

Tompkins County Environmental Management Council

Annual Report for year 2021, submitted March 2022

Note: During 2021 the TC Environmental Management Council (EMC) and its subcommittees continued to meet virtually due to the continuation of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The year 2021 marked the 50th anniversary of the Tompkins County Environmental Management Council. Although the Covid-19 pandemic precluded a large public gathering, we celebrated. On a beautiful day in October, about 10 EMC members, past and present, met at the Finger Lakes Land Trust's Lindsay-Parsons Biodiversity Preserve in West Danby where we planted a white oak tree (grown from a local acorn by the Plantsmen Nursery) and left our hopes for the future on painted stones. A guided walk in the preserve followed.



Our goal for 2021 was revitalizing and better connecting the EMC. To this end, we worked throughout the year to address two key areas:

In-reach: Making a cooperative and engaged working group of the EMC by:

- 1) increasing the effectiveness of both individual members and committees, while,
- 2) improving our whole-council meeting process.

Outreach: Continuing to:

- 1) host informative presentations at EMC's open monthly meetings,
- 2) reach out to partner organizations,

- 3) work more closely with the County Legislature and Department of Planning and Sustainability and,
- 4) improve information sharing through the “Tompkins Green Scene” * (see list below) and partnering with Vanessa Greenlee on [The Plastics Challenge Podcast](#) at Cornell.

Progress: Along the way, we:

- 1) learned a great deal from the monthly presentations.**
- 2) encountered expected and unexpected challenges and took a hiatus from committees to re-evaluate them and close one (the Waste Reduction Committee; the independent Zero Waste Ithaca group is quite active in our community so it was determined that an EMC committee would be duplicative)
- 3) participated in a multi-step process*** to re-engage and reconfigure our committees as follows: **Unique Natural Areas, Outreach and Education, and Climate Adaptation.**
- 4) reconnected with the **New York State Association of Conservation Advisory Councils** on their 50th anniversary via a presentation from the organization’s president. At their virtual conference, EMC vice chair Cait Darfler hosted a poster session and Michelle Henry (Climate Adaptation Committee chair) also attended. Developing these ties greatly enhances our connection with similar councils statewide. Steve Nicholson, who serves as EMC vice chair and chair of the Unique Natural Areas Committee, is our liaison.

As in prior years, **the EMC provided written comments on relevant issues.** We wrote letters to the governor about two properties on Cayuga Lake: the protection of the Bell Station (Nut Ridge Unique Natural Area) parcel, and conservation of the Camp Barton parcel. In addition, we wrote a letter to U.S. Secretary of Transportation Pete Buttigieg in support of a TCAT grant for the purchase of electric buses.

Notes:

***The Tompkins Green Scene** This bi-weekly e-newsletter compiles updates, events, and notable items from over 50 groups in Tompkins County and tracks pertinent updates from the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation’s Environmental Notice Bulletin. **Interested in sharing event information, learning more, or subscribing? Reach out at TompkinsCountyEnvironmental@gmail.com.**

****List of 2021 presenters and presentation topics:**

Jody Enck and Paul Anderson, “The Christmas Bird Count and the Cayuga Bird Club.”

Stephen Nicholson, EMC vice chair, “Unique Natural Areas of Tompkins County.”

Dr. Thangamani, Thangamani Lab, SUNY Center for Environmental Health and Medicine, Upstate Medical University, “Ticks and tick-borne diseases in New York State.” (nyticks.org)

Simon Skolnick, NYSACC president, “NYS Association of Conservation Advisory Councils.”

Sarah Zemanick, Ole Gustafson, Terry Jordan and Tony Ingraffea, “Cornell University Earth Source Heating.”

Scott Doyle, Tompkins County Department of Planning and Sustainability, “Tompkins County Hazard Mitigation Plan.”

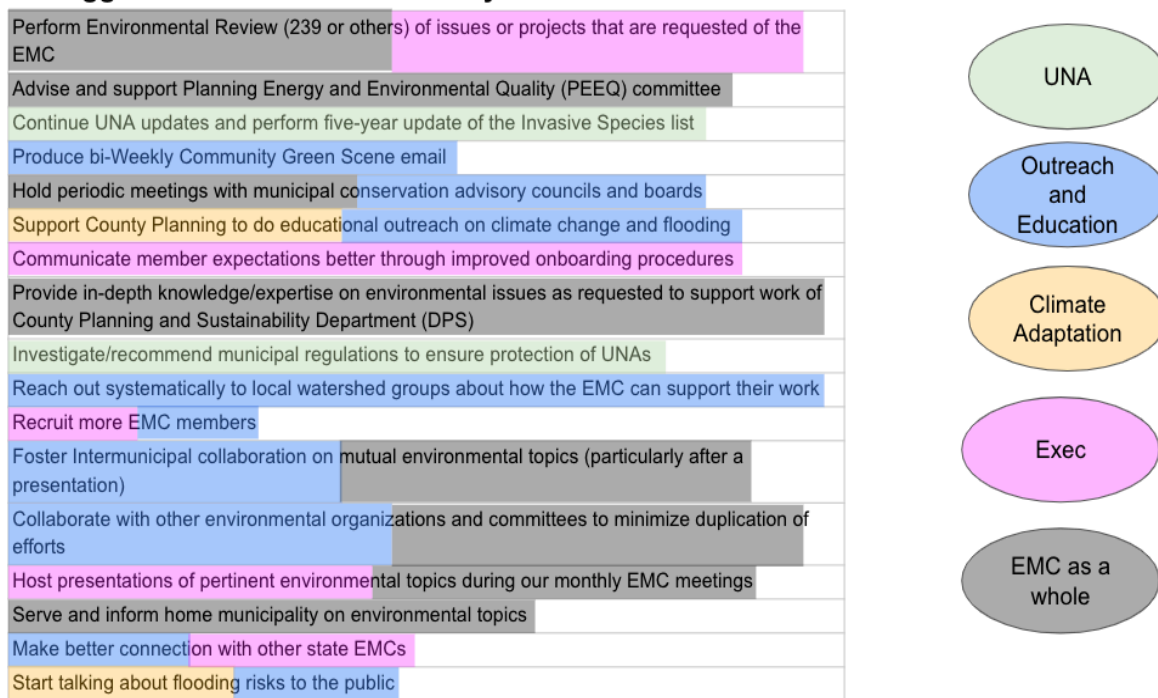
*****Stop/Start/Continue Group Reorganization Process led by EMC vice chair Cait Darfler**

In August the EMC began a multi-month reorganization and prioritization workshop. This effort kicked off with a “Start, Stop, Continue” exercise where all participants compiled a list of tasks that they would like to see stopped, started, or continued.

Tasks needed to be action oriented and not just involve pursuing lofty goals. We were glad to see that no tasks were desired to be stopped, so our next exercises focused on determining which tasks to start or continue.

EMC voting members then voted and ranked which tasks should be the focus for the EMC in the upcoming years. This ranked task list was then used to form new EMC committees. These new or re-formed committees have been developing their workplans for 2022 to find the best means to accomplish these tasks.

Suggested breakdown of tasks by EMC Subcommittee



Respectfully Submitted,

Regi Teasley, Chair