



# 2009 ANNUAL REPORT TOMPKINS COUNTY ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

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Phone: (607) 274-5560 <http://www.tompkins-co.org/emc>

## 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 2009.

Amy Risen served as Chair. She reported to PDEQ on the EMC's projects throughout the year and served as the group's primary spokesperson and liaison to the Legislature. Gary Stewart, Mark Whitmore and Roger Yonkin 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. Kathy Wilsea provided administrative services to the Council.

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 sixteenth year in 2008.

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, 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*. EMC also has twelve at-large voting seats. Seven 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 in 2009: Communication, Consumer Products, Energy, Environmental Review, Gas Drilling (a subcommittee of Environmental Review), Invasive Species, Transportation, and Unique Natural Areas.

## 2009 EMC MEMBERSHIP ROSTER

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### **At-Large Members**

Spring Buck  
Kenneth Christianson  
Katie Kelley  
Neha Khanna  
Dan Lamb  
Jim McGarry  
Amy Risen  
Gary Stewart  
Andrea Turner  
Marissa Weiss  
Mark Whitmore  
Roger Yonkin

### **Municipal Members**

Roberta Dixon, Town of Danby  
Martha Ferger, Village of Dryden  
Kariann Mackie-Cunningham, Town of Newfield  
Stan Marcus, Town of Dryden  
Michael Miles, Town of Enfield  
Tony Nekut, Village of Lansing  
Stephen Nicholson, Town of Caroline  
Roger Segelken, Village of Cayuga Heights  
Larry Sharpsteen, Town of Lansing  
Kristine Shaw, Town of Ithaca  
Jacalyn Spoon, Village of Groton  
Lucia Tyler, Town of Ulysses

### **Legislature Liaison**

Carol Chock

### **Associate Members**

Cliff Babson  
Herb Engman  
Joyce Gerbasi  
Peter Harriott  
Dooley Kiefer  
Steve Uzmann  
Steve Whicher

### **EMC Staff**

Dariele Drake, Principal Account Clerk  
Kathy Wilsea, Secretary  
Scott Doyle, Senior Planner



## PRESENTATIONS AND DISCUSSIONS

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

- Adapting to Climate Change – *Susan Riha, PhD., Director, NYS Water Resources Institute at Cornell University, and Charles L. Pack Professor, Department of Earth & Atmospheric Sciences*
- The Cornell College of Veterinary Medicine Waste Management Facility -- *Paul Jennette, Biosafety Engineer – CCVM Biosafety Program*
- Transportation Initiatives in Tompkins County– *Fernando de Aragon, Executive Director of Ithaca-Tompkins County Transportation Council*
- Bisphenol A in Tompkins County – What can we do about it? – *Katie Kelly, Child-Safe Products Campaign Coordinator, Clean New York*
- Comprehensive Planning and The County Planning Department's Role in Development Reviews — *Ed Marx, Tompkins County Commissioner of Planning & Public Works*
- Water Testing for Gas Drilling -- *Murray McBride*
- Cornell Climate Action Plan – *Dan Roth*

The EMC purchased a DVD of the movie *A Sense of Wonder*, a story about the life of Rachel Carson. The movie was made available to members and the public through two showings in May at the Tompkins County Public Library.

The October, November and December meetings were devoted to analysis and discussion of goals of EMC. In October, team building exercises were used to discuss our visions and goals for the EMC's future. At the November meeting, discussion centered on shaping agendas, committees and leadership structure to meet our goals. In December, goals and committees for 2010 were established.

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).



*Communication Committee members Mike Miles and Kiwi Mackie-Cunningham are ready for the crowd at the Earth Day Celebration in April.*

## RESOLUTIONS

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Resolution 1 of 2009 supported Earth Hour. Many cities and countless individuals worldwide turned off the lights for one hour as part of a global event symbolizing support for action on climate change. By Proclamation, the Chair of the Tompkins County Legislature designated Saturday, March 28, 2009, from 8:30 PM to 9:30 PM as Earth Hour in Tompkins County.

Resolution 2 supported efforts to reduce Bisphenol A in our environment and requested the Tompkins County Legislature to pass legislation with the following components to reduce exposure to this toxin:

- Immediate ban on the sale of children's products in Tompkins County containing Bisphenol A, including baby bottles and sippy cups intended for children under age three.
- Phased in ban in Tompkins County on the sale of infant formula packaging (including powdered and liquid infant formula), children's toys intended for children under age three, and sports bottles containing BPA.
- Annually review the status of and promote the local use of BPA-free adult food can linings in conjunction with the Tompkins County EMC, with the goal of requiring the sale of BPA-free food cans in Tompkins County within 5 years of enacting the original legislation.

## OTHER ACTIVITIES

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### **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 granted for the second year to 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). Amy Risen and Steve Nicholson 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. In 2009, the annual Conference on the Environment, co-sponsored by NYSAEMC and NYS Association of Conservation Advisory Councils, was held in Watkins Glen in November. Jim McGarry and Steve Nicholson attended the Conference.

## COMMITTEE & LIAISON ACTIVITIES

### Communication

*Members: Mike Miles (chair), Roberta Dixon, Kiwi Mackie-Cunningham, Roger Segelken, Jacie Spoon, Gary Stewart, Marissa Weiss*

The Communication Committee started the 2009 year as a combination of the Education Committee and Web Committee. Input regarding priorities was sought from the larger EMC, and those were identified as the website, the *EMC News*, and community outreach.

Options for improving the website were investigated, including meeting with Marcia Lynch, the Tompkins County Public Information Officer, and looking into purchasing a new web address and building a new website. This project did not take root and is no longer under consideration.

Efforts for improving the *EMC News* were made, and the *News* was distributed monthly. Council discussion at the end of the year led to suspension of the *News*, and each monthly EMC agenda will include reports from all committees in 2010.

Community outreach efforts were successful with the Communication Committee facilitating tabling for both Earth Day and the Ithaca Festival in 2009. Thank you to all the EMC members who contributed to our presence at these events.

The 2009 year closed with the Communication Committee seeing the loss of all but two of its members. As the EMC reviews its priorities and goals for 2010, the Committee looks forward to new membership and enthusiasm.

### Consumer Products

*Members: Amy Risen (chair), Martha Ferger, Dooley Kiefer*

This committee began in 2008 in response to concerns about the human and environmental health impacts that products can have throughout their production, use, and disposal. In 2009 we focused on Bisphenol A (BPA). BPA is a chemical that acts like a hormone in our bodies, but is also used to make plastic bottles and line food cans, and a variety of other products (find more informa-

tion on our website <http://www.tompkins-co.org/emc/BPA.htm> ). Our committee researched the bans on BPA that are being considered or passed in other counties and states. In our efforts to reduce human exposure we focused on the most susceptible group, babies and infants. The effects on babies and infants are recognized by industry so there are enough replacement products (baby bottles and pacifiers, mostly) available to make a ban easy to follow.

Through our work, we also determined that many of the stores in Tompkins county are already voluntarily choosing BPA-free baby products. Despite this, voluntary action is not sufficient to protect everyone, so we wrote a resolution that was passed in the May EMC meeting. We discussed our concerns with the legislature and health department and they were generally supportive of a ban. Unfortunately, our county lacks the financial capability to enforce a ban and therefore can't pass BPA legislation. Since the state is working on a bill, we choose to postpone further action for the time being.

### Energy

*Members: Kenny Christianson, Peter Harriott, Neha Khanna, Dooley Kiefer, Kiwi Mackie-Cunningham, Tony Nekut, Steve Nicholson, Andrea Turner, Marissa Weiss*

The Energy Committee has worked since 2000 on energy use and building efficiency within



*Energy Committee members Kenny Christianson, Andrea Turner, Dooley Kiefer & Marissa Weiss.*

Tompkins County government. This year, work continued with County staff to review accounting methods for data in the Local Energy Action Plan. A project assistant at the Tompkins County Planning Department gathered the 2008 data needed for finalizing the emissions inventory using ICLEI software. Final analysis will be published in 2010.

Tony Nekut was involved in the Danby Land Bank Coop. This is an initiative organizing local land-owners to use marginal land for biomass fuel production. The steering committee worked with a lawyer toward establishing a coop. The early goal of the coop were to coordinate biomass harvesting and sales and provide members an opportunity to qualify for property tax reduction via agriculture assessment. Possible future goals include biomass processing (e.g. pelleting) for local consumption.

Peter Harriott and Kenny Christianson worked with solar panel data from the Tompkins County Public Library. The bad news is that the solar panels have only provided 60% of the energy originally predicted by Powerlight in 2001. The good news is that, including estimates for missing data, the solar panels have produced 950 MWH so far. It was anticipated that the milestone of one million KWH would be reached by the end of 2009. A graph of the electricity output of the solar panels so far was prepared and distributed at the Bioneers conference, which took place at Ithaca College in October. Roberta Dixon (Communication Committee member), Steve Nicholson, and Kenny Christianson met several times to prepare for the Bioneers conference, but in the end Council decided that there were not sufficient resources for other meaningful EMC participation.

## **Environmental Review**

*Members: Jim McGarry (chair), Herb Engman, Joyce Gerbasi, Dooley Kiefer, Amy Risen, Larry Sharpsteen, Lucia Tyler, Mark Whitmore, Roger Yonkin*

The ERC provided input by comment to a total of eight projects/issues during 2009. The largest single effort was by a subcommittee on the issues surrounding Marcellus Shale Natural Gas Drilling development. Their letter to DEC, which provided comments on the draft supplemental Generic Environmental Impact Statement, is posted on our website. The remaining ERC members reviewed and commented upon the following seven developments:

*Environmental Review Committee members Roger Yonkin, Joyce Gerbasi & Jim McGarry.*



### *Cornell Boathouse renovations and construction on the lake shore in Ithaca.*

Issues: inappropriate tree species selected for planting, need for maintenance on permeable gravel parking or pave the parking, proper catch basins needed for runoff water from parking and roads.

### *Six Mile Creek bank stabilization project in Brooktondale.*

Issues: high water events calculated on historic data but future climate models indicate likelihood of more and greater events, plantings included no woody shrubs, disposition of current trees not mentioned in plan.

### *Hanshaw Road cell tower construction in Dryden.*

Issues: tower site unnecessarily close to homes, site hydrology not addressed in plan, visual impact of tower might be mitigated by disguising it as a tree.

### *Ithaca College Athletics Center development compensatory wetlands in Ithaca.*

Issues: compensatory wetlands ratio to eliminated natural wetlands was too low, lack of clarity on disposition of water captured in overflow swales, suggested additional post-progress monitoring, suggested bird and bat house installations to assist in insect control.

### *Snowmobile trail development in Groton.*

Issues: potential noise impact on Groton Village, trail maintenance procedures not made clear, no plan made clear for steep slope areas, no details of engineering for protection of stream crossings and the Salt Rd. Unique Natural Area.

### *Lansing Commons Planned Development Area in Lansing.*

Issues: sewage treatment effluent discharged into intermittent stream, increased flows may alter erosion patterns for downstream abutters.

### *Holochuck Homes Development on the slopes below Trumansburg Rd. in Ithaca.*

Issues: abandoned landfill sites on the property must be mitigated, traffic safety at the intersections of Rt. 96 and the development access roads, steep grades on the access roads, elimination of several small pocket wetlands, detention ponds and standing water, need to distribute runoff to all ephemeral streams on the site, need for relatively maintenance-free design of water management structures.

### **Executive**

*Members: Amy Risen (chair), Gary Stewart, Mark Whitmore, Roger Yonkin*

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.

In an effort to improve overall administration of the EMC, the Executive Committee organized discussion on goals for the October, November and December council meetings (See Presentations and Discussions, page 2).

### **Gas Drilling *ad hoc***

*Members: Amy Risen (chair), Martha Ferger, Steve Nicholson, Steve Whicher*

This subcommittee of the Environmental Review Committee was formed to prepare comments in response to the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation on the draft Supplemental Generic Environmental Impact Statement on gas drilling (hydrofracturing). These new regulations are required to oversee the anticipated widespread use of high-volume gas drilling rigs in New York State.

Members interacted with other community groups such as: the Water Resources Council (another advisory board to the county legislature); Tomp-

kins County Legislature, Council of Governments, and Department of Health; and citizens group Shaleshock. These groups shared concerns and issues that each group prioritized for their comments to the DEC. The Tompkins County Council of Governments shared community comments on their web-site. The major concerns include the impacts of water withdrawals on water supply, the environmental fate of chemicals at spills and accidents, disposal of the high volume of wastes containing hydrofracturing chemicals, and impacts on community character and infrastructure. This has been a several-stage process and we have additional information available on our website <http://www.tompkins-co.org/emc/GasDrilling2008.htm>.

### **Invasive Species**

*Members: Spring Buck, Stan Marcus, Jacie Spoon, Mark Whitmore*

For several reasons, our committee decided to focus on a few invasive insects, namely, the Emerald Ash Borer, the woolly adelgid and the Asian Longhorned Beetle; and a few invasive plants, the Giant Hogweed and the Japanese Knotweed.

Cornell Forest Entomologist Mark Whitmore, who is a member of the EMC, has recently become actively involved in responding to the recent discovery of the Emerald Ash Borer in Randolph, New York (<http://74.125.93.132/search?q=cache%3AZVqOm9515HkJ%3Awww.cce.cornell.edu%2Fdata%2FCCE%2520Emerald%2520Ash%2520Borer%2520Identification%2520Protocol%25207-17-20092>).

<http://www.cce.cornell.edu/data/FCCE/2520Emerald%2520Ash%2520Borer%2520Identification%2520Protocol%25207-17-20092.pdf+Mark+Whitmore+emerald+ash+borer+randolph&hl=en&gl=us>), and he has also been dealing with the invasion of the woolly adelgid, which has infected many hemlock trees in New York. In October, Mark released hundreds of predatory beetles, *Laricobius nigrinus*, as a part of a study sponsored by the US Forest Service, to help in combatting the woolly adelgid. (<http://www.cornellplantations.org/our-gardens/natural-areas/invasive/hemlock-woolly-adelgid>).

The Asian Longhorned Beetle (ALB) (<http://nyis.info/insects/AsianLongHornedBeetle.aspx>) has been observed in downstate New York since 1996, and was first seen in Worcester, Massachusetts in August of 2008. The ALB has the potential of destroying more hardwood trees (maples, birches, elms, willows and poplars) than any former invasive insect.

Invasive plants in Tompkins County include Giant Hogweed (<http://nyis.info/plants/GiantHogweed.aspx>), which has been observed in a number of locations. It can cause very nasty skin blistering in human beings who come into contact with it, and the plant is difficult to remove. Japanese knotweed (<http://nyis.info/plants/JapaneseKnotweed.aspx>) is present and is rapidly expanding in Tompkins County.



*Invasive Species Committee members Stan Marcus, Mark Whitmore & Spring Buck at a June meeting.*

### **Transportation**

*Members: Mike Miles (chair), Spring Buck, Roberta Dixon, Dan Lamb, Gary Stewart, Roger Yonkin*

The Transportation Committee was new this year. It sprang forth from a combination of new concerns and issues of the Air Quality Committee that remained following the adoption of the countywide ban on open burning of household waste. Mike Miles initiated the start of the committee and served as Chair for most of the year. Our charge has been to “Research and report on ways to improve Tompkins County transportation infrastructure by focusing on both the community and the overall environmental impact.”

This committee has been active and engaged since its inception with the creation and organization of the team, the creation of the TIY

(Transportation Initiative of the Year Award) which shone some positive press on the EMC, and in having Fernando De Aragon speak to the full EMC regarding the Ithaca-Tompkins County Transportation Council’s long range transportation plan.

The committee members agreed at the end of 2009 that, while this committee has been successful, team members’ efforts can be better utilized on other committees. In discussing the dissolution of our committee we feel there are important elements in our committee which should not be lost from the EMC. We trust that as concerns and issues arise which do need review, other committees can take on those concerns as appropriate.

### **Unique Natural Areas**

*Members: Steve Nicholson (chair), Dooley Kiefer, Roger Segelken, Gary Stewart, Mark Whitmore*

The UNA Committee held discussions on how the update process can best provide data to municipalities and researchers. The 2000 UNA Inventory was distributed in large binders, a form that is not ideal for users, but is protective of landowners and rare species. The committee members were interested in expanding data on animals and including reptiles during the update.

The committee discussed Critical Environmental Areas and other criteria that could become useful for land protection in the natural gas drilling permitting process. Discussion on CEAs was brought to the full Council at the November meeting so ideas could be shared. CEA is a state or municipal designation that would trigger a full Environmental Impact Statement during review of development projects.

The UNA Inventory is an important resource that can be used to avoid sensitive areas in development projects. It is used regularly by the Environmental Review Committee and some municipalities have begun using it to guide them in planning for anticipated gas drilling activities.

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### **EMC Liaisons**

EMC members served as liaisons to:  
Cayuga Sustainability Council, 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, and  
Tompkins County Water Resources Council.

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

