

Tompkins County
Water Resources Council

2007 ANNUAL REPORT



Frank P. Proto, Chair
Roxy Johnston, First Vice Chair
R. Barry Goodrich, Second Vice Chair

Tompkins County Planning Department
121 East Court Street
Ithaca, New York 14850
607-274-5560

<http://www.tompkins-co.org/planning/committees.html>

2007 Membership Roster

Appointed WRC Members

Terms that expired end of 2007:

County Legislature	Jim Dennis
Municipal Government	Bud Shattuck (Town of Lansing)
Recreation	Dan Karig
At-Large	Darby Kiley
Economic Development	(vacant)
Water Purveyor	Roxy Johnston
Soil & Water Conservation District	Craig Schutt

Terms that will expire end of 2008:

County Health	John Andersson (through April), Liz Cameron (since June)
Agriculture	Dan Konowalow
At-Large	Paul Tunison
At-Large	Nick Schipanski
Municipal Government	Cathy Valentino (Town of Ithaca)
Environmental Management Council	Roger Yonkin
Cornell Cooperative Extension	Tania Schusler

Terms that will expire end of 2009:

At-Large	Mary Shelley
Municipal Government	Ed Bugliosi (Town of Dryden)
Tompkins County Planning Dept.	Kate Hackett (through July)
Watershed Organizations	Barry Goodrich
Business & Industry	(vacant)
Environment	Ted Hullar (through August)
At-Large	Frank Proto

Ex-Officio Members

USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service	Dan Dostie (through September)
US Geological Survey	Todd Miller

Associate Members

Liz Cameron (through May)
Dooley Kiefer
Steve Penningroth
Linda Wagenet
John Andersson (since May)

INTRODUCTION TO THE WATER RESOURCES COUNCIL

The Tompkins County Water Resources Council (WRC) advises the Tompkins County Legislature on matters related to water resources management and planning, and is charged with identifying problems, proposing priorities, and promoting the coordination of activities in the management and protection of the County’s water resources. The WRC provides a public forum for local communities and stakeholder groups to address and discuss their water resources concerns, and it is the intent of the group to coordinate the water resources-related efforts of local governments, public and private institutions, and agencies and organizations throughout the County.

The WRC also serves as the County’s water quality coordinating committee, responsible for the development of the Tompkins County Water Quality Strategy (WQS), which is intended to help prioritize local water resources issues and concerns and identify strategies to address these concerns. The strategies are incorporated into the WRC’s bi-annual workplan, which is developed in conformity with the WQS, to help guide the activities of the WRC that are achieved through a number of standing and special committees. WRC membership consists of 21 voting members, who are appointed by the County Legislature, representing various water-related interests and six non-voting members from relevant Federal and State agencies. We also welcome Associate Members, who have committee-level voting rights.

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COUNCIL MEETINGS AND COLLABORATION

Water Resources Council meetings frequently include presentations by guests. The following presentations occurred in 2007.

February -- City of Ithaca Drinking Water Supply – Scott Gibson, a staff member for the City of Ithaca, reported that the City needs to make a decision about a new water supply system, and described the options.

March -- The Greening of Newman Golf Course: A Study on the Use of Effluent Wastewater for Irrigation – Rick Manning and Marty Petrovic provided information on the study and a planned grant application for implementation.

April -- Cancelled due to a snow storm!

May -- Tributary Modeling for the Cayuga Lake Watershed – Doug Haith, of Cornell University, gave a presentation on his work.

June -- Roadside Ditching Practices – Rebecca Schneider gave a PowerPoint presentation on her work.

July -- Update on WRC/Cornell University Cayuga Lake Monitoring Partnership Efforts – WRC member Roxy Johnston reported on committee work.

September -- Countywide Approach to Water Quality Monitoring – WRC Associate Member Steve Penningroth gave a presentation on the functions of the Community Science Institute.

October -- Optimal Lot Size for Onsite Wastewater Treatment Systems: Review of a Report from Dutchess County – Lyle Raymond spoke on this report. (The WRC Aquifer Committee also studied the report and some of the methodology -- see Committees.)

November -- Research Programs at the Finger Lakes Institute – Dr. Bin Zhu, Research Scientist for FLI, presented a PowerPoint slide show and spoke about the mission and programs of FLI.

December -- Stone Gardens: Report on the Barrille Streambank Restoration Project – WRC member Barry Goodrich provided an outline of the documentary and a handout showing the project partners, then the DVD was shown.

Minutes from the monthly meetings of the WRC are posted on the Tompkins County Planning Department website at: <http://www.tompkins-co.org/planning/committees.html>.

To foster coordination and collaboration in the management of local water resources, WRC members serve as liaisons between the WRC and other groups, including the Finger Lakes-Lake Ontario Watershed Protection Alliance, Cayuga Lake Watershed Intermunicipal Organization and its Technical Advisory Committee, the Upper Susquehanna Coalition, Stormwater Coalition of Tompkins County, Tompkins County Agriculture and Farmland Protection Board, and Tompkins County Environmental Management Council. Informal relationships also exist between the WRC and other organizations and agencies such as the Fall Creek and Six Mile Creek volunteer monitoring groups, the Cayuga Lake Watershed Network, and the Town of Caroline Watersheds Committee.

COMMITTEE ACTIVITIES

Aquifer Committee

Members: John Andersson, Liz Cameron, Kate Hackett, Todd Miller (Chair), Lyle Raymond

The Aquifer Committee discussed the results of a groundwater resource report done by The Chazen Companies for Dutchess County. The report was commissioned by the Dutchess County Water & Wastewater Authority to better understand county-wide aquifer recharge rates and to give municipalities guidance in setting sustainable development densities specifically related to the use of individual wells and conventional individual septic systems based upon a better understanding of aquifer recharge. The results of the study would be extremely valuable also to community decisionmakers and particularly to municipal governing boards in Tompkins County and charged with setting long-range sustainable development goals. Aquifer recharge supports groundwater supplies critical to various uses, including reliability of public water system and individual domestic wells, the adequate dilution of wastewater discharges from septic systems, and aquifer base-flow contributions to streams. As such, the aquifer recharge rates have many applications.

Highlights from the Dutchess County report include:

1. Current Health Department separation distances required between wells and septic systems are designed to ensure bacteria and viral die-off between wells and septic systems. But these measures were never intended to address or provide the dilution necessary to ensure that more persistent wastewater constituents such as nitrate remain below drinking water standards.

2. The intent of the report was to ensure that residents using individual wells and septic systems could be assured potable water even as surrounding permitted lots reach full build-out.
3. The ranges of recommended average minimum parcel sizes relate to the differing aquifer recharge rates identified across the County. The smallest average parcel sizes can be sustained where precipitation and aquifer recharge rates are highest. Larger average parcel sizes are necessary where precipitation and aquifer recharge rates are lowest.

The Aquifer Committee began to explore the advantages and disadvantages between the results of Dutchess County study and the Department of Health setback guidelines for wells and septic systems. Also, the committee made some rough evaluations for one hydrologic setting (sand and gravel scenario) to determine whether there was a conflict between the two approaches - there wasn't for this setting.

Cayuga Lake Recreation

Members: Liz Cameron, Jim Dennis, Dan Karig (Chair), Dooley Kiefer, Mary Shelley, Lucia Tyler, Cathy Valentino

In the spring of 2007 the Cayuga Lake Recreation Committee updated both the Paddling and Rowing brochure and the Power Craft brochure and had them reprinted. Of the 1000 copies of each that were printed almost half have already been distributed.

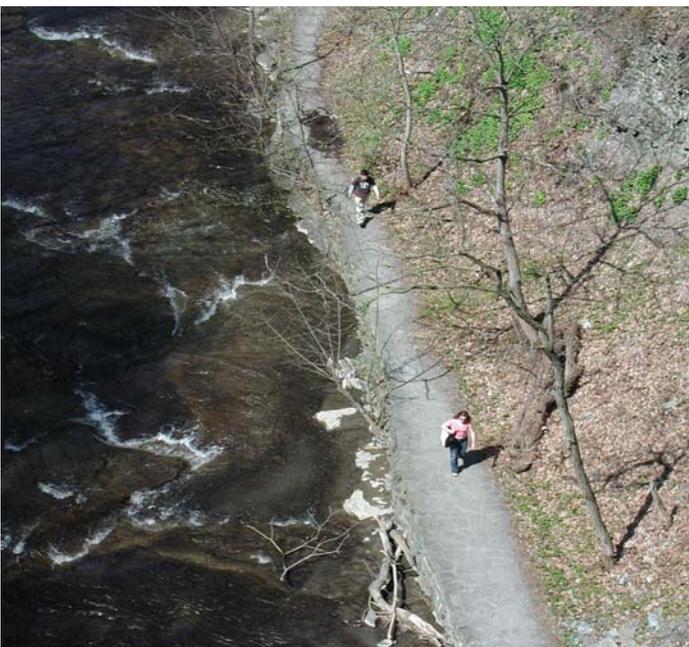


Because of the common exceedence of the 5 mph speed limit in the Cayuga Inlet, due in part to a lack of signage there, the Committee undertook to have speed limit signs installed. This entailed making a proposal for signs to the NYS Canal Corporation and then helping coordinate interaction between them and the City of Ithaca Department of Public Works. Four signs at strategic locations (on land, not in the water) around the Inlet were agreed upon, and these are scheduled to be installed before the 2008 boating season.

There are few public locations at which the public can launch cartop boats (primarily canoes and kayaks) within the Inlet and none along the east side. Based on the stated desire in the "Cayuga Lake Waterfront Plan" for such launch sites, the Committee proposed the upgrading of an informal site at the Farmers' Market. Research into canoe/kayak launch sites led to a basic design proposal that was submitted to and discussed with the City of Ithaca Public Works Department. Discussion is ongoing, but the chances of constructing this facility appear very promising.

The Committee has been trying to initiate an annual cleanup of the shoreline along the Inlet, whereby the Inlet stakeholders would continue to oversee this effort after the Committee initiated it. One problem had been the identification of stakeholders but recently a group of Inlet-related businesses have formed such a group and they are very receptive to the idea of an Inlet cleanup. Plans are underway for the first such event.

Another topic of discussion was whether to encourage Cayuga Lake motor boaters to switch from 2 cy-



cle to more efficient fuel injection or 4 stroke engines, and also to junk their old motors rather than resell them.

Some progress has been made concerning the carrying capacity of boats at the southern End of Cayuga Lake and the Inlet. Contact was made with the Office of Parks, Recreation & Historic Preservation (OPRHP) Planning Bureau, who pointed us to a study done 15 years ago of the carrying capacity for the Lake Champlain Basin. Important information was gained for that study via aerial photography that, to be useful, must be done in weather when people will be out using the water! We also looked at the 2003 SCORP (Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan, for the period 2003–2007), and noted it contains the results of a carrying capacity analysis (for only boats) in the lower Hudson River.

The Committee became aware of the awarding of a grant to the City of Ithaca for the planning and design of a dredging project in the Inlet. In response we proposed to the WRC that an ad hoc committee be formed to work with the City and the contractor to monitor the project. This proposal was accepted and such a committee was formed, which included several members of the Recreation Committee.

Dredging Committee

Members: Liz Cameron, Roxy Johnston, Dan Karig (Chair), Dooley Kiefer, Nick Schipanski, Craig Schutt, Mary Shelley

In 2007 the City of Ithaca received a grant to support the Planning and Design phase of a project to dredge the Cayuga Inlet. Because of its interest in this project, the WRC created an ad hoc committee to obtain information about the project and its potential impacts to the lake. The committee would also analyze components of the proposal and interact with the City and the chosen contractor to minimize any negative impacts.

A partnership of EcoLogic, LLC, and Environmental Resources Management (ERM) was chosen as the contractor for the planning and design, but finalization of the contract is still incomplete. The dredging ad hoc committee has been formed, but cannot begin substantive work until the contractor begins work, probably in May, 2008. Members of the committee informally met with principals of Ecologic and ERM in May, 2007 to discuss matters of potential concern at the earliest possible stage of the project. Future activity of the committee will be guided by another meeting, in some form, with the contractors when their work begins.

Education

Members: Jim Dennis, Roxy Johnston, Tania Schusler (Chair), Paul Tunison

The WRC Education Committee collaborated with the Tompkins County Health Department to organize our local celebration of National Drinking Water Week in early May. Twenty-seven third graders and nine teachers and parents from the Montessori School of Ithaca participated in hands-on activities at Environmental Appreciation Days held at 4-H Acres. The students learned about drinking water sources and treatment, using Global Positioning Systems and Geographic Information Systems for stormwater management, watersheds and non-point source pollution, and aquatic critters as indicators of water quality. Over 300 members of the public viewed exhibits, discussed watershed issues, and voted for their favorite municipal drinking water in the Tompkins County Drinking Water Taste Test at the Ithaca Farmers Market. The Education Committee also created new poster displays about the WRC and the proposed strategic monitoring plan for the south basin of Cayuga Lake, and we participated in the Cayuga Lake Watershed Network's Lake Fest celebration held at Cass Park.

Executive

Members: Frank Proto (Chair), Roxy Johnston (First Vice Chair), Barry Goodrich (Second Vice Chair), Cathy Valentino

WRC Bylaws allow three officers and one or two other voting members to serve on the Executive Committee. While the members actively participate as individuals on various other committees, the primary Executive Committee activities for 2007 included work with the WRC/CU Partnership to develop a strategic monitoring plan for the south basin of Cayuga Lake, and addressing the entire issue of staff support to the Council. A review of the Health Department's proposed Water Well Program and the WRC 2008 Work Plan will be early activities of the Committee for 2008.

Grants

Members: Ed Bugliosi, Kate Hackett, Roxy Johnston, Darby Kiley, Craig Schutt (Chair), Linda Wagenet

The Grants Committee meets as necessary to consider water quality-related grant opportunities. One of the primary duties of the committee is to identify water quality funding opportunities for which the WRC and other entities within the county are eligible



and then assist those entities with the application process. Such assistance varies from helping to write the grant applications to providing support for submission of the applications (via support letters or other appropriate means).

The major duty of the Grants Committee in 2007 was to develop and propose to the WRC a plan and budget for the County's annual FL-LOWPA (Finger Lakes – Lake Ontario Watershed Protection Alliance) appropriation from the state (2008 appropriation will be \$85,000, an increase from \$70,000 in 2007). Once the committee meets and drafts a plan for the use of these funds, the WRC votes on that proposal. Many times the Grants committee develops a FL-LOWPA Special Projects proposal. This is a separate fund that FL-LOWPA maintains for competitive small grants proposals. Tompkins County has been very good at garnering some of these funds over the past few years. Due to the fact that there are currently two Special Projects contracts not yet completed, it was decided not to apply for another in 2007.

Other grant opportunities and collaborations were explored in 2007 but none of these were pursued for various reasons, most of all because of either timing or the fact that they did not fit well into the current priorities or work plan.

The EPA Wetlands grant that is being administered by the Soil and Water Conservation District on behalf of the WRC will be completed in 2008. Once that grant is complete, there will be opportunities to determine further priorities for the Wetlands Committee and possible funding needs. Funding that the Grants Committee can identify and prepare applications for those if requested to do so.

Monitoring Plan

*WRC Members: Liz Cameron, Kate Hackett, Roxy Johnston (Chair), Joan Jurkowich, Dan Karig, Dooley Kiefer, Darby Kiley, Linda Wagenet
Cornell Partners: Jim Adams, Bert Bland, Todd Cowen, Cheryl Horney, Cliff Kraft, Pat McNally, Seth Schweitzer, Gary Stewart, Ed Wilson*

The Monitoring Plan Committee coordinated a series of meetings in the Spring of 2007 to solicit input on a draft strategic monitoring plan for the south basin of Cayuga Lake. Participants represented four stakeholder groups: scientists, resource managers, policy makers, and the public. A special meeting was held at the DEC offices in Albany to discuss monitoring needs. The Committee also participated in a forum facilitated by Cayuga Lake Watershed Intermunicipal Organization about multiple monitoring efforts occurring in the southern portion of the Cayuga Lake watershed.

In the fall of 2007, the committee launched a series of articles in the Ithaca Journal starting with our committee efforts and expanding to a broad set of water-related topics. These articles will be ongoing through 2008. The committee finished the year working on changes to the draft strategic plan and a joint statement of commitment. These two documents will be presented to the full WRC and Cornell officials in the Spring of 2008. The Committee and Cornell partners will participate in discussions with DEC in 2008 regarding meeting monitoring needs in the south basin of Cayuga Lake.

Nominating/Membership

Members: Dooley Kiefer, Craig Schutt (Chair), Cathy Valentino

The following appointments expired in 2007: Recreation, At-Large (1), Economic Development, Water Purveyor, Soil and Water Conservation District and Municipal Government. The Planning Department seat was also vacated due to Kate Hackett's departure from Tompkins County, and the Environment seat was vacated by Ted Hullar's moving as well. John Andersson's retirement from the Health Department and Liz Cameron's appointment to his position created the need to have the two of them switch WRC seats. Liz is now fills the Health Department seat and John asked to be named to an associate member seat, a seat Liz had previously held. Similarly Cathy Valentino's Municipal Government seat was vacated by her retirement and she requested associate member status. Dan Dostie, NRCS, also left the area leaving the USDA Natural



Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) ex-officio seat vacant. Dan's replacement is expected to be on the job in early 2008. Following WRC policy, solicitation of applicants began on schedule and the process proceeded smoothly to where recommendations by the Nominating Committee were presented to the full WRC in November for approval. The Nominating Committee also made additional recommendations at that time to change two seats that have been difficult to fill to other designations. The recommendations were as follows; to change the Business and Industry and Economic Development seats to another Environmental seat and to a Planning seat (understanding that this would not be filled by a County Planning Department staff person, but would likely be filled by someone from one of the various municipalities working in some aspect of planning). After considerable discussion by the WRC it was decided to take no action at that time on this recommendation and instead to try to fill the seats as they exist. If those efforts are unsuccessful, further discussions about their future and status will take place in 2008.

The WRC recommended these appointments be made by the County Legislature:

Planning Department (2 year): Joan Jurkowich
Municipal Government: Bud Shattuck
Municipal Government (1 year): Cindy Schulte
Environment (2 year): Linda Wagenet
County Health (1 year): Liz Cameron
Soil and Water Conservation District : Craig Schutt
At Large: Darby Kiley
Recreation: Dan Karig
Water Purveyor: Roxy Johnston
Economic Development: Vacant
Business & Industry: Vacant

Associate membership granted to: John Andersson, Cathy Valentino, and Susan Riha

Water Quality

Members: John Andersson, Roxy Johnston, Steve Penningroth, Nick Schipanski, Craig Schutt, Paul Tunison (Chair)

At the beginning of the year, the Committee continued working with the project of incorporating the water quality data from the local stream monitoring groups into a GIS-based website. Given uncertainties regarding where the website would be hosted and who would be responsible for maintaining the site, and that the professor the Committee was working with left the area, the Committee abandoned the project. At the same time, Steve Penningroth and his colleagues at the Community Science Institute were developing their own website for incorporating the data. The Committee then began focusing on sharing the Community Science Institute's website for adding water quality data from sources other than the Institute. The Committee learned that the Cayuga Lake Watershed Network was also investigating developing a website for water quality data. In 2008, the Committee intends to explore a joint venture with the Watershed Network.

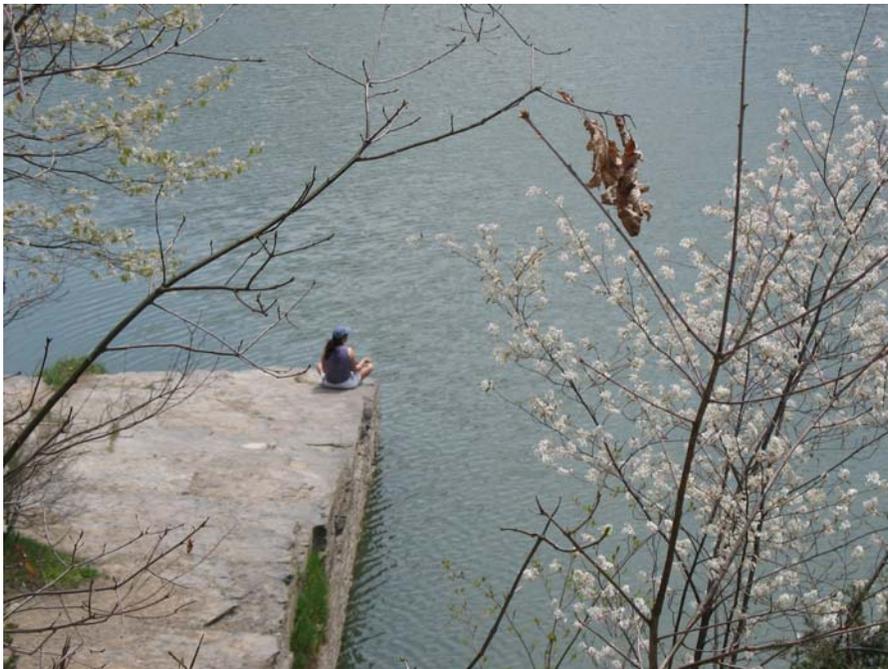
Wetlands Committee

Members: Barry Goodrich, Dan Karig, Dooley Kiefer, Darby Kiley, Nick Schipanski (Chair), Tania Schusler, Craig Schutt, Lucia Tyler, Roger Yonkin

In 2007, the wetland committee investigated (1) how recent changes in federal wetland regulations might

reduce the protections afforded wetland resources in the County, and (2) what local governments can do to address identified limitations to wetland protection. A wetland survey conducted in the summer of 2007 through the towns of Dryden and Lansing indicated that a significant amount of wetland area surveyed (up to 16%) lacked regulation under federal or state laws. These wetlands are vulnerable to development and land disturbance due to a "gap" in federal and state wetland laws. An investigation of local laws found that no municipalities in the County have any wetland law or regulation that will fill this "gap", although at least one is considering riparian corridor protection. The committee identified both regulatory and non-regulatory tools that local governments can use to fill the regulatory gap for vulnerable wetlands as well as enhance protections for all wetlands generally. For example, it is still possible to amend recently adopted stormwater regulations to include language protective of wetlands and streams via buffers. Finally, a review of wetland science and regulation literature indicated a need for comprehensive, watershed-scale planning to best protect wetlands and other water resources.

In 2008, the committee will focus on proposing and supporting local ordinances, regulations, and non-regulatory programs that fill the identified regulatory gap and improve protection of all wetlands generally; and developing a framework and assessment procedure for prioritizing wetlands for protection.



You're Invited!

We welcome visitors! Residents of Tompkins County are invited to attend meetings of the WRC and apply for WRC membership. Membership in the WRC is a great opportunity for citizens to provide input into the decisions that are made about our local environment. The Water Resources Council meets the third Monday of each month from 4:15 to 6:00 PM at the Transit Center (737 Willow Avenue, Ithaca). Meetings that conflict with federal holidays are rescheduled (feel free to phone the Secretary at 274-5560 about dates, or check our website). The WRC typically does not meet in August.

2008 meeting dates:

January 28	July 21
February 25	September 15
March 17	October 20
April 21	November 17
May 19	December 15
June 16	

For more information about the WRC or how to apply for WRC membership, please contact the Tompkins County Planning Department at 274-5560, planning@tompkins-co.org, or 121 East Court Street, Ithaca, NY.

LIST OF ACRONYMS

CCE	Cornell Cooperative Extension
DEC	New York State Department of Environmental Conservation
EPA	United States Environmental Protection Agency
FLLOWPA	Finger Lakes-Lake Ontario Watershed Protection Alliance
IO	Cayuga Lake Watershed Intermunicipal Organization
Network	Cayuga Lake Watershed Network
NYS	New York State
NRCS	Natural Resources Conservation Service
NYSDOH	New York State Department of Health
PRISM	Partnership for Regional Invasive Species Management
SWCD	Tompkins County Soil and Water Conservation District
TCDOH	Tompkins County Department of Health
TCL	Tompkins County Legislature
TCPD	Tompkins County Planning Department
TCSWCD	Tompkins County Soil and Water Conservation District
US	United States
USDA	United States Department of Agriculture
USGS	United States Geological Survey
WQS	Water Quality Strategy
WRC	Tompkins County Water Resources Council