



2006 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 Jim Dennis served as the Legislature's liaison to the EMC in 2006.

Stephen Nicholson served a fourth 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. Neha Khanna, Steve Uzmann and Mark Whitmore 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 thirteenth year in 2006. 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 2006. Twelve 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 Cayuga Heights, Groton, and Lansing. Municipal representatives provide an important link between countywide and local issues. Two long-vacant municipal seats were also converted to at-large seats for a period of one year to accommodate individuals interested in serving on the EMC. Eleven 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. Seven committees were formed at the organizational meeting at the beginning of 2006: Air Quality, Earth Day, Energy, Environmental Review, Invasive Species, Unique Natural Areas & Green Corridors, and Website.

RESOLUTIONS

The EMC passed three resolutions in 2006. The first was passed in March, supporting EMC membership in the New York Energy \$mart Communities Partnership. Members of the EMC Energy Committee interact with Energy \$mart.

The second resolution passed in November, and addressed the rescission of the City of Ithaca leash law for the Festival Lands. EMC recommended an environmental review of the project and fencing for the dog park. On November 21st, the County Legislature adopted the same resolution.

The third resolution also passed in November, and recommended support for development of alternative fuels in New York State. This resolution was also adopted by the County Legislature on November 21st.

PRESENTATIONS AND DISCUSSIONS

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

- A presentation by Crystal Buck, Senior Planner at Tompkins County Planning Department, on the County's Natural Features Focus Areas. The 14 areas were identified during development of the Comprehensive Plan, and the next steps described by Crystal were to establish detailed protection and management plans for the areas.
- Dean Koyanagi provided information on sustainability efforts at Cornell University.
- John Kiefer, Cornell University Facilities Director, gave an overview of building and renovation projects on campus.
- Cooperative Extension Wildlife Specialist Paul Curtis gave a PowerPoint presentation on management systems for deer and wildlife damage, including the Cayuga Heights Fertility Project.
- Lora Hine, a member of Leadership Tompkins' community action team, spoke on the issues surrounding dredging Cayuga Inlet.
- Jon Bosak and Bethany Schroeder visited from TCLocal. Jon made a presentation on TCLocal's efforts to make Tompkins County aware of the need to work toward developing the ability to provide our own goods, services, and energy because of anticipated fossil fuel depletion and climate change.
- Katy Nicholson, Clean Energy Organizer for the Energy Justice Network, gave a presentation with EMC Chair Steve Nicholson entitled, "Is Ethanol Really a Solution?"
- EMC learned of the status of the walkability studies being conducted by Tompkins County Planning Department with consultants Rick Manning from Northeast Greenways and Norma Moores from Stantec. Pilot projects were conducted in Trumansburg and the northeast part of the Town of Ithaca.
- Joel Zumoff, a member of the City of Ithaca's Common Council, visited for discussion of the City's rescission of the leash laws at the informal dog park on the Festival Lands.

The EMC also scheduled quarterly municipal reports in 2006, facilitating 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

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. Three clean-ups were held in 2006. The fourth annual Golden Hard Hat Award was presented to Dan Lamb for his commitment to keeping our highway clean.

County Government Sustainability Program

The EMC formally endorsed the County's efforts to develop a sustainability program. The Chair forwarded a letter to the Government Operations Committee of the County Legislature supporting a resolution to form a county sustainability team and develop a sustainable action plan for county government. The EMC Energy committee has been involved in recommending several of the sustainable practices already implemented by the County, including the library solar panel installation, building envelope improvements, and purchasing renewable energy. The EMC hopes to continue its involvement in the County's efforts in 2007.

Paper or Plastic, No Thank You!

To reduce natural resource consumption and promote environmental awareness, the EMC continued the bag-less shopping campaign of 2005 by offering re-usable plastic shopping baskets and sturdy canvas bags for sale. An intern developed marketing materials and worked to find a home for this program. At year's end, it had been transferred to the County's Solid Waste Division where it fits in nicely with their mission.



Festivals

The EMC was active in local festivals in 2006, participating with a display at the Earthday celebration at the Farmer's Market. Members also continued the EMC's bag-less shopping campaign at the Ithaca Festival and America Recycles Day.

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 and the annual meeting of the association in October. Steve Nicholson and Mikel Shakarjian continued to serve as at-large director and president of NYSAEMC, respectively. In October 2006 Steve was elected treasurer of NYSAEMC.

Visit the EMC website at www.tompkins-co.org/EMC

COMMITTEE & LIAISON ACTIVITIES

Air Quality

After a successful campaign to ban open burning in 2005, the Air Quality Committee turned its focus in 2006 to research and education. The committee teamed up with Cornell's Environmental Risk Analysis Program to learn about agricultural plastics as they relate to collection, recycling, disposal and public health. They participated in a demonstration of a baler that could have potential to help farmers transport the material which is generally buried or burned. Members were also trained to administer surveys of agricultural plastics as part of an outreach program at Cornell. In the fall, the topic of vehicle idling came up, and the committee turned its attention to researching this issue, which should continue in 2007.

Earth Day

The Earth Day Committee organized a table to participate in the annual Earth Day celebration held this year on April 23 at the Farmers Market. The Energy Committee provided displays on the County's Local Action Plan to Reduce Greenhouse Gas Emissions and on the Sample Municipal Wind Ordinance developed in 2005. The EMC sold over a dozen bags and baskets.

Back by popular demand was Dioxin Man. Wearing a gas mask and biohazard suit, he attempted to create dioxin in an ordinary burn barrel, only to be thwarted by a public health official. Dioxin Man was given a stern but educational warning. He also received our new brochure provided by the Air Quality committee explaining the new County Sanitary Code Regulations that prohibit open burning of household waste - one of the largest sources of dioxin emissions in the United States.

Energy

The Energy Committee provided information and support to the City of Ithaca and the Town

of Dryden in developing municipal wind ordinances and continues to participate in local discussions on issues surrounding the promotion and development of small on-site and larger scale wind turbine projects in Tompkins County. The committee monitored output of the solar panel array on the Tompkins County Public Library.

They also 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. Over \$2 million was invested in county government building improvements in 2006. Preliminary reports estimate a 22% reduction in natural gas consumption and an 11% reduction in electricity usage compared to the same period last year. The committee also began discussing implementation of an educational component to further energy conservation measures by County employees.

Members also provided support to the City of Ithaca in developing its own Local Action Plan, which was adopted in 2006.

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 comments on phase I of the Danby Community Park followed by comments to the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation regarding the draft NYS Solid Waste Management Regulations. The Committee spent several months participating with the Tompkins County Airport on an obstruction removal project. The Committee reviewed the preliminary obstruction identification study and did field work viewing many of the stands of trees that impact the

navigable airspace. The committee then provided extensive comments on the environmental assessment for the project. In addition to comments on specific sites, the committee communicated that it is a natural process for trees, which account for the bulk of the obstructions, to grow over time and regenerate. Given this ongoing, natural process they recommended developing a long-range management plan for the forested areas rather than attempting to remove obstructions that would most likely grow back in the future. They hope to be involved with this project further in 2007 as the removal plans are developed.

The committee also reviewed two subdivisions in 2006. The first, located in the Town of Ithaca, was Briarwood II, a 49-unit subdivision near Sapsucker Woods. The committee did not provide comments, but did attend a public hearing and discussed the potential negative impacts of using an existing wetland as a detention basin for stormwater run-off. The second subdivision, Bolton Estates, was a 21-lot subdivision in the Village of Lansing. The committee provided comments urging the Village Planning Board to pursue more protection for the unique natural features along the cliffs adjacent to Cayuga Lake.

The committee provided comment and drafted a resolution regarding the City of Ithaca's decision to allow dogs off-leash on the Festival Lands adjacent to the Treman Marina. Given the sensitive nature of the grassland nesting habitat on Festival Lands, the easy access to the Hog Hole UNA and State Park land where law requires dogs to be leashed and migratory waterfowl are common, the ERC strongly recommended that first, a SEQR review be completed and second, a fence be installed to enclose the area.

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. No County actions were forwarded to the ERC for review in 2006.

Invasive Species

The invasive species committee did not meet in 2006, but hopes to reorganize and get down to business in 2007.

Unique Natural Areas and Green Corridors

The UNA Committee continued working 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. The Committee is starting to gear up for a 2010 update of the inventory. They requested a budget for 2007 to begin field work for the update, acknowledging that there is much work to do. In addition to providing more detail for the vegetation and geological information, they hope to add reptiles and mammals to the inventory.

Website

The EMC website was launched in 2005. The site is a clearinghouse for EMC 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, and links to relevant websites. 2006 was a maintenance year. Member biographies were added and members worked on updating the current issues section.

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 2006.

2006 EMC MEMBERSHIP ROSTER

Appointed At-Large Members

Amy Chaffee	Dan Lamb
Kenneth Christianson	Ashley Miller
Scott Doyle	Emily Rochon
Karen Edelstein	Gary Stewart
Herb Engman	Steven Uzmam
Keith Epstein	Mark Whitmore
Neha Khanna	Roger Yonkin

Legislature Liaison

Jim Dennis

Associate Members

Walter Buble	Nancy Ostman
Barbara Ebert	Tania Schusler
Joyce Gerbasi	Mikel Shakarjian
Peter Harriott	Robert Wesley
Dooley Kiefer	Jenifer Wightman
Dan Kwasnowski	

Appointed Municipal Members

Glynn Bebee - City of Ithaca
John Dennis - Village of Lansing
Stan Marcus - Town of Dryden
Michael Miles - Town of Enfield
Stephen C. Nicholson - Town of Caroline
Robert Roe -- Town of Danby
Larry Sallinger - Town of Ithaca
Cindy Schulte -- Town of Newfield
Roger Segelken - Village of Cayuga Heights
Larry Sharpsteen -- Town of Lansing
Jacalyn Spoon - Village of Groton
Lucia Tyler -- Town of Ulysses

EMC Staff

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