



# 2022 ANNUAL REPORT

**Tompkins County Environmental Management Council**

121 E. Court Street , Ithaca, NY 14850

<http://www.tompkinscountyny.gov/emc>

# Tompkins County Environmental Management Council

## 2022 Annual Report

### 2023 Outlook

*A quick look forward before the retrospective: The year 2023 looks to be an engaging and collaborative one for the Environmental Management Council (EMC). Later this fall, Tompkins County will host the NYS Association of Conservation Commissions (NYSACC) annual conference with the EMC serving as lead organizer. This will engage the EMC with municipal conservation advisory commissions and boards, organizations, nonprofits, and community members both locally and from across New York State.*

### 2022 Guest Speakers

The EMC continued pursuing information sharing and knowledge growth opportunities in 2022 through the following presentations:

- E.O. Wilson's Half-Earth Vision, Vermont's Part – *Curt Lindberg, Vermont Alliance for Half-Earth*
- Bio-sequestration/Better Top Soil and Aquifer Management – *Tim Woods, field biologist, Town of Dryden Conservation Board*
- Amphibian Breeding Migrations – *Lean Kanda, Ithaca College*
- Protecting the Environment Through Green Burial – *Herbert John Engman, Greensprings Natural Cemetery*
- Resiliency & Recovery Plan Update – *Scott Doyle, Tompkins County Planning & Sustainability Department*
- Water Quality Protection and Other Priorities: News from the Cayuga Lake Watershed Intermunicipal Organization (CWIO) – *Liz Thomas, chair of CWIO*
- Environmental issues in New York State and the Role of the EMC – *Anna Kelles NYS Assembly*
- Nature Benefits Us in So Many Ways – *Professor Don Rakow, Cornell University*

### 2022 Fall Outreach Event

A highlight for the EMC in 2022 was our hybrid fall outreach event: ***Flooding in Tompkins County? Are you Ready? Let's talk about it.***

This remote and in-person event focused on reaching members of the public who were not already engaged with environmental groups. We had 26 people join remotely and equally that many gather in person at the Tompkins County Public Library. Many of those attending were new faces. Our panel of presenters included:

- Darby Kiley, Tompkins Co. Department of Planning and Sustainability - *What Kinds of Floods Do We Get in Tompkins County and Where Do They Occur?*
- Robert Covert, Ithaca Fire Department Acting Chief - *Flood Safety for Individuals and the Home*

- Maureen Bolton, Enfield resident and former EMC member, Masters of Landscape Architecture from Cornell in Environmental Remediation - *Flooding: Surviving, Recovering, and Preparing for the Future*
- Doug Barnes, Tompkins Co. Environmental Health Division - *Restoring and Testing Your Private Well After a Flood*

After the panel of presenters, followed by ample Q&A time, participants moved into small group discussion. Many attendees were particularly concerned with the National Flood Insurance Program and the updated FEMA maps. This information was shared with County Planning & Sustainability Department staff for future collaboration on outreach efforts.

A recording of this informative presentation is available online:

<https://youtu.be/wgllGr0pKQQ>

### **Strengthening Partner Ties Across the State**

In 2022, the EMC continued growing our connection to the New York State Association of Conservation Commissions (which also now recognizes EMCs as member organizations). Members attended the virtual NYSACC Conference on the Environment held in October. Long-time EMC member Stephen Nicholson has joined the NYSACC board of directors and is providing Tompkins County with a link to the statewide agency.

### **2022 EMC Committees**

Every January, as part of its annual organizational meeting, the EMC forms committees to focus its efforts on addressing environmental issues relevant to its mission and that of the County Legislature. Members, both voting and associate, serve on at least one committee. Each committee is tasked with specific goals for the year. The following committees met in 2022:

#### **Education & Outreach Committee**

The Education & Outreach Committee continued to grow the Tompkins Green Scene newsletter, migrating production to the MailChimp platform for sign-up and distribution ease. This bi-weekly newsletter compiles local environmental events, news, activities, and notable items into one easily accessible email. Additionally, the Green Scene includes NYS DEC Environmental Notice Bulletins and wastewater discharge alerts related to Tompkins County. It is a valuable resource for anyone looking to stay in the know about events or news in the vast Tompkins County environmental scene. You can check out past issues and subscribe here:

[bit.ly/GreenSceneArchive](http://bit.ly/GreenSceneArchive).

The Education & Outreach Committee also connected with partners at the neighboring Broome County EMC through a presentation given by committee chair Cait Darfler. Cait spoke about the current work of the Tompkins County EMC, sharing both challenges and successes, and engaged in dialogue with colleagues from Broome County.

## Unique Natural Areas (UNA) Committee

The UNA Committee met monthly by Zoom and for an in-person fieldtrip on July 18. The field-trip was led by committee member and botanist Robert Wesley to Durfee Hill Oak Woods, UNA-173, in hopes of finding the rare grass *Poa sylvestris* (woodland bluegrass). Unfortunately, the woodland bluegrass was not seen during this trip.



UNA consultants Karen Edelstein and Robert Wesley continued the UNA Inventory updating process, adding new wetlands data and inserting justification of boundary change details into the first two batches of UNA revisions. The remaining UNA updates will be completed later this year (2023). Mr. Wesley performed site visits to UNA-6 Devils Den, UNA-16 Sanguisorba Swamp, UNA-173 Durfee Hill Oak Woods, and UNA-180 Caroline Pinnacles.

The UNA Committee submitted comments for General Municipal Law Section 239-l, -m, and -n County Environmental Reviews related to five projects.

## Climate Adaptation Committee

The Climate Adaptation Committee met monthly continuing to gather and sort information on flooding risks in Tompkins County. The work was grounded in our prior involvement in the Tompkins County Hazard Mitigation Plan – 2021 Update, our concerns about its limitations, and how they might be addressed.

The committee discussed at length how best to interpret the forthcoming preliminary FEMA flood maps of the County and to inform community members about the map changes. The Climate Adaptation Committee and EMC as a whole will work with Planning & Sustainability Department staff when the FEMA flood maps are released to support the County's public education efforts.

Finally, Climate Adaptation and Education & Outreach Committee members worked together in the planning, publicity, and execution of the EMC's public information event on flooding in Tompkins County.

## **2022 EMC Members**

In 2022, members donated over 500 hours of time and expertise to EMC projects that benefited Tompkins County.

### **Leadership**

Regi Teasley, At-large  
Chair

Cait Darfler, Village of Trumansburg  
Vice Chair

Steve Nicholson, Town of Caroline  
Vice Chair

Susan Riley, At-large  
Vice Chair

### **Legislative Liaison**

Anne Koreman

### **Voting Representatives**

George Adams, Town of Danby  
Steve Bissen, Town of Dryden  
John Dennis, Village of Lansing  
Marc Devokaitis, Town of Ulysses  
Pat Dutt, At-large  
Pegi Ficken, Town of Groton  
Joey Gates, At-large  
Melanie Greaver Cordova, At-large  
Michelle Henry, Town of Newfield  
Rick Neville, Village of Groton  
Stephanie Redmond, Town of Enfield  
Larry Sallinger, At-large  
Ron Szymanski, Village of Freeville  
Jeff Walker, Village of Cayuga Heights  
David Wolfe, Town of Lansing

### **Associates (non-voting)**

Lindsay Dombroskie  
Karen Edelstein  
Jason Fenn  
Vanessa Greenlee  
Thomas Hirasuna  
Maria Van Dyke  
David Weinstein  
Robert Wesley

## **A Little Background**

Environmental Management Councils are voluntary advisory boards appointed by their County governments throughout New York. EMCs were established under Article 47 of the New York State Environmental Conservation Law passed in 1970.

The Tompkins County EMC was one of the first EMCs in the state, established by Resolution No. 103 of the Tompkins County Board of Representatives in 1971. The EMC was added to the County's Charter in 2003.

*Respectfully submitted,*

*Cait Darfler, 2023 EMC Chair*