

Minutes of the EMC General Meeting July 9, 2008

Present: John Dennis, Herb Engman, Kariann Mackie-Cunningham, Michael Miles, Ashley Miller, Steve Nicholson, Amy Risen, Roger Segelken, Larry Sharpsteen, Anni Skoler, Hank Spencer, Jacie Spoon, Gary Stewart, Lucia Tyler, Marissa Weiss, Mark Whitmore
Excused: Carol Chock, Martha Ferger, Neha Khanna, Dan Lamb, Stan Marcus, Larry Sallinger, Roger Yonkin
Absent: Cliff Babson, Glynn Bebee, Kenny Christianson, Lara Kimber
Associates: Joyce Gerbasi, Peter Harriott, Dooley Kiefer
Guests: Spring Buck, Fay Gougakis, Linda Wagenet
Staff: Kathy Wilsea

Call to Order – The meeting was called to order by Chair Steve Nicholson at 7:08 p.m.

Privilege of the Floor – Fay Gougakis thanked EMC for protecting the environment. She thanked the Town of Ithaca for the stance they took in their resolution concerning the draft monitoring plan for the lake. She urged EMC members to support the resolution that separates Lake Source Cooling from the monitoring plan. To her, the key issue is use of volunteers. She feels the issue of reducing the budget for LSC monitoring is baloney. CU is saving by having LSC, and CU should contribute from that savings instead of from monitoring savings.

Changes to the Agenda – Gary Stewart proposed changing the order of items, but since other participants were expected this was not done.

Emerald Ash Borer – Mark Whitmore presented information on EAB, which he said is almost unique, and the scariest pest he has heard of. If EAB infests our forests, it will have an economic impact on agriculture, forestry, fisheries, and recreation, and an ecological impact on habitat and native species through exclusion. The three ash species make up about 25% of NYS forests. Infestation in Michigan probably dates back to 1990, although it was first detected in the Detroit area in 2002. Maryland has an area of infestation that originated from transported nursery stock. Canada cut a 30km swath to stop spread, but it did spread further because of firewood transport by humans. Ohio and Pennsylvania now have infestation. Current movement is through firewood, nursery stock, and logs for milling. Natural spread is 3km per year. Tree death can occur in two to three years.

There is no resistance right now that leads to population control. EAB kills trees of all ages. Three Chinese wasps are natural enemies, and might work in areas of low EAB populations. A Canadian scientist is working with ground nesting wasps that gather EAB. In very recent news, another wasp has been identified that might work against EAB. Fungal agents have never been used on this scale before. There is one homeowner chemical treatment that has been used with limited success, and one professionally-applied chemical that is 99.9% effective, but needs to be applied every year.

NYS is drafting an action plan now. Action plans do not address long-term management of generally infested areas. NYSDEC has regulations banning transport of all firewood. The federal government allows transport of kiln-dried wood, but states can enact stricter regulations. In terms of community action plans, Michigan's plan is a good model. Infestation would be very expensive for municipalities, and being reactive can lead to poor decisions. For homeowners, infestation is an economic hardship affecting home values and cooling costs. Unclear state and federal regulations are confusing for homeowners.

Things we can do include inventorying trees and making proactive decisions. Disposal is different in every state, and NYS has no policy yet. The trees can be shredded, or in some cases debarked and cut back 1". Delays can allow time for better research, exploration of funding, and development of chemical use but time is of the essence. Mark thinks removal of less vigorous trees would be a good proactive step. Education is very important, as it will improve decisionmaking. Property owners need early detection tools, clarification of liabilities, and knowledge about where their property lines are. The National Center for Genetic Resources Preservation in Fort Collins, Colorado has a new agreement with the US Forest Service for seed collection. Lucia Tyler warned that hedgerows along ag land contain mostly ash. Mark said, in its native areas, EAB can also infest elms. Gary Stewart

suggested using the County Public Information Officer to help get the word out. Jacie Spoon attended an EAB conference, and Finger Lakes Community News ran a full-page article of an interview with her. The CD she received on the topic was given to the public library. Kiwi Mackie-Cunningham said she did a paper when she attended the University of Michigan and concluded that it is hopeless because people don't care. Fay Gougakis agreed that education is critical, but expressed worries about introducing wasps. Mark said protocols are very strict for importing insects. Steve Nicholas had a card from DEC about identifying EAB, and we will try to obtain more.

Municipal Reports – Town of Ulysses: Lucia Tyler reported that the planning board is working on a conservation zone for Unique Natural Areas on the west side of Route 89. The town is drafting a comprehensive plan, with an important meeting scheduled for 7/10 that will gather public input.

Draft Monitoring Plan for the Southern Basin of Cayuga Lake – Recommendations and draft resolution had been provided by ERC. Amy Risen reported that ERC supported the monitoring plan, but didn't like the link for Lake Source Cooling reduction. She said the plan has many great parts. **Resolution: Supporting the Water Resources Council – Cornell University Lake Monitoring Partnership's Strategic Monitoring Plan and Supporting Continuation of DEC's Lake-Source Cooling Permit-Required In-Lake Monitoring** was moved by Amy, seconded by Larry Sharpsteen. Gary Stewart asked who serves on ERC, and if they were all here last month. Dooley Kiefer, Joyce Gerbasi, Herb Engman, Amy Risen and Larry Sharpsteen worked on this review for ERC, and all but Larry were present last month. Mike Miles asked if DEC has weighed in. Amy said this plan makes suggestions, but they are not directed to DEC. ERC doesn't want DEC to think EMC endorses reduction of DEC permitting requirements. ERC will also itemize their concerns in a letter to DEC. Larry said this resolution endorses the plan without reducing LSC monitoring. There was disagreement on the permissibility of volunteers collecting data. The renewal of LSC's SPDES permit is under review at DEC, and use of volunteers might be spelled out in the new permit. John Dennis said he is uneasy about different groups doing the sampling. He felt testing needs to be done under the same conditions – all on the same day, time of day, etc., and Hank Spencer agreed. Two amendments were moved and accepted as friendly. Resolution passed by vote of 12 yes, 0 no, 1 abstention. Chair did not vote.

Approval of Minutes -- The minutes of June 11, 2008 were accepted with one correction of a typo. Final minutes are available on the EMC webpage: www.tompkins-co.org/emc.

Chair and Staff Reports – Steve Nicholson had no report. Kathy Wilsea reported that PDEQ began discussion of term limits and enforcement of attendance last year. She will attend the PDEQ meeting on 7/10 to discuss this. Member comments were that this is a volunteer board, members have jobs that lead to conflicts, EMC doesn't have problems getting a quorum, and guests have commented on what a large group of members we have. Kathy will relay comments to PDEQ.

Member Items – Peter Harriott commented on an Ithaca Journal green power article. The author spoke of how few people use green power, but did not point out that only 1% of our power nationally is green. Peter stressed that we can't buy more than is available. Residents who subscribe to wind power development need to check up on the program. Most of the money goes to administration and advertising. Green power pricing is arbitrary, and set by brokers. We need to question what is happening. He would like to see local organizations that can do better things for us locally. He also supports zoning for individual power systems. He pointed out that the public wouldn't support a charity that used such a high percentage of income for administration. Ashley Miller said she lives near the Tompkins-Schuyler line. A Mecklenburg dairy farm is spreading sludge as fertilizer. She is issuing an alert that there are no disposal sites. Hank said we need to beware of heavy metals. Larry said this issue cropped up in Lansing about 15 years ago. He believes a County regulation was passed. The concern then was heavy metals, but newer concerns include pharmaceuticals and undigested microbes. Herb said Ithaca Area Wastewater Treatment Plan now takes such material for dewatering. Amy said breakdown of pharmaceuticals is her area of research. It takes years to detect how each pharmaceutical is broken down. Roger Segelken suggested contacts: Ellen Harris (CU Natural Resources) and Anthony Hay (CU Microbiology). A member said he has been reluctant about being in the debate on the monitoring plan, since he is a CU employee. Larry said Ithaca wouldn't be what it is today if it weren't for CU, and he feels CU's social awareness has improved 1000% since he was young. Peter said LSC is not a big moneymaker. A long payoff was anticipated when the plant was built, but it reduced freon use. Steve said, based on electricity use, CU should be saving \$100,000 per year. Amy said many hardworking scientists at CU get the feeling they are being slammed.

Adjournment – Steve Nicholson adjourned the meeting at 8:46 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Kathy Wilsea, Secretary
Tompkins County Planning Department
Approved by Council on September 10, 2008