

Tompkins County
Water Resources Council

2008 ANNUAL REPORT



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

Tompkins County Planning Department
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<http://www.tompkins-co.org/planning/committees.html>

2008 Membership Roster

Appointed WRC Members

Terms that expired end of 2008:

County Health	Liz Cameron
County Legislature	Carol Chock
Agriculture	Dan Konowalow
At-Large	Paul Tunison
At-Large	Nick Schipanski
Municipal Government	Cindy Schulte (Town of Newfield)
Environmental Management Council	Roger Yonkin
Cornell Cooperative Extension	Tania Schusler (through March)

Terms that will expire end of 2009:

At-Large	Mary Shelley
Municipal Government	Ed Bugliosi (Town of Dryden)
Tompkins County Planning Dept.	Joan Jurkowich
Watershed Organizations	Barry Goodrich
Business & Industry	Rick Manning
Environment	Linda Wagenet
At-Large	Frank Proto

Terms that will expire end of 2010:

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

Ex-Officio Members

USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service	Patrick Barry
US Geological Survey	Todd Miller

Associate Members

John Andersson
Dooley Kiefer
Steve Penningroth
Elaine Quaroni
Susan Riha
Cathy Valentino

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 to represent 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.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	page
Introduction to the Water Resources Council	1
Council Meetings and Collaboration	2
Committee Activities	3
You're Invited!	8
List of Acronyms	8

COUNCIL MEETINGS AND COLLABORATION

Water Resources Council meetings frequently include presentations by guests. The following presentations occurred in 2008.

February -- The WRC Wetlands Committee provided a final report on their Wetlands Regulation Gap Analysis.

March -- The Council's Monitoring Plan Committee presented the Draft Monitoring Plan for the Southern Basin of Cayuga Lake for review and comment.

April -- A Cayuga Lake Report Card: Progress and Opportunities presentation was made by Cornell Graduate Students in NTRES 694.

May -- Roxy Johnston, Chair of the WRC Monitoring Plan Committee presented the Final Monitoring Plan for the Southern Basin of Cayuga Lake, which was adopted by resolution of the Council.

June -- Howard Goebel visited from the Canal Corporation to speak of their role in control of lake levels.

July -- Water Conservation and Stormwater Measures at Ithaca College were topics of presentations by Rick Couture, Associate Director of Facilities at Ithaca College, engineers and architects.

September -- Steve Penningroth presented a Community Science Institute proposal for funding of stream studies by Tompkins County and area municipalities. WRC passed a resolution of support.

November -- Rick Kessy, of Fortuna Energy, spoke of water use and hydrocarbon extraction.

December -- Jessica Miles visited from Cayuga County and provided an overview of the Owasco Lake Watershed Regulations in Tompkins County.

Also in November, some WRC members attended a forum on gas exploration that was organized for members of Tompkins County advisory board members. Speakers were Susan Riha, NYS Water Resources Institute at Cornell University; Rick Kessy, Fortuna Energy; and Bill Kappel, United States Geological Survey.

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, Todd Miller (Chair), Dave Morey, Lyle Raymond

During the early part of the year, the Aquifer Committee designed the framework of a table to compile sources of ground-water data currently being collected in Tompkins County. Unfortunately, during the later part of the year it became difficult to schedule times when the committee members could meet and continue work on this goal.

In 2009, the committee hopes to continue establishing this framework, compile a list of groundwater-related issues in Tompkins County, and study gas exploration drilling issues.

Cayuga Lake Recreation

Members: Liz Cameron, Dan Karig (Chair), Dooley Kiefer, Mary Shelley

The reach of the Cayuga Lake Recreation Committee exceeded its grasp during 2008, but the committee still made progress on a number of projects.

The two pamphlets, on power boating and on paddling and rowing in Cayuga Lake, were reprinted and re-distributed to relevant locations this spring. Both these pamphlets have been positively received by the organizations to which they were given and by the public.

The speed limit signs that we have been trying to have installed along the Inlet are still not in place. All the necessary groundwork has been done and it

was learned that it was now up to the Canal Corporation to install the signs. Efforts will continue to accomplish this task.

The committee proposed a public canoe/kayak launch site somewhere along the eastern shore of the Inlet and has been working to implement this proposal. A site was first chosen at the north end of the Farmers Market on Cascadilla Creek, but this would have required fill to be placed in the Inlet, which was not approved by the NYSDEC. In addition, this site is too weedy and muddy. An alternative site, at the south end of the Farmers Market and already informally identified, was then chosen. This site would require a short floating dock, which would be approved by the NYSDEC. Efforts are now underway to find the resources for such a dock.

Progress has also been made for the planting of trees along the flood relief channel between Wegmans and Nate's Floral Estates. Informal approval has been obtained from both of these owners, but a formal letter from the WRC to Wegmans has been sent/drafted explaining the project and asking permission. Discussions with Andy Hillman, the City Forester, have led to a plan covering the type of trees and an early spring, 2009, planting. The Committee will solicit volunteers to help with this planting.

A 2008 spring Inlet cleanup was sponsored by the Waterfront District Association and the WRC and was coordinated by Rick Manning, now a member of the Committee. This cleanup was reasonably



successful, considering the rapid rise in water level that preceded the event. Plans are being made to continue this cleanup but to advance the date to better fit the yearly raising of the water level in the lake.

Dredging Committee

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

The ad hoc Dredging Committee of the WRC was charged with representing the WRC during the planning and design phase of the proposed Cayuga Inlet dredging project. The City of Ithaca created a Project Advisory Committee (PAC), by which they chose to interact with the various stakeholders in the project. Although most of the WRC Dredging Committee members were on this PAC, representing various agencies, the committee as a whole was able only once to directly interact with the consultants.

Nevertheless, the committee members had significant input during the several PAC meetings that were held, including the relationship between flooding and dredging and the biological, geological and hydrologic nature of the Inlet. At present, the proposed design of the dredging project is moving toward one that the committee can support. This is significantly less ambitious than that originally proposed.

Education

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

A public meeting was held in February highlighting four distinct monitoring efforts in the south end of



Cayuga Lake and its tributaries. The main focus was on their findings as related to phosphorus. The monitoring conclusions were all similar; the source of phosphorus is from the tributaries not in-lake discharges, any attempts at reducing phosphorus should focus on the tributaries, the current state of the lake is good.

The WRC had a display at Water Week promoting the organization and the draft Strategic Monitoring Plan for the Southern Basin of Cayuga Lake. Bolton Point won the annual municipal drinking water taste test sponsored by the Tompkins County Health Department. The City of Ithaca's drinking water won a taste test against bottled water by a margin of 2:1. The Tap vs. Bottled water challenge was run by Marian Brown from Ithaca College. The WRC display was also shown at the Cayuga Lake Watershed Network's Lakefest event, held in August at Goosewatch Winery.

Executive

Members: Frank Proto (Chair), Roxy Johnston (First Vice Chair), Barry Goodrich (Second Vice Chair), Cindy Schulte, Bud Shattuck

The Executive Committee was primarily involved with the major effort surrounding the Water Resources Council/Cornell University Strategic Monitoring Plan for the Southern Basin of Cayuga Lake. Numerous meetings with both entities, and public presentations with work sessions took place with the partners. The Plan and resolution were accepted and passed by the County Legislature prior to the end of 2008.

Grants

Members: Ed Bugliosi, Liz Cameron, 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 2008 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 (2008-09 appropriation will be \$85,000, but future funding beyond 2009 is questionable as Governor Paterson has proposed dramatic cuts to FL-LOWPA funding in 09-10, approximately a 50% reduction). 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. In 2008 Tompkins County did apply for Special Projects funding to begin a macrophyte study in Cayuga Lake. Funding applied for is approximately \$15,000. The two Special Projects previously funded and under contract were both completed and closed in 2008.

Other grant opportunities and collaborations were explored in 2008 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 was completed and closed in 2008. With that grant completed there will be opportunities to determine further priorities for the Wetlands Committee and possible funding needs.

Monitoring Plan

WRC Members: Liz Cameron, Roxy Johnston (Chair), Joan Jurkowich, Dan Karig, Dooley Kiefer, Darby Kiley, Linda Wagenet

Cornell Partners: Jim Adams, Bert Bland, Cheryl Brown, Todd Cowen, Nelson Hairston, Cliff Kraft, Pat McNally, Seth Schweitzer, Gary Stewart, Ed Wilson

Research Partners: Dave Bouldon, Bill Foster, John Halfman, Robert Howarth, Robert Johnson, Jose Lozano, Greg Nagle, Stephen Penningroth, Lynn Smith, Tom Vawter

Research Partners: The Monitoring Plan Committee coordinated a series of meetings throughout 2008 to share the draft Strategic Monitoring Plan (SMP) for the Southern Basin of Cayuga Lake and to gather formal support for it.

Organizations passing resolutions in support of part, or all, of the plan include:

- Tompkins County Water Resources Council
- Tompkins County Environmental Management Council



- Town of Caroline
- Tompkins County Stormwater Coalition
- Tompkins County Planning, Development and Environmental Quality Committee
- Tompkins County Legislature

Presentations were also given to:

- Cayuga Lake Intermunicipal Organization
- Town of Dryden Conservation Board
- Town of Ithaca Conservation Board
- City of Ithaca Board of Public Works

A progress report was made to Cornell University.

The Upstate Freshwater Institute published “Trophic State, Tripton, Pelagic Versus Near-Shore, and Modeling Issues for Cayuga Lake, NY.”, a FL-LOWPA special project that was initiated in response to some of the early findings that phosphorus and chlorophyll a are not directly linked in the southern portion of Cayuga Lake.

Several new researchers have joined the partnership and regularly share their monitoring data and discuss research needs. A group of professors and graduate students have been meeting to discuss phosphorus and its complex role in the watershed. Dave Bouldin, a professor emeritus from Cornell University, has presented much of his 40 years of monitoring data and proposed further analyses that could improve our understanding of the dynamics of nutrient cycling in the watershed.

Two grant proposals have been submitted to further implementation of the SMP. The proposals focus on algae and macrophyte abundance in the southernmost corner of the lake – addressing the public concerns of perceived excessive growth and odors.

The Tompkins County Planning Department and Stormwater Coalition also budgeted for some monitoring called for in the SMP.

Cornell University and the Cayuga Lake Watershed Network are coordinating the posting of watershed data and reports to e-commons, an on-line source for scientific information.

The Lake Source Cooling permit was not changed in 2008, sampling was completed as designed with extra resources going to the deployment and gradual rehabilitation of the Remote Underwater Sampling Station (RUSS) unit. Outside funding was secured by Cornell researchers to cover this expense.

The SMP will be finalized in 2009 and an annual report for 2008 will be prepared. External funding sources will continue to be sought to implement pieces of the plan. Outreach via presentations and articles will be on-going.

Nominating/Membership

Members: Dan Karig, Dooley Kiefer, Nick Schipanski, Craig Schutt (Chair), Linda Wagenet, Roger Yonkin

2008 saw an increased interest of applications for seats on the WRC. Several new applicants applied as well as some current members chose to reapply. The pool of candidates was so extensive that the Committee chose to meet with some of the candidates and discuss the role of the WRC. Through that process one applicant chose to withdraw his name from consideration.

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. These appointments were recommended:

- Todd Miller – USGS (reappointment)
- Liz Cameron – Environmental Health (reappointment)
- Roger Yonkin – EMC Liason (reappointment)
- Cindy Schulte – Municipal (reappointment)
- Sharon Anderson – Cooperative Extension (new)
- Herbert Dwyer – Economic Development (new)
- Elaine Quaroni – At Large (new)
- Donna Eschenbrenner – At Large (new)

Two applicants not chosen to fill voting seats accepted Associate Membership:



- John Mawdsley
- Marjory Rinaldo-Lee.

By the close of 2008, recommendations for all WRC vacant seats except the Agriculture seat were moved forward to the County Legislature's Planning, Development and Environmental Quality Committee for consideration. The WRC Nominating/Membership Committee continued to solicit a suitable candidate for the Agriculture seat. Hopefully that final seat will be filled early in 2009, effectively filling every seat on the WRC.

The Committee also secured a slate of officers for 2009 and placed that slate into nomination to the full WRC.

Water Quality

Members: John Andersson, Liz Cameron, Roxy Johnston, Steve Penningroth, Craig Schutt, Paul Tunison (Chair), Cathy Valentino

The Water Quality Committee was involved in various issues with other committees, principally the Monitoring Plan Committee. Goals are being reassigned to other committees, and this committee will be discontinued.

Water Quality Strategy Update

Members: John Andersson, Joan Jurkowich (Chair), Dooley Kiefer, Cindy Schulte, Craig Schutt

The Water Quality Strategy Update Committee began meeting mid-year. While a draft is not yet available, a few recommended changes to the document are worth noting. First, the Strategy currently identifies only those activities in which the Water Resources Council has a role. The recommended strategy will include activities undertaken by other organizations in order to have a fuller picture of related

activities in the community. Second, the introduction to the Strategy is being updated. And, finally, the Strategy will recommend a three-year update schedule.

Wetlands Committee

Members: John Andersson, Barry Goodrich, Dooley Kiefer, Darby Kiley, Susan Riha, Nick Schipanski (Chair), Cindy Schulte, Craig Schutt

In 2008, the wetland committee completed a report (*Wetland Protections in Tompkins County: Existing Status, Gaps, and Future Needs*) detailing how recent changes in federal wetland regulations impact protections for local wetland resources and recommending regulatory and non-regulatory actions to improve conservation of those resources. The report was distributed electronically to municipal and planning boards in the County, as well as to members of various advisory boards as requested. Thirty-eight physical copies of the report were also distributed.

The report's findings were publicly presented during the public meetings of various elected or appointed boards and advisory bodies. These included the Town of Caroline Watershed Committee, Town of Danby Town Board, Town of Dryden Conservation Board, Town of Lansing Planning Board, Town of Ithaca (Planning Board, Town Board, and Conservation Board), Town of Newfield Town Board, the Stormwater Coalition of Tompkins County, and Tompkins County Water Resources Council. Members from the Town Boards of Enfield, Ulysses, and Danby, and the Village of Lansing's Board of Trustees, were also present for at least one of the above presentations. In all, approximately 60 individuals representing elected or appointed boards and advisory bodies were present during the presentations. Based on interest voiced during some of these meetings, the committee began work on developing a model wetland ordinance, with a goal of completing a final draft in 2009.



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.

2009 meeting dates:

January 26	July 20
February 23	September 21
March 16	October 19
April 20	November 16
May 18	December 21
June 15	

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