Tompkins County Water Resources Council 2014 Annual Report

Ithaca Falls Photo by: Peter Roark

Introduction to the Water Resources Council

The Tompkins County Water Resources Council (WRC) advises the Tompkins County Legislature on matters related to water resources management and planning, and is charged with identifying problems, proposing priorities, and promoting the coordination of activities in the management and protection of the County's water resources. The WRC provides a public forum for local communities and stakeholder groups to address and discuss their water resources concerns, and it is the intent of the group to coordinate the water resources-related efforts of local governments, public and private institutions, and agencies and organizations throughout the County.

The WRC also serves as the County's water quality coordinating committee, responsible for the development of the Tompkins County Water Quality Strategy (WQS), which is intended to help prioritize local water resources issues and concerns and identify strategies to address these concerns. The strategies are incorporated into the WRC's bi-annual work plan, which is developed in conformity with the WQS, to help guide the activities of the WRC that are achieved through a number of standing and special committees. WRC membership consists of 21 voting members, who are appointed by the County Legislature, representing various water-related interests that include six non-voting members from relevant Federal and State agencies. The WRC welcomes Associate Members, who have committee-level voting rights.

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2014 Membership Roster

Sharon Anderson - Cooperative Extension
Fay Benson - Agriculture
Chris Bordlemay - Water Purveyor
Ed Bugliosi - USGS
Liz Cameron - Environmental Health
Sarah Dwyer - Business Industry
Barry Goodrich - Watershed Org., Vice Chair
Jim McGarry - EMC Liaison
Roxy Johnston - At-Large
Dan Karig - Recreation
Marjory Rinaldo-Lee - Environment, Vice Chair
Jonathan Negley - Soil & Water
Lynn Leopold - Municipal Government
Darby Kiley - Municipal Government
Bill George - Municipal Government
Dooley Kiefer - Legislature Liaison
John Andersson - At-Large
Elaine Quaroni - At-Large
Scott Carpenter - At-Large
Rick Manning - At-Large
Frank Proto - At-Large, Chair
Jose Lozano - Associate
John Mawdsley - Associate
Todd Miller - Associate
Steve Penningroth - Associate
Mary Shelley - Associate
Tom Vawter - Associate
Linda Wagenet - Associate

Council Meeting & Collaborations

Guest presentations occur frequently at Water Resource Council Meetings. The following presentations occurred in 2014.

January 27, 2014

Project Update on Hydrilla Eradication and New Invasive Species List – *James Balyszak, Hydrilla Program Manager*

February 27, 2014

Report on Update to the Chesapeake Bay TMDL – *Aaron Ristow, Program Specialist of the Tompkins County Soil & Water Conservation District*

April 24, 2014

Loading of Phosphorus and Sediment to the South End of Cayuga Lake – *Steve Penningroth, Executive Director of the Community Science Institute*

May 19, 2014

Update from NY State Department of Parks – *Fred Bonn, Regional Director of Finger Lakes Parks Department*

June 16, 2014

SPDES Permit Annual Report Public Hearing – *Angel Hinickle, Resource Conservation Specialist for the Soil and Water Conservation District for the Tompkins County Stormwater Coalition*

June 16, 2014

Update on the Water Plant Rebuild Project – *Chuck Baker, Chief Operator with the City of Ithaca Water Treatment Plant*

July 2, 2014

Wetlands Mapping Presentation - *Nicholas Hollingshead, GIS Consultant*

September 15, 2014

Tompkins County Stream Corridor Restoration & Flood Hazard Mitigation Program - *Scott Doyle, Senior Planner with the Tompkins County Planning Department*

October 20, 2014

Tompkins County Comprehensive Plan Update - *Joan Jurkowich, Planning Administrator with the Tompkins County Planning Department*

November 17, 2014

Cornell University Addresses Stormwater - *Chris Bordlemay, Cornell University, Water and Wastewater Manager*

Minutes from the monthly meetings of the WRC are posted on the Tompkins County Planning Department website at: http://www.tompkins-co.org/planning/committees.html.

To foster coordination and collaboration in the management of local water resources, WRC members serve as liaisons between the WRC and other groups, including the Finger Lakes-Lake Ontario Watershed Protection Alliance, Cayuga Lake Watershed Intermunicipal Organization and its Technical Advisory Committee, the Upper Susquehanna Coalition, Storm-water Coalition of Tompkins County, Tompkins County Agriculture and Farmland Protection Board, and Tompkins County Environmental Management Council. Informal relationships also exist between the WRC and other organizations and agencies such as the Fall Creek and Six Mile Creek volunteer monitoring groups, the Cayuga Lake Watershed Network, Hydrilla Taskforce, and the Town of Caroline Watersheds Committee.

Cayuga Lake Monitoring Partnership Committee

Members: from the WRC: Roxy Johnston, Joan Jurkowich, Darby Kiley, James McGarry, Dooley Kiefer, Dan Karig, Linda Wagenet, Jose Lozano, Liz Cameron, Steve Penningroth, Chris Bordlemay, Elaine Quaroni, Jon Negley, Linda Wagenet, Sharon Anderson

The Monitoring Partnership is working directly with representatives from DEC on the Cayuga Lake project investigating phosphorus levels and possible development of a Total Maximum Daily Load regulation. The group meets monthly to discuss current research. A DEC representative participates in the meetings.

Highlights from 2014 include:

Three Technical Advisory Committee meetings took place where the most current Cayuga Lake/Watershed research was presented. Members of the Partnership attended and/or reviewed summaries of the data presented and provided feedback to the DEC.

Special presentations by:

- **Upstate Freshwater Institute,** on phosphorus forms, analytical methods and specific characteristics of local water bodies,
- **Dave Bouldin,** on the scalability of phosphorus data from Fall Creek to the southern basin and whole lake as well as correlations between spring lake phosphorus and summer chlorophyll levels,
- **Steve Penningroth,** of Community Science Institute, on the strength of volunteer monitoring data to calculate stream sediment loads as well as individual stream characteristics.

The Monitoring Partnership debated the merits of the pathogen, nutrient and sediment listing for the south end of Cayuga Lake with the benefit of input from DEC. Ultimately, members of the Partnership submitted individual comments regarding the State's 303d list. Members of the Partnership also provided data (mostly regarding pathogens) to the Department of Environmental Conservation. The Department of Environmental Conservation's final recommendation was to de-list the southern end of Cayuga Lake for pathogens.

The Monitoring Partnership will continue partnering with DEC in 2015 on the Cayuga Lake project. The Partnership provides a place for exchange of information between regulators, local and regional scientists, and local stakeholders.

Aquifer Committee 2014 Annual Report

Members: *John Andersson, Fay Benson, Ed Bugliosi, Liz Cameron, Barry Goodrich, Dan Karig, Todd Miller, Marjory Rinaldo-Lee, Dooley Kiefer*

The Aquifer Committee investigated arsenic (As) in groundwater in Tompkins County during 2012-14. Data on concentrations of arsenic in groundwater were collected and compiled in 2012. In 2013, the committee began drafting a Fact Sheet based on those findings. In 2014, the draft was compiled and presented to the WRC for review. The committee prepared responses to the WRC members' comments and the document was revised. A final Fact Sheet (Arsenic in your groundwater?) was released to the public in December of 2014. The fact Sheet has been posted online at the Water Resources Council webpage under the Highlights section: http://tompkinscountyny.gov/planning/committees-wrc and the Aquifer Committee webpage: http://www.tompkinscountyny.gov/files/planning/water-resources/Documents/Arsenic_Fact_Sheet_WRC_2014-01_final.pdf.

Recreation Committee 2014 Annual Report

Members: *Bill George, Dan Karig, Lynn Leopold, Mary Shelley, John Mawdsley, Jose Lozano*

The Recreation Committee worked on updating the paddling brochure for muscle-powered sports. It is due to be printed and distributed this spring. As an *ad hoc* committee, there are no other projects at the present time. The committee will reconvene as future projects dictate. The paddling brochure can be found on the Water Resources Council at: http://www.tompkinscountyny.gov/files/planning/paddle%20brochure%20both%20pages_1.pdf

Education Committee 2014 Annual Report

Members: *Sharon Anderson, Lynn Leopold, Elaine Quaroni, Bill George, Tom Vawter, Steve Penningroth,*

The Education Committee participated in the activities of the Outreach group of the Hydrilla Task Force including hosting public information programs and distributing information flyers to residents living along the east shore of the south end of Cayuga Lake. Links to up-to-date information on the progress in the fight against Hydrilla in the Cayuga Inlet and Lake can be found at the following website: www.stophydrilla.org which is maintained by Tompkins County Cornell Cooperative Extension.

Sharon Anderson gave presentations to the Tompkins County Stormwater Coalition and the Planning, Energy & Environmental Quality Committee (PEEQ) of the Tompkins County Legislature on the Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL), a process presently being undertaken by the DEC.

The Education Committee reviewed the Arsenic Fact Sheet prepared by the Streams Committee and added a link to it on the WRC web site which the Committee keeps current with pertinent information on water resources. The Committee also assisted with the layout of the Recreation Committee's brochure on paddling.

Executive Committee 2014 Annual Report

Members: Frank Proto (chair), Barry Goodrich (1st Vice Chair), Marjorie Rinaldo-Lee (2nd Vice Chair), Elaine Quaroni, Sharon Anderson

As a result of the City of Ithaca's newly proposed Stormwater Law the Executive Committee was instrumental in bringing together members of the WRC, the Stormwater Coalition, and the City's Public Works department to discuss the new proposal. This resulted in the City forming a review group under the guidance of Mike Thorne, City Public Works Commissioner, to tackle the issue of how the City handles its water related concerns particularly where the creeks are involved. This newly formed group will continue to work with Mr. Thorne, with the goal of compiling a strategy regarding the issue itself. Mike Thorne was invited to submit an application for WRC membership which would be initially reviewed

by the Nominating Committee, and perhaps forwarded to the full WRC, as he expressed an interest in becoming a member of the Council. Though no guarantee of approval was implied, it was appreciated that a City Official was interested in participating.

- The Executive Committee continues to participate with the Monitoring Partnership, Cornell University, and the DEC to address the concerns at the south end of the lake, and the TMDL issue.

- The Committee supported the City's application to the DEC for revised 6 Mile Creek stream bed excavation as proposed by the WRC's Streams Committee.

- The Committee supported the WRC's Wetlands Committee's recommendation to expand funding and the scope of study regarding the wetlands study to expand it to include all of Tompkins County. Funding from the Park Foundation was secured by the Cayuga Lake Watershed Network.

Grants Committee 2014 Annual Report

Members: *Sarah Dwyer, Jose Lozano, Jon Negley, Chris Bordlemay, Scott Carpenter*

In 2014 the Grants committee met on an as-needed, informal, basis to discuss grant opportunities, applications and awards. A formal meeting was held in November to create and recommend the FLLOWPA (Finger Lakes Lake Ontario Watershed Protection Alliance) work plan and budget. $59,915.18 was approved for the 2014-2015 FY Tompkins County FLLOWPA budget through the NYS Environmental Protection Fund.

The committee was also active in assisting the City of Ithaca apply for (and be awarded) a "Cleaner Greener Initiative" grant through the Environmental Protection Agency. The Committee also assisted the Tompkins County SWCD apply for a grant through the NYSDEC for a stream restoration project in the Town of Enfield. The District was awarded that grant of $157,203.

Ongoing research, investigation and application submittal is a routine activity of the committee. As grant announcements are publicized the committee works to update the WRC membership. We look forward to a productive 2015 of grant activity!

Nominating/Membership Committee 2014 Annual Report

Members: *Joan Jurkowich (Chair), Barry Goodrich, Dooley Kiefer, Elaine Quaroni, Jon Negley*

This committee recommends to the Water Resources Council prospective members to fill vacancies of a 21-person voting council, six non-voting members of relevant Federal or State agencies, and associate members with committee-level voting rights. Members are chosen with these criteria in mind: credentials, skills, experience, background; diversity; residence time and location in Tompkins County; and other watershed-related activities.

The new members appointed by the Tompkins County Legislature for three-year terms commencing in 2015 are:

- At-Large: Elaine Quaroni
- Cooperative Extension: Sharon Anderson
- Environmental Management Council Liaison: James McGarry
- Municipal Government: William George
- Tompkins County Division of Environmental Health: Elizabeth Cameron

The new associate members appointed by the Water Resources Council for two-year terms commencing in 2015 are:

- Michelle Henry
- Roxy Johnston
- Jose Lozano
- John Mawdsley
- Todd Miller
- Tom Vawter

This committee is also responsible for recommending a slate of officers for the Water Resources Council. The slate, approved by the unanimous vote of the members of the Water Resources Council for 2015 are:

- Frank Proto as Chair;
- Barry Goodrich as First Vice-Chair;
- Darby Kiley as Second Vice-Chair.

Streams Committee 2014 Annual Report

Members: *John Andersson, Liz Cameron, Barry Goodrich, Roxy Johnston, Dan Karig, Dooley Kiefer, Jon Negley, Steve Penningroth, Marjory Rinaldo-Lee, Todd Miller*

The Streams Committee continued compilation of chloride values in Sixmile and Fall creeks over time, but tentatively decided to stop this, as the present values are below levels of concern. It also offered support to the Tompkins County

Planning Department in their efforts to obtain funding to monitor pipeline stream crossings. A major effort was directed toward the problem of flooding due to sediment accumulation along the Sixmile Creek channel in downtown Ithaca. This involved advising the DEC as to that danger, working with the City Public Works superintendent concerning reduction of that hazard, and interaction with the office of Barbara Lifton. Members of the Committee were also involved in a field review of a channel remediation project along Inlet Creek.

Wetlands Committee 2014 Annual Report

Members: *Sarah Dwyer, Dooley Kiefer, Darby Kiley, John Mawdsley, Tom Vawter*

For a number of years, an objective of the Water Quality Strategy has been to identify and map wetlands that are not currently regulated by the State or federal government. The Wetlands Committee continued discussions with a local GIS consultant on how to use new mapping data to locate vulnerable wetlands. The committee partnered with the Stormwater Coalition of Tompkins County, Tompkins County Soil and Water Conservation District, and the Cayuga Lake Watershed Network to garner sufficient funds to support a pilot project for mapping wetlands in a portion of Tompkins County. A contract between the consultant and Cayuga Lake Watershed Network was executed in late 2013, and we look forward to providing technical assistance in 2014.

You're Invited

We welcome visitors! *Residents of Tompkins County are invited to attend meetings of the WRC and apply for WRC membership. The Water Resources Council meets the third Monday of each month from 4:15 to 6:00 PM at the Transit Center (737 Willow Avenue, Ithaca). Feel free to phone the Secretary at 274-5560 about dates, or check our website: http://www.tompkinscountyny.gov/planning/committees-wrc*

2014 Meeting Dates

January 26, March 16, April 20, May 18, June 15, July 20, August 17, September 21, October 19, November 16, December 14

For more information about the WRC or how to apply for WRC membership, please contact the Tompkins County Planning Department at 274-5560 or planning@tompkins-co.org.