health Dept.
Issues- Inclusion of site sketch in permit file, clarification on permit fee.
- Maintaining Enclosed Temporary Off Leash Dog Area

To: Town of Ithaca Planning Board
Issues- Proximity of Unleashed Area to Unique Natural Area, runoff of dog waste to Cayuga Lake.

- Construction of New Ithaca College Athletic and Events Facility
To: Town of Ithaca Planning Board and Ithaca College President
Issues- Insufficient wetland mitigation plan, opportunity to contribute to sustainability (smaller carbon footprint, etc.), inadequate sanitary facilities requiring more chemical toilets and accompanying disposal issues.

- Carrowmoor Condominium Development
To: Town of Ithaca Planning Board
Issues- Impact on views, stormwater issues, grounds maintenance, opportunities for walking trails.
- Addition of Energy and Greenhouse Gas Emission Element to the Tompkins County Comprehensive Plan
To: Tompkins County Planning and Tompkins County Legislature
Issues- Facilitation of communications regarding plan at the state and federal levels.

- Construction of Milstein Hall at Cornell University
To: City Planning and Cornell University
Issues- Potential soil erosion into Fall Creek Gorge.

- Draft Environmental Impact Statement for Ithaca Water Supply
To: City of Ithaca Planning Dept.
Issues- Long-term effects on the Six Mile Creek Watershed, extent of dredging required, greenhouse gases and energy use, water quality, impact on Esty's Glen Unique Natural Area.

- Scoping Document for Supplement to 1992 Generic Environmental Impact Statement on Drilling and Mining in NYS to address hydraulic fracturing for natural gas
To: NYS Dept. of Environmental Conservation
Issues- Include assessments of: cuttings handling & disposal, capacity of wastewater treatment plants to remove pollutants in fluids for disposal, fluids storage on drilling site, reuse of potentially contaminated brines for road deicing & dust control, and impact of noise and air quality on wildlife.

Executive

Members: Steve Nicholson (chair), Kenny Christianson, Dan Lamb, Ashley Miller

Under the Bylaws of the EMC, the Executive Committee handles nominations for at-large membership. Following the fall recruiting cycle, members reviewed applications and forwarded recommendations for appointments to the County Legislature's Planning, Development & Environmental Quality Committee for action. A special recruiting round was initiated at the end of the year to fill vacancies that occurred due to resignations.

Invasive Species

Members: Jacie Spoon (chair), Stan Marcus and Mark Whitmore

Several meetings were held. We decided to concentrate on one pest, the Emerald Ash Borer.

The Emerald Ash Borer, (*Agilus planipennis*, *Fairemaire* or EAB), an invasive, exotic insect is believed to have been transported to the US by shipping pallets from Asia. The insect was first discovered in Michigan in July of 2002. The EAB is responsible for an estimated 20 million ash tree deaths since its arrival.

On March 19, we attended an Emerald Ash Borer preparedness workshop in Canandaigua. The workshop was sponsored by the New York Dept. of Environmental Services Forestry Division and Western Finger Lakes ReLeaf, a volunteer organization of the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation. The objective of the workshop was to prepare municipalities and the green industry for what to expect if the EAB arrives and to equip them with the tools to deal with any potential outbreaks.

<http://www.ci.rochester.ny.us/mayor/NewsReleases/index.cfm?release=2830>

An Emerald Ash Borer informational interview of the committee chair by Matt Cooper was published in the Finger Lakes Community News.

Mark Whitmore organized a day-long workshop October 30, "New York Non-Native Invasive Forest Pest Conference". Presentations were videotaped and permission was obtained to make recordings available online.

Mark was interviewed and an article appeared in the November 22 issue of the Ithaca Journal following the workshop.

<http://www.theithacajournal.com/article/20081122/NEWS01/811220327/1014/OPINION>

Mark and Jacie continue to be vocal on the topic.

Unique Natural Areas

Members: Mark Whitmore (chair), John Dennis, Karen Edelstein, Martha Ferger, Neha Khanna, Dooley Kiefer, Steve Nicholson, Roger Segelken, Gary Stewart, and Marissa Weiss

The Unique Natural Areas Committee (UNA) remained engaged in the process of updating the full inventory of UNA's to incorporate any changes to the boundaries and incorporate additional biological information, especially with regard to sensitive habitats and species of plants and animals. The committee anticipates evaluating the Inventory for UNA's that obviously require revision, and speaking with experts in order to incorporate information on organisms that are currently poorly represented in the inventory, such as reptiles and amphibians. Tompkins County Planning Department devised a GIS-based online resource for committee members to use when evaluating individual sites.

Website

Members: Mike Miles and Jacie Spoon

2008 saw consistent updates of newsletters, agendas, minutes, resolutions, and meeting dates. Membership and committee lists were also updated with current information at the beginning of the year.

EMC Liaisons

EMC members served as liaisons to:

- Cornell University Lake Source Cooling,
- Cornell Community Waste Management Advisory Committee,
- Partnership for Regional Invasive Species Management,
- City of Ithaca Project Advisory Committee for Dredging,
- Planning Advisory Board Energy Plan Committee (for development of EGGE), and
- Tompkins County Water Resources Council.

Liaisons attended and participated in meetings, and reported back to the EMC.

2008 EMC MEMBERSHIP ROSTER

At-Large Members

Cliff Babson
Kenneth Christianson
Herb Engman
Neha Khanna
Lara Kimber
Dan Lamb
Ashley Miller
Amy Risen
Hank Spencer
Gary Stewart
Marissa Weiss
Mark Whitmore
Roger Yonkin

Municipal Members

Glynn Bebee, City of Ithaca
John Dennis, Village of Lansing
Martha Ferger, Village of Dryden
Kariann Mackie-Cunningham, Town of Newfield
Stanley Marcus, Town of Dryden
Michael Miles, Town of Enfield
Stephen Nicholson, Town of Caroline
Larry Sallinger, Town of Ithaca
Roger Segelken, Village of Cayuga Heights
Larry Sharpsteen, Town of Lansing
Anni Skoler, Town of Danby
Jacie Spoon, Town of Groton
Lucia Tyler, Town of Ulysses

Legislature Liaison

Carol Chock

Associate Members

Walter Buble
Karen Edelstein
Joyce Gerbasi
Peter Harriott
Dooley Kiefer

EMC Staff

Dariele Drake, Principal Account Clerk
Kathy Wilsea, Secretary
Joan Jurkowich, Deputy Commissioner
Tompkins County Planning Department

