

St. Lawrence County Environmental Management Council
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Draft

MEETING MINUTES

January 15, 2020

**2nd - Floor Conference Room, Public Safety Complex
49½ Court Street, Canton, New York**

Action items in bold italics / Motions underlined.

- 1. Call to Order:** In the absence of the Chair, Secretary Pat Whalen called the meeting to order at 6:08 PM.
- 2. Roll Call, Determination of Quorum: *A quorum was present.***
Members present: David Barnes; Aaron Barrigar; Catherine Bennett; Ryan Burkum; Richard Marshall; Lance Rudiger; Tiernan Smith; Nicole Terminelli, *BOL Liaison*; Rod Tozzi; Brian Washburn; Pat Whalen, *Secretary*.
Members absent: Joseph Brant, *Chair*; Jennifer Berbrich; Erica Leonard (resigned); Don O'Shea, *Vice Chair*; Sue Rau.
Guest(s): Jon Rosales, presenter and EMC alumnus; Lee Willbanks. Staff: Matilda Larson.
- 3. Acceptance of Order of Business:** Whalen said an EMC policy on its response to citizen speakers will be tabled until February. ***The Order of Business was accepted by consensus.***
- 4. Approval of the Minutes of the September, October and November 2019 EMC Meetings:** The slate of meeting minutes were unanimously approved (Rudiger/Burkum).

5. Hearings, Comments from the Public.

Introductions were made by all those present. Jon Rosales distributed a handout on climate change adaptation planning, and a draft element of Canton's Climate Smart Community Plan. Rosales said a SLU senior catalogued how climate change would impact Canton, and said the community was not particularly vulnerable compared to some of the coastal communities that he worked with in northwest Alaska.

Rosales said he would talk about a framework to identify how communities can adapt to changes that are coming, and said this planning is happening at local, regional and state levels, but not at the federal level. Rosales said it would be his hope that the County would consider adaptation planning as the impacts of climate change are already being felt.

Rosales described the climate change vulnerabilities in the Village of Shaktoolik, northwest Alaska, particularly the effects of sea fetch and storm surges from the Norton Sound onto the coastal community. Rosales said the village is at 20' above sea level, and played a video recorded by Elmer Bekoalok during a fall storm.

Rosales said he offered to help monitor storm surge impact with the use of driftwood samples and GPS coordinates taken with mobile phones. Rosales talked about the Village's preparation of its climate action plan; efforts to harden its shoreline to dampen the impacts of driftwood crashing on the shore by storm surges; and the mapping of GPS records of driftwood deposits from recent storms.

To identify vulnerabilities in St. Lawrence County, a recommendation was made to update FEMA flood hazard maps countywide. Bennett asked how changes were measured for documentation, and whether Rosales was able to use satellite imagery. Rosales said satellite imagery has improved, along with calculating lat-long data using digital elevation models. Rosales also said GPS coordinates also work, but are more distorted at the poles. Rosales said one of the most cost effective ways to assess vulnerabilities and measure change is with the use of university students through partnerships with area colleges.

Whalen and members of the EMC thanked Rosales for his presentation. Whalen announced a five minute recess at 6:59 pm.

6. Report by the Representative of the Board of Legislators:

Nicole Terminelli reported the NYS Association of Counties (NYSAC) will be meeting in Albany on January 27th and 28th. She asked about a pending State resolution to raise the rebate for purchasing an electric vehicles to accelerate the transition from carbon-based fuels. Members of the EMC recommended she ask what source of State funds would be used to finance the rebate.

Terminelli also asked for the EMC's feedback on a proposed 5-cent brown paper bag tax where 3 cents would go to the State, and 2 cents would go to the County. Terminelli said the County's population base may be too small to generate enough revenue for the amount of administrative paperwork required to institute and collect a 2 cent tax. Members of the EMC recommended she ask how other counties are responding to the proposal.

A discussion ensued about the County's involvement with the State's Resiliency and Economic Development Initiative (REDI) and the County's policies in response to this summer's flooding along the St. Lawrence River. Members of the EMC and staff discussed their involvement over the past year in drafting a Shoreline Resiliency Study that was prepared on behalf of St. Lawrence River communities, and the former Planning Director's involvement in helping to create a framework to disseminate resiliency funds to shoreline communities, businesses and residents.

Terminelli talked about the development of technology that records flood data in real-time, and her plans to arrange a meeting with Planning staff and the developers of the technology to see how it can be applied with area universities.

7. Reports by EMC Members on Conversations with County Legislators: None.

8. Report of the Committees:

a. Executive Committee: No report.

b. Conservation of Resources Committee (CRC): Pat Whalen reported. **See attached.** Bennett added the Watertown Daily Times has agreed to create a personal column to publish the Committee's articles.

- c. **Environment + Economy Committee (E+E):** Rod Tozzi reported. **See attached.**
- d. **Invasive Species Committee (ISC).** Aaron Barrigar reported. **See attached.**
- e. **Watershed Management Committee (WMC).** Brian Washburn reported. **See attached.**

9. Report of the Staff: Larson reported:

- Demolition at the former J&L site in the Town of Clifton is complete, and grading of the site will be scheduled by the County’s Highway Department.
- The State Septic Repair and Replacement program is nearly complete; 40 households were assisted during the two-year program.
- The online collection of public input for the St. Lawrence River Watershed Plan is underway.

10. Unfinished Business: Whalen said Tenbusch is drafting text for the EMC’s consideration on its response to citizen speakers. Whalen said EMC members can email their ideas to Tenbusch for discussion at the February meeting.

11. New Business: None.

12. Announcements: Smith said Tony David from Akwesasne was recently appointed Director and may attend a future EMC meeting. Larson said Lisa Bartalo began is working in the Planning Office as the Office Manager for the next six months, and the Planning Office currently has a vacancy for a Planner II position.

13. Message to the Board of Legislators: Whalen and members of the EMC suggested the Board of Legislators consider advocating the implementation of the Shoreline Resiliency Study.

14. Adjournment: The meeting adjourned by consensus at 8:20 pm. (Washburn/Whalen)

Respectfully submitted:

Patrick Whalen

Secretary

Minutes written by M. Larson



St. Lawrence County Environmental Management Council Conservation of Resources Committee Meeting Wednesday January 8th, 2020

Purpose of the *Conservation of Resources Committee*.

- “Conservation” can mean “saving” or “effective/efficient/wise use”.
 - Thus, “conservation of resources” might include topic areas including solid waste management; household hazardous waste management; recycling; energy efficiency; wise use of natural resources of St Lawrence County
 - “Conservation” might also mean “preservation”, as in preservation of endangered/ rare/ significant flora (plants) or fauna (animals/creatures).
 - “Conservation” also means addressing issues such as the climate crisis that threatens environmental devastation for our region.
-

Present: Pat Whalen, Chair. Jennifer Berbrich. J. Tenbusch attended as staff.

The meeting began at 4:49 PM.

Review Report of Last Meeting. No comments on last meeting report.

Priority Projects for 2020

- Climate Crisis.
 - John reported that the North Country 350Alliance will continue to hold climate vigils in Canton at the downtown park at 4 PM on the first Friday of each month.
 - Tenbusch also reported that NC350.org has started to hold climate vigils in Potsdam at the Post Office at 4 PM on the second Friday of each month.
 - No progress made on reaching out to other established programs, e.g., the Canton Composting Program.
- Movie Series.
 - Tenbusch reported that he was not able to schedule a showing of the movie “Plastic Paradise” at the Nicandri Nature Center in Massena over the holidays.
 - Tenbusch did report that Erica Leonard, General Manager at St. Lawrence Centre Mall, has offered the use of the mall’s Community Room for us to host a showing of the movie, or for other EMC events.
 - Jenifer Berbrich reported that she works with several senior housing facilities; she thought that she might be able to get permission for us to show the movie at one or more of them.
- Reducing usage of single-use plastics
 - John will check with DEC to see if the EMC can help implement the new bag regulations that will go into effect in March. See <https://www.governor.ny.gov/news/earth-day-governor-cuomo-signs-legislation-banning-single-use-plastic-bags-new-york>

- Regarding the previous suggestion re: letter to the editor of local paper asking people to reduce or eliminate their reliance on single-use plastics: no progress has been made.
- Trashpresso: no progress.
- Meeting with local college representatives: no progress.

Other Items

- Proposed policy for speakers at EMC meetings: This Committee had previously developed a proposal to address issues of civility toward speakers at EMC meetings. Tenbusch reported that, at their meeting earlier in the week, the E+E Committee had discussed such a policy for speakers.
 - Tenbusch proposed that, after the E+E Committee presents their proposal, that the topic be tabled until the February EMC meeting. During the next month, Tenbusch will draft a policy that incorporates the CRC and the E+E Committees' proposals

The meeting was adjourned at 5:20 PM.

The next meeting of this Committee will be on Wednesday February 12, 2020.



St. Lawrence County Environmental Management Council Environment + Economy Committee Meeting Monday, January 6th, 2020

Purpose of the Environment + Economy Committee.

- To explore the relationship and interactions of the environmental resources of St. Lawrence County with the local and regional economy.
 - To reach out to individuals, business, and organizations involved in the use of natural resources in an economic capacity and to learn from these individuals and organizations about the challenges and opportunities in their endeavors.
 - To act as the interface between business, residents, and lawmakers of St. Lawrence County with regards to the role of natural resources in the economy, with an emphasis on sustainable use.
-

Meeting started at 5:05 PM. **Present:** Ryan Burkum, Chair. Rod Tozzi. J. Tenbusch attended as staff.

Item 1: Review Report of last meeting

- Fish ladder proposal in Madrid.
 - Tenbusch has not yet been able to follow up on funding ideas.
 - It may be possible to get the proposal listed as a project for the St. Lawrence River Watershed Revitalization Project (SLRWRP).
 - Listing would be helpful in obtaining funds for studies / construction.

Item 2: Priority Projects for 2020. No progress on:

- Develop workshop to include reps from various parts of the agriculture industry.
- Outreach to / meet with reps from Clarkson to develop local technical solutions to some environmental problems.

Item 3: Other Business.

- Fiftieth anniversary of Earth Day in 2020.
 - EMC project to observe the occasion? Each Committee will be asked to brainstorm possible ideas. Ideas to be discussed at the January EMC meeting.
- Discussion about policy toward speakers during “Citizen Comments” portion of EMC meetings.
 - R. Burkum proposed a policy that would allow for EMC members (or Meeting Chair) to cut off/object to speakers’ comments that may be wildly off-base or offensive.
 - Possibly, an EMC member could raise his/her hand and wait to be recognized by the Meeting Chair.
 - Other mechanisms for directing/moderating discussion?
 - Planning staff to act as Sergeant-at-Arms/ parliamentarian?

Item 4: Speakers for EMC Meetings.

- Invite Curran Renewables to speak at EMC meeting.
- Speaker regarding bass tournaments.
- Speaker on new regulations for agriculture.
- Speaker from Farm Credit re: future of the agriculture industry.
- Speaker on modern maple syrup production.
 - Ryan Burkum will check with a producer whom he knows.

Item 5: Develop Public Service Announcements. No progress made:

The meeting adjourned at 5:37 PM.

Next E+E Committee meeting will be held Monday, February 10, 2020.



St. Lawrence County Environmental Management Council Invasive Species Committee Meeting Tuesday January 7th, 2020

Overview of the Invasive Species Committee.

- The Committee decided that the variety of “invasive species” topics is so large, that it might be best for this committee to work on specific areas.
 - Emerald Ash Borer
 - Eurasian Watermilfoil
 - Wild Parsnip
 - Others
-

Meeting started at 1:03 PM.

Present: Don O’Shea, Chair. Aaron Barrigar; Sue Rau; Pat Whalen. John Tenbusch attended as staff.

Review Previous Committee mtg report:

- Reviewed priority items for 2020. See next item.

Priority Projects for 2020:

- EABs
 - J Tenbusch reported that next EAB TF meeting will be held at Northwest Tech (BOCES) building on Park Street in Ogdensburg on Thursday Jan. 23rd.
 - o Discussion re: attendance at this meeting: BOCES students; Ogdensburg Tree Commission; Ogdensburg City Council (?)
 - o Question: when /can the EAB TF make another presentation to City Council?
 - o Question: How can Ogdensburg work with private homeowners to remove/grind up infested ash trees? How can EAB TF work with City Council to make this happen?
- Wild parsnip
 - Follow up with Town Highway departments re: PSA distributed last year (see attached)
 - o A Barrigar reported that Town Highway departments do receive training on how to deal with wild parsnip
 - They also receive some equipment for this purpose
 - o Conduct a survey for towns re how they deal with wild parsnip?
- Eurasian Watermilfoil. No discussion.
- Spotted Lanternfly
 - S. Rau suggested contacting CCE re programs that they might have regarding this.

Other Items

- Invasive Species Awareness Week, June 7 – 13, 2020
 - This Committee should think about activity(ies) we want to do during this week.
- 50th Anniversary of Earth Day
 - What ideas does the Committee propose the EMC do for Earth Day this year?
- Discussion on glyphosates
 - Sue Rau reported that she had recently seen an article about community-led efforts to ban glyphosate use in public spaces. After some discussion, John Tenbusch found an article on the topic. **See attached.**

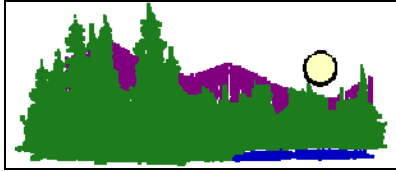
Discuss Speakers for EMC Meetings:

Tenbusch reported on several upcoming speakers for EMC meetings. The Committee had no suggestions for speakers.

Public Service Announcements: None.

The meeting ended at 1:55 PM.

Next ISC meeting will be held at 1:00 PM on Tuesday February 11, 2020.



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Mowing: A Reasonable Alternative to Manage Wild Parsnip Along Roadsides

It is that time of year again; now that winter plowing is (almost!) finished, Town and County Highway Departments are starting to look at their next major task: mowing along roadsides. The **Environmental Management Council** would like to take this opportunity to let you know that you can control the spread of Wild Parsnip along your roadsides with relatively minor changes to mowing schedules.

Wild parsnip (*Pastinaca sativa*) is an invasive plant from Europe and Asia. It can be found growing in a broad range of habitats, especially disturbed areas along roadsides, and near playgrounds.

Wild parsnip is especially noxious because its sap can combine with sunlight to cause severe burns on exposed skin that has come into contact (pedestrians; highway workers; etc.). One recent report noted that wild parsnip was growing past the fence at a local ballfield. If anybody hit a home run, the kids who chased the ball were all at risk of severe burns. (See <https://dec.ny.gov/animals/105364.html>)

Typical methods of control of wild parsnip have involved use of herbicides, and mowing. The **Environmental Management Council** proposes that, by planning roadside mowing schedules, it may be possible to control, and over time to eradicate wild parsnip without having to use herbicides (except in very limited circumstance).



We notice that wild parsnip flowers along our roadsides in late June-early July. By mid-July into August those flowers create seeds that are easily dispersed by wind or other factors.

Mowing wild parsnip before July will prevent plants from seeding out, and prevent the spread of wild parsnip.

Though plants may re-sprout and re-flower, seed production will be greatly reduced.

Highway crews should take precautions to wear long sleeved shirts and long pants when mowing, in order that they don't get hit with wild parsnip sap while mowing. Rinsing off mowing equipment is also recommended.

EMC: Everybody Must Care!



Community-Led Efforts to Ban Glyphosate in Public Spaces Pick up Speed

Buoyed by scientific and public concern, hundreds of communities around the country are banning the herbicide's use and working toward organic lawn management.

BY **GOSIA WOZNIACKA**

Posted on: December 17, 2019 Last updated: December 17, 2019 [1 Comment](#)

A decade ago, when Kathleen Hallal's three young sons were battling auto-immune disorders, the Irvine, California, resident realized that powerful herbicides were often being sprayed in the school yards, fields, and parks where they spent most of their time.

"I'd see my kids stretch and roll in the grass. Other kids would be digging in the dirt where they had just sprayed Roundup. No one paid attention to the yellow warning signs," said Hallal, referring to the controversial herbicide that contains glyphosate.

Hallal contacted pediatricians, organic lawn managers, even a retired scientist from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). For over two years, she pushed the school district to ban glyphosate and other synthetic pesticides—and succeeded in 2015. The following year, she formed a group with several other parents and they convinced the entire city of Irvine to ban pesticides in public spaces and **switch to organic lawn care**. In the following months, activists in nearby cities of **San Clemente, Malibu, and Burbank** also moved to implement bans.

Today, Hallal's organization, **Non Toxic Communities**, is a model for others around the country hoping to do away with herbicides in public spaces and transition to organic lawn management. And while she says the fight was lonely and arduous for a long time, over the past two years, **hundreds of cities, counties, schools, and other entities** have followed suit. They include **Los Angeles County, the University of California system, Hawaii County, Miami, Tucson, and Seattle**. Many places have made these moves amid intense public interest stemming from a flood of litigation against Bayer (formerly Monsanto), the maker of Roundup.

“People from new cities are contacting us daily, [wanting] to form a group in their community,” said Hallal. “We give them materials and guidance... There is no excuse for using these toxic products when there are alternative methods.”

The new pesticide ban movement comes at a critical time, say advocates, as the U.S.

Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) under President Donald Trump is **relaxing safeguards for several pesticides and herbicides**. Earlier this year, the agency **announced it will re-evaluate** how it handles requests by states to impose stricter rules on pesticides, essentially limiting regulations. The EPA **is also proposing restricting** how human studies (known as epidemiological studies) are used in official rule-making.

“We cannot trust what’s going on at EPA; it’s being dismantled,” said Jay Feldman, executive director of **Beyond Pesticides**, a Washington, D.C.-based nonprofit. “Unless local communities take up the fight for the environment, we’re not being protected.”

Awareness Grows Amid a Flurry of Lawsuits

For decades—since the seminal 1962 publication of Rachel Carson’s *Silent Spring*, a book that exposed the hazards of synthetic pesticides—environmentalists have been ringing alarm bells about these chemicals. Most of the attention has been focused on agricultural use and pesticides’ impacts on farmworkers, their children, and the environment, as well as the potential for harm from **pesticide residue found on produce**. Pushback against the chemicals has led to the banning of **DDT**, the formation of the EPA, and the passage of the **Organic Foods Production Act** of 1990, among other things.

And yet while about **40 million acres of managed turf** (i.e., residential and commercial lawns, golf courses, parks, etc.) is tended across the U.S. and about **88 million households** in the U.S. use pesticides, there has been little interest in and virtually no research on herbicides sprayed in urban and suburban areas for cosmetic purposes, nor on the effects of such spraying on the health of ordinary Americans.

In the 1990s, the New York attorney general’s office released a report on the toxicity of golf course maintenance. Titled “**Toxic Fairways**,” it showed that golf

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courses on Long Island use 4 to 7 times the average amount of pesticides used in agriculture, on a pound per acre basis. Then, in **1996, a study** revealed that golf course superintendents are subject to higher mortality rates from some cancers than other Americans. But none of that appeared to move the needle on policy.



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Now, concerns about pesticide use appear to be taking center stage in mainstream consciousness with the current **wave of lawsuits against Bayer**.

In 2015, after [the International Agency for Research on Cancer \(IARC\)](#) classified glyphosate as a [probable human carcinogen](#) with a particular association to non-Hodgkin's lymphoma, thousands of cancer victims sued Bayer. More than 42,700 lawsuits have been filed as of October, [Bayer said](#) this fall. In the first three trials in U.S. courts, all three of the juries have ruled against Bayer, awarding large damages to the plaintiffs. And the [possibility of a settlement](#) is on the horizon.

Roundup has been around since the 1970s and is the most widely used herbicide in the world. And while the lawsuits also allege that the company was aware of the dangers for years but did nothing to warn consumers, Bayer still maintains [the chemical is safe](#).

"The overwhelming weight of science and regulatory reviews by leading health authorities around the world for more than 40 years have determined that glyphosate can be used safely and is not carcinogenic," Bayer spokeswoman Charla Lord told Civil Eats in a written statement. Pesticide regulating authorities in the U.S. agree. The EPA has maintained for years that glyphosate does not pose a risk to public health and isn't carcinogenic in humans; in April, the agency again [reaffirmed its belief that the chemical is safe](#).

Independent scientists strongly disagree, however. After IARC's classification, an international group of scientists [concurred in 2016](#) that glyphosate may cause cancer. The scientists said regulatory authorities rely on non-publicly available studies provided by industry researchers that have not been peer-reviewed. And earlier this year, a [University of Washington analysis](#) found that exposure to glyphosate increases the risks of some cancers by more than 40 percent.

While the EPA focuses on acute exposure—whether or not a person who is exposed once or twice will suffer or die—[endocrinology research](#) has shown that pesticides accumulate over a lifetime through chronic low-dose exposure and are even passed on through generations. [Children are especially at risk](#) because their small bodies are more vulnerable to toxins. The chemicals have also been shown [to harm the health of dogs](#) who are frequent visitors to parks and other green areas sprayed with herbicides.

In defiance of the EPA, California has listed glyphosate as a potentially cancer-causing substance under Proposition 65. And more recently, [Vietnam](#) and [Austria](#) have moved to [ban glyphosate](#) (though Austria's ban may be hindered by a [legal](#)

technicality), Germany has said **it will ban it by 2023**, and **France has banned** Roundup and most other glyphosate-based weedkillers.

Across the Country, Banning Pesticides in Urban Areas

Environmentalists have leveraged the flood of lawsuits, new analysis, and media publicity to spur a new movement against the use of toxic chemicals in public and private spaces.

Lord, the Bayer spokeswoman, said such policies and bans are not science-driven. “Decisions to restrict glyphosate use have not been based on independent regulatory risk assessments nor the full body of scientific evidence on glyphosate’s safety,” she said.

Limiting exposure to pesticides in urban areas has faced a major obstacle, said Feldman of Beyond Pesticides, in part because so much of it gets used on private lawns. **And 43 states have laws that preempt** local governments’ authority to restrict pesticide use on private property beyond existing state-level regulations.

The inability to control what residents spray on their lawns is an issue, Feldman said, because pesticide drifts through the air and travels through groundwater. It also explains why public places have moved to the center of the fight.

Beyond Pesticides has **worked with** municipalities to pass pesticide restrictions mostly on public property, but Feldman said pushback from park officials and other administrators against organic lawn and weed management can be intense. “We were told it couldn’t be done and it wasn’t financially viable,” he said. “The organic agriculture industry has proven that it can be done.”



Magruder Park in Hyattsville, Md., is one of the newly organically maintained field. (Photo courtesy of Stonyfield)

Last year, Beyond Pesticides teamed up with Stonyfield, the organic yogurt maker, to help launch the **StonyFIELDS #PlayFree** initiative. The company, known for promoting social and environmental causes, will help 35 cities across the U.S. through the transition away from synthetic pesticides and herbicides, including **10 last year** and **another 10 this year**.

Stonyfield chose the project because “Being proactive goes beyond what you’re eating,” said Gary Hirshberg, Stonyfield’s co-founder and a life-long soccer coach. Hirshberg said millions of children play in parks and on fields in the U.S. and studies show **two-thirds of those parks** are sprayed with synthetic chemicals. These can be inhaled, absorbed by children’s skin, or tracked inside homes on feet, hands, or pets, he said.

Hirshberg said Stonyfield commissioned a survey last year which showed that while 69 percent of American parents are looking to lessen exposure to pesticides in food, nearly the same number of parents (67 percent) do not consider sports fields, playgrounds, or parks to be of concern.

The cities selected by Stonyfield range in climates and soil conditions. They'll each receive a \$5,000 grant and be paired up with a local or national nonprofit for technical assistance on the ground. "We wanted to go at the skeptics to show this can work all over the country," said Hirshberg. *[Disclosure: Stonyfield has been a supporter of Civil Eats in the past.]*

The municipalities involved in Stonyfield's project are enthusiastic about the results of transitioning to organic lawn care. "Change can be difficult, and the chemical companies are good at telling us their products are great," said Lesley Riddle, the public works director with the city of **Hyattsville, Maryland**. But, she added, "Our fields look better than they ever have."

Riddle said the city had some upfront costs to transition to organics—it used the Stonyfield grant to purchase a tea-composter—but it's already seeing savings due to using fewer inputs and less water. And, Riddle said, she expects the savings will grow as the city restores soil biology in its parks and on soccer fields. City staff are also sharing results with curious homeowners.

Banning Glyphosate Is Not Enough

Easing off herbicides isn't always easy for public entities, advocates say. The first challenge: changing the mindset of decision makers and park administrators who are used to synthetic inputs, said Kim Konte of Non Toxic Neighborhoods, an LLC that's assisting the cities selected by Stonyfield.

"The biggest hurdle is trying something new," said Konte. "A lot of the land managers have been maintaining parks in a certain way for a long time, and it's a complete shift in how we're asking them to manage the landscape."

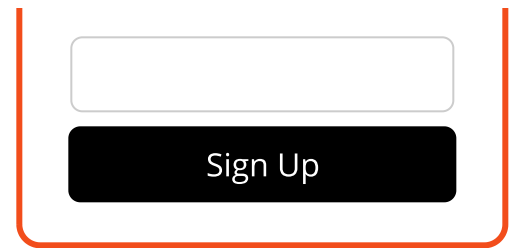
Yet landscape managers often consent when they hear about the benefits reaped by other cities that have gone through the transition to organic management, she said. Weeds don't come back, turf conditions improve. As soil health increases, so does soil's water retaining ability—meaning that cities are able to save significantly on irrigation. And there's no chemical runoff from parks, so cities can better protect their waterways.

While the shift requires an initial investment, by year three when soil goes back to its natural state, cities usually start to save money, Konte said.

Another challenge is convincing administrators not to replace glyphosate with another chemical that may be harmful to people's health, and to

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encourage proactive organic care. Non Toxic Neighborhoods offers communities an online [organic toolkit](#), which includes a product list, examples of other cities' approaches to organic turf maintenance, and supporting research. The goal, said Konte, is to make sure landscape contractors and city staff have the tools to maintain the landscape aesthetics that everyone expects and that organic maintenance is effective and not cost prohibitive.



Cities that work with Beyond Pesticides and Stonyfield also get help from a professional horticulturist. [Chip Osborne](#), president of Massachusetts-based Osborne Organics and founder of the [Organic Landscape Association](#), has helped some 100 public entities across the U.S. to transition to organic lawn management. He also has spoken at thousands of schools and cities, testified at city councils and legislatures, and worked with administrators to teach organic methods.

Transitioning to organic lawn care isn't just about swapping synthetic herbicides for organic ones, Osborne said. Rather, it's about regenerative land care—a system that relies on the same principles as [regenerative agriculture](#). "We talk about a whole systems change," Osborne said. "Instead of just putting product down, we're focusing on the health of the soil ... as opposed to (the appearance of) the lawn or field. We try to sequester carbon and bring resources back to the soil."

Hallal's group [Non Toxic Communities](#) is launching a nationwide training program, called the "Organic Land Care project," which will train landscapers and city employees to use organic lawn and weed management. Hallal developed the training after large mainstream landscaping companies (which frequently contract with cities, schools, or homeowner associations) began approaching the group for help.

"They're getting so much pressure and they don't know how to switch to organic methods," she said. "All they know is how to spray chemicals."

Push for Herbicide-Free Campuses

Students are also at the forefront of the fight to ban pesticides in public spaces. [Mackenzie Feldman](#), (no relation to Jay Feldman of Beyond Pesticides) an activist and University of California, Berkeley alumna, advocated for the reduction in pesticide use on her campus after realizing that the same herbicide she'd been

learning about being sprayed on farms was also used where she and her team played volleyball.

She then pushed for U.C. President Janet Napolitano to **issue a temporary suspension** on the use of glyphosate-based herbicides at all 10 U.C. locations.

Feldman founded **Herbicide-Free Campus**, a nonprofit whose mission is to ban the weed killers at schools across the country. The group offers a step-by-step toolkit and brings in Osborne to help once the schools are ready to transition to organic lawn care.



This year, Feldman hired three campus coaches, which allows her to expand the organization's reach beyond the U.C. system, and the group is currently onboarding a dozen new schools, including Chapman University in Orange, California, University of Northern Iowa, University of Hawaii, and Fordham University in New York City.

The best part of her job, said Feldman, is working with other young people. "Students get mad," she said. "You don't think you're sitting and laying in grass that

has cancer causing, reproductive harming chemicals. They're like, 'Wait, how do we find out what's sprayed? What's the next step to stop these?' It's really cool to activate and motivate them."

Within the U.C. system, President Napolitano brought together a task force to examine the issue. It uncovered that the U.C. schools have not been recording how much herbicide is being sprayed on campus, Feldman said. In a show of potential challenges, one of the members of the task force—Brad Hanson, a scientist at U.C. Davis—was removed after public documents showed **he was being paid** by the pesticide industry. Napolitano will make a decision early next year about whether to permanently ban glyphosate and/or other herbicides on the campuses.

Feldman said the ultimate goal is to expand the bans "beyond people who are privileged to attend a university." That includes protecting farmworkers, passing stricter pesticide regulations on a national scale, and pressuring the EPA to enforce them.

Feldman is buoyed by the number of schools and communities wanting to move away from using herbicides and pesticides. "Things are moving fast... there are new bans happening every day," Feldman said. "But also, people are literally dying and we're not moving fast enough."

This article has been updated to reflect the facts that Non Toxic Neighborhoods is not a nonprofit, and that Non Toxic Communities' project is called Organic Land Care, not Organic Lawn Care.

LEAVE A COMMENT

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St. Lawrence County Environmental Management Council Watershed Management Committee Meeting Tuesday, January 7th, 2020

Overview of *Watershed Management Committee*.

- This Committee has worked on a number of watershed questions/issues, including:
 - Development / promotion of riparian buffers
 - “No Mow Zones” / “Trees for Tribs”
 - Work with U.S.A. Corps of Engineers to bring Sediment Transport Analysis and Regional Trainning to local colleges, high schools, etc.
 - Stenciling storm drains to read: “Don’t Dump – Drains to River”
-

Meeting started at 4:05 PM.

Present: Brian Washburn, Chair. Bob Flavin (in person) and Don Lucas (by phone) attended as guests. J. Tenbusch attended as staff.

Item 1: Discussion About SLC Fisheries Board Concerns Re: Sale of Possibly Contaminated Fish for Public Consumption

NOTE: The item below was taken from the WMC Meeting Report on 10/8/20

Review SLC Fisheries Board meeting report (9/24/19). This meeting was on the topic of sale of possibly-contaminated fish to local restaurants. Sixteen people attended this meeting, including two members of the EMC: Nicole Terminelli (BOL), and Tiernan Smith.

- The Committee will ask them to report on the Fisheries Board meeting.
 - The Committee will also invite Bob Flavin, Chair of the Fisheries Board and former member of the EMC, to attend the next meeting of the Committee to discuss the topic further.
- Bob Flavin reported on the meeting that had been held on Sept. 24, 2019 regarding the sale of possible contaminated fish to local restaurants. There seem to be several concerns:
 - Depending on where they are caught, fish may have significant levels of contamination.
 - Flavin noted that fish are frequently caught in the lower Grasse River below the Massena “Area of Concern”, where known contaminants include PCBs, mercury, etc.
 - Fish to be sold are required to be processed at a (registered?) facility. There seems to be one in our region – in Alex Bay.
 - Allegedly, many fish are sold directly to stores, restaurants, etc., without going to the required processing facility.
 - Whether fish are processed or not, by the time these fish are eaten, the consumer has no way to know where they were caught – therefore, no way to know if there might be reason to worry about contamination.

- Again allegedly, some species of fish (e.g., perch) are caught by people who only have “sporting” licenses, not commercial fishing licenses.
 - o It is thought that some number of these fish end up being sold to restaurants.
 - o The Committee has been told that it is permissible to catch fish, cook and sell them WITHOUT having taken them to the registered processor. Thus, we hear commercials saying “we catch’em, you eat’em”.
 - o Flavin suggested that all fish be assigned a “season” when it is permissible to take them. Such a regulation would eliminate the loophole whereby a restaurant can catch, then sell, fish that have not been processed at the registered processor, OR where “spot” fishermen can catch, then sell, fish.
- Don Lucas joined the conversation by phone at approx. 4:30 pm. Lucas repeated many of the comments and statements that had been made by Mr. Flavin.
 - Lucas claimed to have scientific information about contaminants. He will provide this to the EMC.
- Lucas and Flavin both reported on previous attempts to regulate the “fishing for sale” industry.
 - They both reported that educational efforts might be a better way to address the issue of people eating contaminated fish.
 - o Education might include signage at all boat launches about possible contaminants in fish.
 - o Education might also include more publicity regarding DEC regulations about fish consumption
 - See https://www.health.ny.gov/environmental/outdoors/fish/health_advisories/
- Lucas and Flavin both reported that representatives from the Mohawks (Canadian and American governments) had attended the meeting in September.
 - They both stated that the Mohawks were in support of trying to reduce the number of contaminated fish that get sold/eaten.
- Lucas and Flavin both agreed that no one is trying to prevent a person from going fishing, and then eating what s/he catches.

There was some discussion about whether/how the EMC might work with the Fish Advisory Board to make progress with this issue. It was determined that:

- Representatives from the EMC will attend the next meeting of the Fish Advisory Board. This meeting will take place on Tuesday January 28th at 7 PM at the BOCES building in Canton (SH 68, near Coakley’s hardware store).
- Representatives from the Fish Advisory Board will attend the February meeting of the EMC (to be held on Feb. 19th at 6 PM in the second-floor conference room of the Public Safety Complex, across Court Street from the County Courthouse).
- After the two groups get a chance to discuss the issues, there may be a decision to approach the Board of Legislators to recommend some kind of action.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:05 PM.

**The next meeting of the Watershed Management Committee will be held on
Tuesday, February 11th at 4 PM.**