

St. Lawrence County Environmental Management Council
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MEETING MINUTES
August 19, 2020
Via ZOOM

Action items in bold italics / Motions underlined.

1. **Call to Order:** In the absence of the Chair, Vice Chair Donald O’Shea called the meeting to order at 6:11 PM.
2. **Roll Call, Determination of Quorum:** *A quorum was NOT present.*
Members present: Don O’Shea, *Vice Chair*; Jen Berbrich; Sue Rau; Tiernan Smith; Nicole Terminelli, *BOL Liaison*; Rod Tozzi; Brian Washburn; Pat Whalen, *Secretary*.
Members absent: David Barnes; Aaron Barrigar; Catherine Bennett, *Chair*; Joseph Brant; Ryan Burkum; Richard Marshall; Lance Rudiger.
Guest(s): Shannon Brennan; Lauren Eggleston, Save The River; Maria “Flip” Filippi, SLC CCE; Kitty O’Neil, SLC CCE; Emily Sheridan, DEC.
Staff: John Tenbusch.
3. **Acceptance of Order of Business:** *No quorum.*
4. **Hearings, Comments from the Public.** The presentation was made by Flip Filippi and Kitty O’Neil, Field Crop and Soils Specialist; both work with the SLC Cornell Cooperative Extension. They discussed the scope of farming activities in SLC, from large-scale to small-scale operations.

O’Neil provided an overview of agriculture in the County. She noted that there are currently fewer dairy farms than the 285 recorded in 2017.

Kitty also reported that the County has 100 organic farms, 2nd-largest number by county in NYS; these organic farms generated almost \$10.5 million in ag sales in 2017. She noted that this number has undoubtedly increased since 2017.

O’Neil stated that the total market values of ag products produced in SLC during 2017 was just over \$191 million; of that, 73% came from milk sales; 18% from crops sold. Cattle sold and vegetables sold also each had a value of more than \$1 million.

Kitty reported that environmental concerns include short- and long-term impacts and needs. These include:

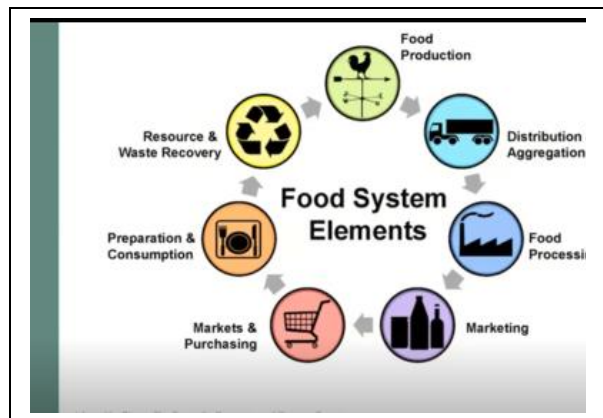
NNY Ag Stats, 2017 – Scale of Ag		
	St. Lawrence County	6 NNY Counties
No. Farms	1303	4322
Dairy Farms	285	859
Land in Farms, acres	356,909	1,189,405
Total Cropland, acres	150,423	536,064
Hay, Haylage, acres	103,900	351,447
Corn, acres	39,425	157,460
Orchards, acres	86	3874
Vegetables, acres	308	2350

- Short-term:
 - Manure and fertilizer spreading
 - Pesticides
 - Land availability
- Long-term:
 - Climate change
 - Soil “health”

In response to questions, O’Neil estimated that most dairy farms are considered CAFOs (Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations), since the CAFO threshold is less than 200 animals. She will look for current data. She noted that sales by Amish are included in the data.

Maria “Flip” Filippi then reported on “Fostering Resilient North Country Food Systems”. Her work is with small-scale diversified agriculture - those farmers who sell directly to the public (“local food producers”). Extension staff have expanded their attention beyond food production into other aspects of the food system.

Flip reported that she primarily works on the following projects: Farm-to-Table; Local Food Initiative; Harvest Kitchen; Farm-To-School.



Farm-to-Table works to “increase awareness and access to locally grown food”. Photo galleries, the Local Food Guide, annual Harvest Tours; are among its activities.

The Local Food Initiative helps producers to start or improve their businesses.

The Harvest Kitchen is a commercial-grade kitchen that can be rented to food producers to process their crops for retail sale.

Farm-to-School does minimal processing in order to get local produce into school kitchens.

Flip also mentioned the “Master Gardener Volunteer” program. She discussed the Local Food Program Advisory Committee (<https://cantonny.gov/government/business/local-food-local-places/>).

In response to questions, Filippi reported that the local maple industry is in the top 4 producing counties in the state.

O’Neil suggested that the EMC might act to assist farming by providing space to talk about agriculture issues. There was a brief discussion on how local producers might improve/increase their “value-added” activities. O’Neil suggested that there may be a lot of room for local consumers to purchase more locally-produced ag products. The problem seems to be how to enable producers to break into the large-scale groceries-market system. She noted that many families need to buy the cheapest products; sometimes, the price point at large grocery stores is too low to meet the cost of production locally.

There was discussion about collaboration among/between farmers. The consensus seemed to be that collaboration is important, but that local producers have little or no time for it – they are too

busy trying to keep their operations running.

There was a suggestion that the EMC might help to locate “experts” who can help our local food producers to work better/more efficiently to compete. O’Neil reported that CCE has an Ag Marketer (Lindsey Pashnow?) available. She also noted that local efforts to improve/increase production tend to rely on individual producers making a significant change/investment; often individuals do not have capacity to make those investments.

5. Approval of the Minutes of the June, July 2020 EMC Meeting: Minutes could not be approved, due to lack of quorum.

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

Nicole Terminelli reported:

- Re the recent NOAA presentation to the BOL, the proposal is to include two local shipwrecks into the Lake Ontario Marine Sanctuary. Further discussions will be forthcoming.
- BOL has requested that Aaron Barrigar, John Tenbusch report on community efforts to combat Emerald Ash Borers.
- NYSAC proposed resolution to expand NYS bottle bill to include additional containers.
- On Sept. 24th, Nicole will attend a public session on updating the US Dept of Interior Strategic Plan re invasive species.

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): John Tenbusch reported that the Committee held an informal meeting.

c. Environment + Economy Committee (E+E): Tenbusch made the Committee report. **See attached.**

d. Invasive Species Committee (ISC). Tenbusch made the Committee report. **See attached.**

e. Watershed Management Committee (WMC). Tenbusch made the Committee report. **See attached.**

9. Report of the Staff: Tenbusch reported:

- The Planning Office has received \$127,000 from NYS to promote the 2020 Census. Activities will include wrapping 3 busses and 1 van with Census-themed messages; full-page ads in North Country This Week newspaper; radio spots; tote bags, face masks, and other give-away items; and an informational postcard mailed to every residential address in the County.
- Household Hazardous Waste collection event to be held in Canton on Sept. 19th.
- The “Earth Day 50” archive project was announced during April. It will be continued through the end of the year.
- John Tenbusch announced that the EMC will celebrate its 50th anniversary in 2021. He suggested that EMC members think about how we should observe the occasion.

10. Unfinished Business: None.

11. New Business: None.

12. Announcements:

13. Message to the Board of Legislators: The EMC has heard from CCE agricultural staff about activities to assist local farmers to increase their profitability while improving their environmental impact.

14. Adjournment: The meeting adjourned by consensus at 8:05 pm.

Minutes drafted by John Tenbusch