

# TOMPKINS COUNTY WATER RESOURCES COUNCIL

**May 18, 2009  
Meeting Minutes**

**Voting Members Present (15):** Sharon Anderson, Will Burbank, Ed Bugliosi, Liz Cameron, Barry Goodrich, Roxy Johnston, Joan Jurkowich, Darby Kiley, Gregg McConnell, Frank Proto, Elaine Quaroni, Cindy Schulte, Craig Schutt, Bud Shattuck, Mary Shelley

**Voting Members Excused (2):** Donna Eschenbrenner, Roger Yonkin

**Voting Members Absent (3):** Dan Karig, Rick Manning, Linda Wagenet

**Non-Voting Members Present (5):** John Andersson (Associate), Dooley Kiefer (Associate), John Mawdsley (Associate), Todd Miller (Ex-Officio), Marjory Rinaldo-Lee (Associate)

**Staff Present (1):** Kathy Wilsea (T C Planning Dept.)

**Guests Present (2):** Don Barber, Leslie Schill

**Public Hearing on Tompkins County SPDES Permit-** The public hearing was called to order at 4:24 PM by WRC Chairman, Frank Proto. Leslie Schill, Senior Planner at the Tompkins County Planning Department, provided background about the new permit, particularly emphasizing that this permit no longer resembles the first five-year SPDES (State Pollution Discharge elimination System) permit. Highlights included strong continuing public outreach, much of which was in conjunction with the Stormwater Coalition; stormwater toolkits were developed by TC Soil & Water Conservation District during the permit period and were distributed to all MS4 (Municipal Separate Storm Sewer Systems) municipalities; countywide outfall mapping was completed and shared with MS4 communities, as well; and the Health Department dealt with almost all of reported septic failures. Dooley Kiefer provided comments about her overall concern regarding the new permit format which is devoid of detail, granting better public access to the SPDES application by locating a copy at the Tompkins County Library, clarifying the outfall screening process and outcomes presented, street sweeping, and general question about the final two pages of the application (Additional Watershed Improvement BMPs). Leslie responded to that outfall screening information is pending final confirmation from Ryan Sherry of Tompkins County Public Works. Public Works just got the sweeper truck and has had limited use of it during the 2008-9 SPDES permit year ending on March 9, 2009. The last two pages of the form do not apply to Tompkins County. The Public Hearing was adjourned at 4:34 PM and the meeting of the Water Resources Council was called to order. Pending any other comments, Frank Proto asked if the WRC was ready to approve the permit application. Cindy Schulte moved to approve, seconded by Barry Goodrich and passed by unanimous voice vote. Any additional comments are due Tuesday, 5/26 and the permit application must be submitted to DEC 6/1.

**Agenda Review and Approval of Minutes** – Frank Proto specified some items that will be in the Chair’s Report: Letter to Cayuga Heights regarding treatment of fracking flowback at the wastewater treatment plant, funding from New York State for MS4 municipalities, and the new County Legislature resolution to DEC on the dGEIS for gas exploration. The draft minutes of April 20, 2009 were moved by Ed Bugliosi, seconded by Roxy Johnston and passed without change by voice vote.

**Geohydrology and Water Quality of the Valley-Fill Aquifer System in the Upper Sixmile Creek and West Branch Owego Creek Valleys in the Town of Caroline** – Todd Miller, of US Geological Survey, explained there are 17 aquifer reaches in Tompkins County and this was the first of them to be studied. Part of Sixmile is unconfined, and part is confined. The upper Sixmile study area has different characteristics from the lower portion. Todd showed maps of the study area and explained the topography, which is a result of glaciation 24,000 years ago. Most of the study is based on water well data available from DEC from their well data reporting requirements established in 2000.

The unconfined aquifer in the eastern portion of the study area means shallow wells yield adequate water supplies, so data for deeper layers are not available. The western portion is confined and deeper wells are needed to reach adequate water supply. Every county in New York has two Climate Response Network Wells. One Tompkins County CRNW is in this aquifer. In addition to precipitation records, groundwater levels are linked to growing season, as plant absorption prevents (percolation?) precipitation from trickling through the ground in June, July & August. Information for calculation of the depth of bedrock is also gathered by seismic refraction surveys.

In seeking information on recharge areas, USGS put a test well by the Caroline School. In addition to the stream gage at Bethel Grove, USGS installed one in Brooktondale. Information from the gages allows calculation of groundwater and storm runoff percentages. SWCD helped gather sediment samples during storm events. In 1993, the aquifer was punctured at Buffalo Road bridge, and many wells went dry. Todd discussed the risk of reaching confined units.

Both wells at Caroline School have salt, with a higher presence in the deeper well. This has been determined to be a natural salt discharge. Salt in the area was known, and a historic marker was in place for Deer Licks natural salt discharge. Presence of chlorofluorocarbons helps date wells, as it is known when the refrigerants were banned. Newer wells also can show higher results for tritium.

Aquifer studies are ongoing in Danby and Dryden. They are funded in part by USGS, part by a capital program of Tompkins County, and part by the municipality (can apply for grants). Artesian well water is still available to the public in front of the Caroline Town Hall. Aquifer study data is available to gas drillers.

**Committee Reports – Monitoring Plan:** Roxy Johnston said the grant application was denied, but they can reapply next year. Frank said Cornell staff had a meeting on the Plan, which Darby Kiley attended for WRC. The Plan was well received. **Aquifer:** Todd Miller reported they met and discussed use of text in the table for posting data on the web. **Cayuga Lake Recreation:** Committee members reported the trees were planted by Wegmans parking lot. **Dredging:** Roxy reported she received an email today on the project schedule. They hope to have final draft of possible dewatering locations in June. **Education:** Elaine Quaroni is the only committee member. Roxy Johnston arranged information for Water Week. Efforts continue to be undertaken by other committees as they develop material that should be presented to the public. Joan Jurkovich encouraged WRC members to check the task lists in the Water Quality Strategy, as members may be willing to team up and address one task at a time. **Executive:** Frank reported they did email review of the letter to Cayuga Heights on treating gas drilling water. Copies of the final draft were distributed. **Gas Drilling:** Liz Cameron said although Cayuga Heights is not taking the gas drilling water now, it is going elsewhere so they are trying to learn more about the process. They will draft a letter to DEC to inquire, and provide a copy to IO. They are also looking at well testing parameters and trying to get information on interbasin transfer bans. If possible, a guest speaker on Great Lakes Basin requirements will be arranged. Frank said PDEQ passed a resolution, which will go to the County Legislature tomorrow, on further hopes for the dSGEIS. Community Science Institute has prepared a booklet, “Documenting Water Contamination from Gas Wells in NY State” and CSI is trying to get it posted to their website, but having technical difficulties right now. Another goal of the resolution is to get a 60-day public comment period and develop a template letter that others can send to municipal officials in order for them to provide comment. **Grants:** Craig Scutt said SWCD received notice from Barbara Lifton that she has obtained \$15,000 in member item funds for Lidar expenses. USGS will continue to operate the Salmon Creek gaging station until the end of the year. SWCD and USGS will seek future funding.

**Chair Report** – The letter to Cayuga Heights will go out tomorrow unless suggestions for further changes are made. New York State has not been reimbursing municipalities for MS4 expenses, and Frank suggested WRC develop a sample procedure for this. He wondered if WRC wants to endorse the SWCD draft letter, and discussion on that will be on the June agenda. Cindy Schulte said Newfield has created a budget line for MS4 implementation so expenses can be tracked, but is the only municipality to do so. Other municipalities are absorbing MS4 work into their other workload.

**Staff Report** – Kathy Wilsea reminded members that WRC usually does not meet in August. Darby Kiley moved to cancel the August meeting, seconded by Cindy Schulte. Joan Jurkovich pointed out the DEC dSGEIS on gas drilling may be out then, and action passed with acknowledgement that the August meeting might be necessary in order to address that topic.

**Adjournment** -- The meeting was adjourned at 6:06 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathy Wilsea, Planning Department Secretary  
Adopted by the Council on June 15, 2009.