

# TOMPKINS COUNTY WATER RESOURCES COUNCIL

**February 28, 2011  
Meeting Minutes**

**Voting Members Present (18):** Sharon Anderson, Ed Bugliosi, Liz Cameron, Carol Chock, Bill Garthwaite, Barry Goodrich, Roxy Johnston, Joan Jurkowich, Dan Karig, Darby Kiley, Rick Manning, Gregg McConnell, Jim McGarry, Frank Proto, Elaine Quaroni, Marjory Rinaldo-Lee, Damon Rodnac, Mary Shelley

**Voting Members Excused (3):** Lynn Leopold, Cindy Schulte, Craig Schutt

**Non-Voting Members Present (3):** John Andersson (Associate), Dooley Kiefer (Associate), John Mawdsley (Associate), Steve Penningroth (Associate), Tom Vawter (Associate), Lisa Wright-Mathews (Associate)

**Staff Present:** Kathy Wilsea (T C Planning Dept.)

**Guests Present:** Thea Martin, Liz Moran

Chair Frank Proto called the meeting to order at 4:16 PM.

**Agenda Review and Approval of Minutes** – There were no changes to the agenda. The draft minutes of January 24, 2011 were accepted without change.

**Update on Dredging Cayuga Inlet** – Dr. Liz Moran was present from EcoLogic, the project consultant for the City of Ithaca. She said the project is currently in the City Planning Department work program, but probably will move over to Engineering. EcoLogic began working with the City in 2008, and has progressed to the stage of kicking off the SEQR process later this week. After being established as a “public highway” in 1821, the southern tributaries of Cayuga Lake altered over the years, with periodic dredging and major flood events. The Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE) helped with the flood control project, which was completed in 1970. This flood control project built the west channel, which straightened the formerly meandering channel, and the east channel, which is for flood relief. The construction was a federal project, but a local partner must maintain the project. The local partner was originally New York State, then it was delegated to DEC. Liz showed some aerial photos, in which the formation of Cass Park could be seen in the 1968 photo, and Treman Marina could be seen in the 1985 photo.

Agency responsibilities: ACOE constructed the flood control project and provides annual inspection. DEC is charged with maintenance, including dredging for flood control to the fish ladder (DEC has never dredged). The Canal Corporation is responsible for navigational dredging of some of the same waterways and the east side of Inlet Island. The City of Ithaca must maintain marinas and provide ordinary maintenance, which has consisted of mowing and riprap.

Recent dredging: In 1980-82, dredging was performed and spoils were placed in Treman Marina (now the dog park). Even at that time, the project was limited by dewatering capacity. The marina’s master plan bars future use of the site for dewatering spoils. In 1984, excavation was performed for the outfall of the Ithaca Area Wastewater Treatment Plant, and spoils were dumped into the lake. Although environmental law concerning dumping into the lake has not changed, DEC policy now opposes it. In 1997, emergency repairs were done near Coy Glen. In 1998, dredging was performed for construction of Cornell’s Lake Source Cooling facility, with disposal upland. In 1999, ACOE performed some dredging, with spoils dewatered on barges.

Project update: Recent project studies have established sediment volume and quality, channel condition, and siting of a sediment management facility. The EcoLogic contract is funded by a Department of State Division of Coastal Resources grant. Canal Corp. did soundings to measure water depths, so the quantity of sediment was calculated. ACOE developed hydraulic models, with cross sections of the channel as designed overlaid by sounding information. This showed 50 to 60% diminished channel capacity. Core samples documented sediment quality to

be Class A (uncontaminated) overall, composed of sand, silt and clay. Stakeholder meetings were held. The different agencies have different removal goals – navigation, flood control, and keeping Cascadilla Creek navigable. DEC has not released goals for the overall project yet. The main barrier to proceeding has been finding a dewatering site. Twenty acres are needed for the current project, with ten acres available for long-term maintenance. Parameters were finding City property that is not designated as park land, within a feasible distance. Common Council and the Board of Public Works have approved Southwest Park as the best site of the possibilities reviewed. Use of 20 acres there is compatible with the other plans for Southwest Park. Project funding for implementation is possible through a Member Item if the SEQR process begins. The SEQR process will begin later this week, with DEC as Lead Agency and the City of Ithaca as Sponsor. DEC is trying to manage it electronically through a website, and the goal for completion of the SEQR process is the end of the summer. WRC, EMC, and Tompkins County Planning Department are among the interested agencies.

Comment period: Steve Penningroth asked if there is any indication of how much sediment comes from each creek. Liz said that has not been part of their research, but they see Sixmile Creek as a big contributor. The public comment period announcements are being handled by a DEC public participation specialist. Liz hasn't seen the ACOE inspection report from Fall 2010, but ACOE could issue a failure notice based on information gathered to show the need for dredging. If a failure notice is issued, the City could not claim any federal remediation for damage from a flood event. Although DEC is responsible for most of the dredging, there is no line item in their budget for it this year. It is hoped other agencies will participate in funding. Dan Karig said the ACOE engineering models need to be available to the public, as he does not consider ACOE infallible. Liz said all of the agencies are trying to work together to avoid a failure. The recent LIDAR data is in use by ACOE. Joan Jurkovich asked if there was any comparison of the expense of a capital project versus maintenance dredging. Liz said determination of a dedicated area for dewatering would help establish the possibility of routine dredging. Jim McGarry asked if the ACOE flood projection area map is from lake flooding or tributaries. Liz said it would be the 100 year flood zone falling on the landscape because the channel is not adequate. There have been no missed inspections by the partners (ACOE, DEC, City). SEQR scoping sessions will be held March 24, in the afternoon for agencies and in the evening for the public.

**Committee Reports** – Aquifer: Marjory Rinaldo-Lee reported they met last week. They chose for their major task this year making a public version of the USGS technical report on the Upper Sixmile Creek and West Branch Owego Creek Valleys study. They will also participate in review of the gas drilling GEIS. Dredging: Dan Karig questioned if a bathometric survey was done when the Inlet project was first established in the 70s, as that would have confirmed whether or not we ever had the true capacity of the plans. The committee members are prepared review the SEQR and will prepare comments for discussion at the March WRC meeting. Joan pointed out we need to comment on any omissions or we won't be able to discuss those points later. Education: Elaine Quaroni reported they did not meet. They are willing to perform outreach on dredging as support for other committees. Executive: Frank Proto reported they did not meet. Committees were reminded to review the Water Quality Strategy and develop a work plan. The WRC Annual Report was distributed, and Barry Goodrich will present it at PDEQ's April meeting. Gas Drilling: Liz Cameron said they have established a meeting schedule, based on presuming the GEIS will be released in June. They are drafting a letter requesting a 90-day comment period on the GEIS. They are also preparing questions to send to the April guest speaker from Chesapeake Energy. Carol Chock had a copy of Sunday's New York Times with a large article on water problems from gas drilling and a review of EPA studies over the years. Grants: Craig Schutt was absent, and the committee did not meet. Frank warned that the Environmental Protection Fund is being targeted again for reductions by state lawmakers. Streams: Dan Karig said they met briefly and discussed permits and projects that lack DEC coordination. He said there was discussion at the Dredging Project Advisory Committee about maintenance dredging, but it always comes back to ACOE is in charge. Joan said the County is working on stream buffers. This is not the only answer to sediment control, but a step the County can work on. Roxy said every chance she gets, she suggests dredging the City's reservoirs so they will act as catch basins in addition to their role in providing drinking water. Fortunately, this is a required component of the facility changeover. Frank said we are in the third year of a three-year capital program funding Community Science Institute stream studies, and we need more information on streams. Monitoring Partnership: Roxy said they did not meet. She is trying to reschedule a meeting with Ron Entringer of DEC. Wetlands: Darby Kiley reported they met last week. The Network is sponsoring a wetlands symposium on April 9<sup>th</sup>, and info was

emailed to members today. Changes in the DEC wetlands regulations will be checked and compared with the committee's model law. The committee is organizing their work plan for this year.

**Chair and Staff Report** – There were no reports.

**Announcements/Other Business** – Elaine said she contacted Bruce Natale about providing information on invasive species to the Ithaca Journal. She has had no response yet. Marjory said information was emailed to members today about a Cooperative Extension symposium, A Systems Approach to Energy Transitions. Sharon Anderson said she can arrange van rides to that symposium for interested members. Carol stressed the need for cooperation on dredging, saying it doesn't matter what the causes were, we need to work on future cooperation. Frank concurred, saying we need the maps and reports that are being used in decision-making so we can learn and comment.

**Adjournment** -- The meeting was adjourned at 5:35 PM.

Respectfully submitted,  
Kathy Wilsea, Planning Department Secretary  
Adopted by the Council on March 21, 2011.