

**TOMPKINS COUNTY WATER RESOURCES COUNCIL**

Oct. 21, 2024

Via Zoom

Final Minutes

**Attendance**

Member		Seat	Member		Seat
Annie Bastoni	P	At-Large	Frank Proto	P	At-Large
Shawn Bossard	P	Agriculture	Brian Rahm	E	Environment
Cynthia Brock	P	Recreation	Stephanie Redmond	P	At-Large
Liz Cameron	P	Co. Environmental Health	Steve Riddle	P	Water Purveyor
Amanda Champion	P	County Government	Becky Sims	E	Municipal Government
Jenna DeRario	P	Cooperative Extension	Linda Wagenet	P	At-Large
Brett Hayhurst	P	At-Large	Douglas Barnes	P	Associate
Kristen Hychka	P	Municipal Government	Roxy Johnston	P	Associate
Darby Kiley	P	County Planning & Sustain.	Lynn Leopold	P	Associate
Patrick King	E	Business & Industry	Rebecca Minas	E	Associate
Liz Kreitinger	P	Watershed Organization	Elaine Quaroni	P	Associate
Jon Negley	P	Soil & Water Cons. District	Grascen Shidemantle	P	Associate
Holly Payne	P	At-Large	Tom Vawter	E	Associate
Vacant		Environmental Management Council			

**Guests:** Bernd Blossey, Harry Greene, Karan Mehta

**Call to Order/Agenda Review** – First Vice Chair Frank Proto called the meeting to order at 3:04pm. No changes to the agenda.

**Privilege of the Floor** – No privilege of the floor.

**Presentation: Scientific Research Updates on Hydrilla and Other Aquatic Species**– *Bernd Blossey, Cornell Univ.* Bernd Blossey presented insights into managing invasive aquatic species, particularly hydrilla, highlighting the lack of concrete evidence on its long-term impacts and the effectiveness of various management strategies. He discussed the potential of biological control agents, such as insects, but cautioned against interfering with natural processes that may lead to hydrilla's decline. Bernd emphasized the need for long-term monitoring to assess ecological impacts and understand hydrilla population dynamics over time. He also noted the challenges in developing standardized assessment protocols for complex and variable aquatic ecosystems. The subsequent discussion explored topics including herbicide treatment effectiveness, biocontrol agents, long-term monitoring, and the potential for natural decline. Participants questioned the long-term efficacy of herbicides and their impact on native plant communities, while emphasizing the importance of monitoring to inform future decision-making. Some suggested that hydrilla may naturally decline without human intervention in certain cases.

**Action: Consider sending a letter to the governor on NYSDOH's Response to Owasco Lake Watershed Rules and Regulations**

Roxy presented a revised letter to Governor Hochul regarding the New York State Department of Health's (NYSDOH) response to the Owasco Lake Watershed Rules and Regulations. She discussed changes made to the letter to improve readability and emphasize key requests. Frank Proto raised a question about the WRC's involvement, suggesting that the letter should explicitly state that the WRC is commenting due to the presence of municipalities within its jurisdiction that are affected by the Owasco WRR. Roxy responded by highlighting the

establishment of the WRR Committee in 2015 and emphasized the practical significance of the issue for the group. Jon expressed concerns about certain language in earlier drafts of the Owasco WRR and urged the group to engage in the process if the NYSDOH decides to reopen the discussion. Roxy reiterated the importance of full participation in any future discussions.

**Action:** Darby Kiley made a motion, which Frank Proto seconded, to approve and send to Gov. Hochul the revised letter regarding NYS Department of Health's response to Watershed Rules and Regulations. Motion carried.

**Action: Approval of draft minutes**

The September 2024 draft minutes were approved as submitted.

**Committee Reports**

**Water Quality Strategy – Introduce TMDL-related actions**

Darby's report covered proposed actions for the Water Quality Strategy, outlining specific steps for implementing the TMDL across various sectors. The discussion included Jon's concerns about the allocation of reduction targets and data collection methods, emphasizing the need for coordination with other county water quality agencies. The group discussed the next steps for TMDL implementation, including potential collaborations with DEC and other relevant organizations.

The discussion also covered the importance of involving the Ag and Markets team to address agricultural and forest land impacts, as noted by Frank and Jon. Elaine inquired about potential stream restoration projects undertaken by the Finger Lakes Land Trust. Lynn emphasized the significance of environmental outreach, particularly regarding septic system maintenance and wellhead protection. She discussed past outreach efforts by Cornell Cooperative Extension and the potential for future collaborations, highlighting the need for funding to support such initiatives.

**Municipal Training** – Watershed 201 training for highway department staff and municipal officials is set for Tuesday, Nov. 12.

**Chair and Staff Reports**

There was no chair's report.

For her staff report, Darby shared that the Environmental Management Council will send postcards to Unique Natural Areas property owners with an updated interactive boundary map and host a public information session on Nov. 13 at the Tompkins County Public Library. Members asked about the release of the state-identified wetlands maps.

**Member Announcements**

Frank shared an NPR news piece highlighting recent federal attention on harmful algal blooms (HABs), while Liz K. mentioned the CLWN Fall Community Conference and Hydrilla Forum. Grascen commented on a record-breaking number of HABs on Cayuga Lake this year, extending an invitation to CSI's annual volunteer event. Finally, Jon shared details about a newly operational solar-powered boat cleaning station at Myers Park.

**Adjournment** – The meeting was adjourned at 4:42pm.