

TOMPKINS COUNTY WATER RESOURCES COUNCIL

**June 15, 2009
Meeting Minutes**

Voting Members Present (18): Sharon Anderson, Will Burbank, Ed Bugliosi, Liz Cameron, Donna Eschenbrenner, Barry Goodrich, Roxy Johnston, Dan Karig, Darby Kiley, Gregg McConnell, Frank Proto, Elaine Quaroni, Cindy Schulte, Craig Schutt, Bud Shattuck, Mary Shelley, Linda Wagenet, Roger Yonkin

Voting Members Excused (1): Joan Jurkowich

Voting Members Absent (1): Rick Manning

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

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

Guests Present (7): Brian Eden, Paul Jennette, Dan Ramer, Mary Russell, Lynn Smith, Gary Stewart, Joel Zumoff

Chairman Frank Proto called the meeting to order at 4:19 PM.

Agenda Review and Approval of Minutes – There were no changes to the agenda. The draft minutes of May 18, 2009 were moved by Dan Karig, seconded by Bud Shattuck and accepted without change.

The Cornell College of Veterinary Medicine Waste Management Facility – Paul Jennette, Biosafety Engineer for the CCVM Biosafety Program, was present. Paul reviewed the history that led to the recommendation for the alkaline hydrolysis facility currently under construction. When Cornell first wanted to change from their current disposal methods of incineration and shipping medical waste to a certified landfill in Buffalo, there was community concern based on the height of the stack, emissions (especially dioxin), and environmental impacts. In 1996, Cornell halted plans and began a planning process that included public participation. The community volunteers and Cornell staff formed CCWMAC and provided a report on recommendations in 1998. This recommendation was for alkaline hydrolysis of carcasses and steam sterilization for medical waste and bedding. The engineering evaluation, environmental impact statement series, permit processing, and public input phases lasted through 2004. The design phase took place in 2005, and has been followed by the construction, with some delays due to availability of state funds.

Alkaline hydrolysis (AH) is not an incineration process. It has reduced energy use and reduced emissions. There are other AH facilities at medical schools, veterinary schools, and federal sites (NIH and USDA). AH is like a big pressure cooker, and dissolves waste. Solids go to a sanitary landfill, and liquids go to a wastewater treatment facility where they are treated by anaerobic digestion, yielding energy recovery. There is no chance of automatic discharge of the treated liquids into waterbodies. Some of the existing AH facilities discharge liquid waste to sanitary sewer systems, but this process is a net energy consumer.

Locally, the Ithaca Area Wastewater Treatment Facility (IAWWTF) is considering taking the liquid waste for anaerobic treatment. Paul characterized IAWWTF as very advanced and well operated. The liquid waste is expected to be 1,000 to 2,000 gallons per day, which would be a small percentage of the 6,000,000 to 7,000,000 gallons of wastewater IAWWTF treats per day. Waste can also be trucked to other authorized facilities for treatment.

Prions, phenol and phosphorus are issues. Prions are rogue proteins, which are not part of the research work at Cornell. However, the diagnostic center might have to process index carcasses with prions in its role with the NYS Public Health. According to studies cited, the risk is extremely small for prions being a health issue following AH. Phenol is a preservative. In a challenged system test, a load that was 100% preserved with phenol (it is anticipated that 1% of a normal load would be phenol-preserved carcasses) was treated in an AH method. A chemical challenge test was also conducted. These loads were not representative of anticipated use. The work on the EIS estimated a 2% increase in IAWWTF's phosphorus load by processing liquid waste from the AH method.

Validation testing will be conducted in July for confirmation of pathogen inactivation. Ongoing periodic challenge testing and parameter monitoring would be conducted. Chemical characterization was examined in the EIS. IAWWTF is conducting a headworks analysis as part of its consideration of taking the liquid waste for anaerobic treatment. The manufacturer has conducted extensive testing, including those for pharmaceuticals destruction. Additional parameters are being examined for the Watertown

WWTF, which can also conduct anaerobic treatment. If validation test results meet parameters, the facility will go on line in September.

In the comment period, Jose Lozano said that a large number of pharmaceuticals tested have been destroyed. Formaldehyde is turned to bakelite. Paul said DEC permits are in place, conditional on validation tests. Manufacturer tests show effective breakdown of hormones, antibiotics, and prions. Paul is willing to visit WRC again after the facility is online.

Results of Wastewater Improvement Projects on Cayuga Lake – Jose Lozano spoke of the IAWWTF tertiary treatment upgrade Before & After Impact study. Evidence that effluent phosphorus was reduced from 42.4 ug/L to 17.5 ug/L was the only thing needed to satisfy the DEC operating permit. But to secure potential funding the IAWWTF adopted a watershed-based approach and proved a reduction from 40 ug/L to 24 ug/L in Cayuga Lake. There are 45 sampling sites, including the outfall, a midlake site, Fall Creek, and Cayuga Inlet. He spoke of determining appropriate sample size (N) and fulfilling high accuracy and statistical confidence (for effluent sampling, the required sample size to detect a 58.7% difference at $2\alpha = 0.05$, with a 95% probability was $N = 28$, and for lake sampling the required sample size to detect a 40% difference at $2\alpha = 0.05$, with a 95% probability was $N = 60$). Through expanded sampling, he was able to develop more precise data and maps. Jose supports Lake Source Cooling, LSC, but feels the monitoring sample size is inadequate. He specifically asked that the WRC should encourage the continuation of a LSC monitoring program, but with higher statistical power, and not based on detecting only a 30% change in total phosphorus, chlorophyll a and turbidity, but to change the sampling design with expectation of detecting a 5% to 15% change, which is a more realistic estimate of the potential LSC impact.

Dan Karig questioned whether this model would really work, given the multitude of variables in field work. Roxy Johnston responded that every testing entity would need to expand sampling. Cayuga Lake is in good shape and getting better. Other states have different water body rankings, and Cayuga is “good” in all of those. Todd Miller commented that it seems counterintuitive to expand sampling to seek different results. Frank asked the Monitoring Plan Committee to discuss this with Jose, have an opportunity to ask questions, and bring comments back to the full council.

Committee Reports – WRC/CU Monitoring Plan: Handouts were available of the May DEC letter to Cornell and the alternate BACI (Ellner/Hairston) submitted to DEC. Roxy Johnston said the committee was disappointed in the letter from DEC, which asked for information that had already been provided and highlighted anecdotal information while ignoring data. They are frustrated that DEC ignored the information provided and the monitoring plan. They are considering writing a letter to DEC to respond specifically to how the monitoring plan addresses the needs of the lake. Linda Wagenet also voiced disappointment, stating DEC kept saying they would only base their response on science. She has never seen so much anecdotal information in a scientific report, and feels it puts the whole report in question. Dooley Kiefer felt DEC was being responsive and extremely cautious, given the great natural variations in weather. Frank Proto concurred that scientific data was overlooked. He suggested the committee draft a letter to DEC and bring to the full council, but cautioned to make clear it is from the committee or WRC. Roxy said Steve Penningroth is frustrated because DEC will only accept data collected by DEC. Roxy went on to say a second article, on geology, is being drafted for publication in the Ithaca Journal. John Halfman reported at the last committee meeting on the “State of the Finger Lakes”, and his data can be used to do some comparison of Cayuga and Seneca lakes. **Wetlands:** Darby Kiley reported they are continuing to work on drafting a model ordinance. **Aquifer:** Frank said PDEQ members had questions about upcoming studies, and wondered how the municipalities are contacted. Todd Miller said USGS and TC Planning will do another round of outreach. Todd mentioned that DEC is gathering some aquifer data in the Pony Hollow area, as it relates to natural gas drilling. Cindy said the Town of Newfield is interested in participating, but has no matching funds. Bud Shattuck said the Town of Lansing has no plans to proceed. **Cayuga Lake Recreation:** Dan Karig said a Canal Corporation representative is scheduled to visit next week on the Inlet signage. **Education:** Frank Proto said chairs of other committees should interact with Elaine Quaroni on their committee goals as they need educational material, and directed Kathy Wilsea to add all committee chairs to the membership list for the Education Committee. **Gas Drilling:** Liz Cameron said they are drafting water well testing parameters. There is a public meeting tonight, organized by the Town of Danby, and a meeting for municipal officials on Saturday in Morrisville. She is hearing the draft Supplemental General EIS won't be out in August. Frank Proto said he received a letter from Senator George Winner on the expected delay, saying the date is uncertain. Assemblywoman Barbara Lifton has asked for an extension of the comment period and provided copies of other letters to Pete Grannis at DEC. **Grants:** Craig Schutt said the letter writing campaign and phone calls are having an impact on the ability of agencies to receive faster payments of grant monies. The Director of NYS Soil & Water Conservation Committee has contacted Craig and said plans are being developed for a budget, with WQIP reimbursements a high priority. **Nominating/Membership:** Frank announced that Dooley Kiefer is chairing a special committee of the County Legislature on Rules. They will discuss advisory boards.

Staff Report – Kathy Wilsea mentioned that a sheet was being circulated seeking more ideas for member recruiting contacts.

Adjournment -- The meeting was adjourned at 5:59 PM.

Respectfully submitted,
Kathy Wilsea, Planning Department Secretary
Adopted by the Council on July 20, 2009.