

St. Lawrence County Environmental Management Council
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Draft

MEETING MINUTES

June 19, 2019

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

Action items in bold italics / Motions underlined.

Blue boxes indicate internal links to sections of these Minutes.

1. **Call to Order:** In the absence of the Chair, Vice-Chair Don O’Shea called the meeting to order at 6:05 PM.
2. **Roll Call, Determination of Quorum:** A quorum was achieved.
Members present: William Barnes; Aaron Barrigar; Catherine Bennett; Jennifer Berbrich; Ryan Burkum; Don O’Shea, *Vice Chair*; Sue Rau; Nicole Terminelli, *BOL Liaison*; Rod Tozzi; Brian Washburn.
Members absent: Joseph Brant, *Chair*; Richard Marshall; Lance Rudiger; Tiernan Smith; Pat Whalen, *Secretary*.
Guest(s): Chelle Lindahl; Luke Martin; Rachel Martin; Lee Willbanks; Lori Witherell.
Staff: John Tenbusch.
3. **Acceptance of Order of Business:** The Order of Business was accepted by consensus.
4. **Approval of the Minutes of the May 2019 EMC meeting:** On a motion by Sue Rau (Ryan Burkum), the Minutes were approved.
5. **Hearings, Comments from the Public.**

Chair Pro-Tem O’Shea asked if any member of the public wished to speak. Mr. Luke Martin stood up. He stated that he represented a group called “Concerned Citizens for Rural Preservation”.

Mr. Martin distributed two handouts; “Glyphosate disrupts honey bee gut bacteria” (<https://cen.acs.org/environment/pesticides/Glyphosate-disrupts-honey-bee-gut/96/web/2018/09>), and “Glyphosate Fact Sheet: Cancer and Other Health Concerns” (<https://usrtk.org/pesticides/glyphosate-health-concerns/>).

He reported that County and Town highway crews spray glyphosate along roadsides and near streams and other waterbodies; he stated that this may be a public liability, since there is considerable controversy among scientists and health organizations regarding the health effects of exposure to

glyphosate. Several members of the EMC expressed doubt about proven health effects of glyphosate. Martin noted that there have been several recent jury awards for damages related to glyphosate (<https://www.cbsnews.com/news/jury-awards-couple-2billion-monsanto-roundup-weed-killer-cancer-lawsuit-trial-today-2019-05-13/>).

Martin reported concern about overspray from highway crews onto adjacent farm fields. He stated that such overspray is especially problematic for organic farmers; these farmers can be severely penalized by organic-food regulators if they are shown to be contaminated by glyphosate.

Sue Rau reported that it may be a good idea to examine/review what limits are set by permits that highway crews may have/operate under. Catherine Bennet reported that she had submitted paperwork that was supposed to limit use of glyphosate near her farm; she stated that her farm was oversprayed anyway.

Martin proposed that highway crews could stop spraying; he felt that it would be preferable to do manual cutting in areas that mowing machines can't access. He also suggested that, in any case, those who do spray glyphosate should respect adjacent land uses, specifically organic farms.

Chelle Lindahl stated that she is a local coordinator for a Pollinator Protection Program (https://www.nny360.com/news/projects-in-st-lawrence-and-jefferson-counties-help-slow-pollinator/article_38951245-4496-5106-9ce8-55b8050646ed.html); she noted that glyphosate creates many problems for bees. She also stated that government programs that negatively affect taxpayers or businesses should be minimized. She proposed to stop spraying glyphosate.

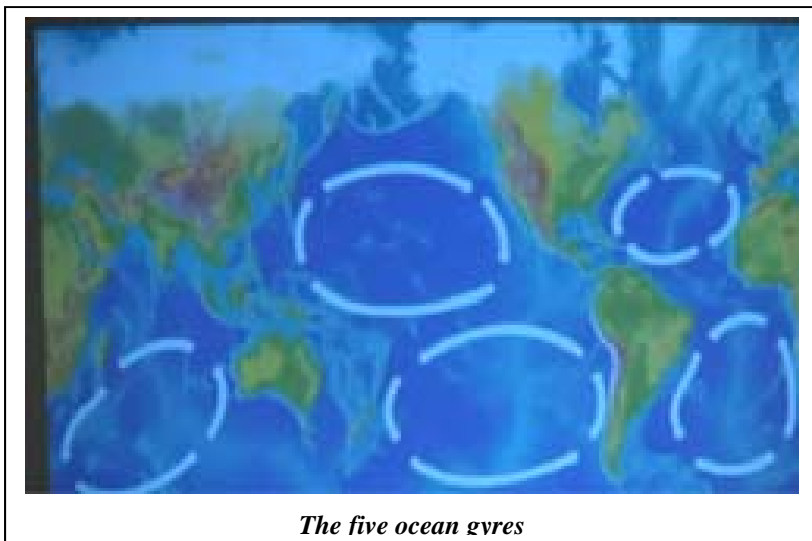
Chair Pro Tem O'Shea assigned the Conservation of Resources Committee to look into this topic.

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John Tenbusch started a video presentation that was made by Dr. Sherri Mason on "The Perils of Plastic". Dr. Mason had made this presentation at the 30th Annual Winter Conference, hosted by Save The River in Clayton NY in February 2019. (See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5Xaq4d3QuUE> to view Mason's presentation in its entirety.)

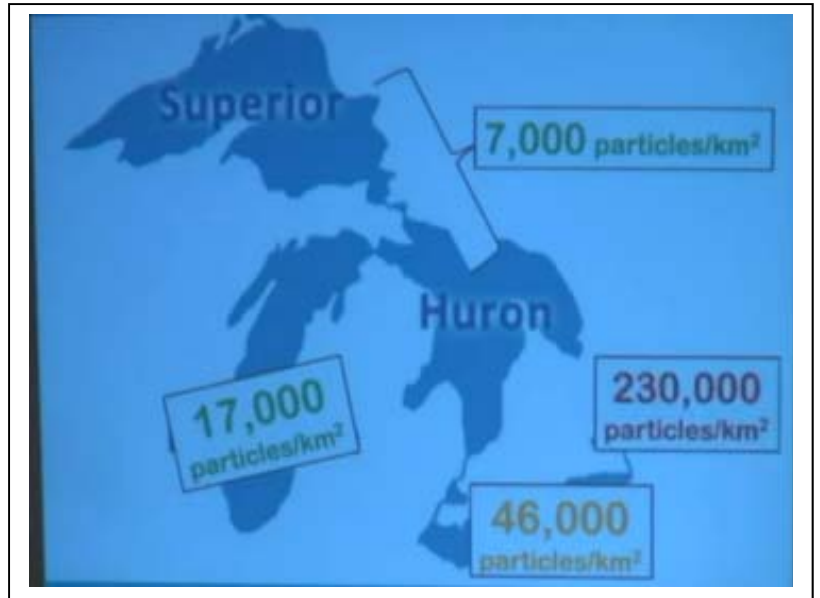
Dr. Mason reported that plastics production has grown since WW II; she noted that in 1967, world production of plastics totaled 25 million tons; by 2012, world production amounted to 286 million tons. According to EPA, only 60% of plastic waste get landfilled (50%) or recycled (10%); the remainder of plastic waste is "unaccounted for".

Mason reported on a U.N. study from 2004, which showed that plastic waste accumulates in the oceans, in the five major "gyres" (see photo, right). This study demonstrated that most plastics in the oceans comes from land-based sources, rather than coming off ships, or other ocean-related sources.



Dr. Mason noted that plastic waste degrades in the water; she noted that this degradation involves breaking down into smaller and smaller pieces; each piece, however, retains all the chemical properties of the plastic. These materials do not deteriorate into simpler chemicals.

Mason then reported on her own work. Starting in 2011, she and her team began to look at the amount of plastic particles in the Great Lakes. They found an average of 7,000 particles per square kilometer in Lakes Superior and Huron. By contrast, the lower end of the Great Lakes, Lake Ontario and the St. Lawrence River, had 230,000 particles of plastic per square kilometer.



Mason has continued to look at smaller particles of plastic, and how they are dispersed. She reported on a study from the U.K. which showed that, each time a synthetic “fleece” garment is put through a washing machine, it releases “at a minimum” 15,000 fibers into the water column.

Mason has since investigated the presence of plastic particles in everyday items including sea salt, beer brewed using water from the Great Lakes, and a study of tap water and bottled water from sources across the world. She found plastic particles in almost every case. She estimated the amount of plastic particles that the average person would ingest on an annual basis; see below.

OVERVIEW

Consumer Product	Region	Average	Est. Yearly Consumption
Sea Salt	USA	212 particles/kg	180 particles
Beer	Great Lakes	4.05 particles/L	520 particles
Tap Water	Global	5.45 particles/L	5,100 particles

Mason reported that these micro-plastic pieces can be contaminated with dangerous chemicals, (plasticizers; PCBs; BPA; methyl mercury; etc.); she noted that micro-plastics can get into the bloodstream, accumulate in various organs, and even pass through the blood/brain barrier.

6. **Report by Representative of the Board of Legislators.** Nicole Terminelli reported that:
 - She had received notice about a Northern New York Water Resource Symposium, to be held July 31st and Aug. 1st in Redwood. For further information, send an email to conference@ratesresearch.org
 - June was observed as “Dairy Month” by the Board of Legislators.
 - Stockholm added 62 acres of prime farmland to the Agricultural District.
 - The County is conducting spill-cleanup activities on several tax-delinquent parcels.
 7. **Reports by EMC Members on Conversations with County Legislators:** Catherine Bennett reported sending an email to Henry Leader. Sue Rau reported sending a note to Nance Arquiett.
 8. **Report of the Committees:**
 - a. **Executive Committee:** No meeting; no report.
 - b. **Conservation of Resources Committee (CRC):** No meeting.
 - c. **Environment + Economy Committee (E+E):** R. Burkum reported. See attached.
 - d. **Invasive Species Committee (ISC).** D. O’Shea gave the Committee report; see attached.
 - i. **Watershed Management Committee (WMC).** No meeting.
 9. **Report of the Staff:** Tenbusch reported that:
 - He had attended a meeting in Rochester on June 10th, at which Gov. Cuomo announced a \$300 million program to assist shoreline communities on Lake Ontario and the St. Lawrence River to make their communities more resilient to high-water and storm events, and to enhance economic development.
 - He distributed copies of an article from the New York Times that reported Gov. Cuomo signed a “sweeping climate plan that calls for the state to all but eliminate its greenhouse gas emissions by 2050”. See <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/06/18/nyregion/greenhouse-gases-ny.html?rref=collection%2Fsectioncollection%2Fclimate&action=click&contentCollection=climate®ion=rank&module=package&version=highlights&contentPlacement=2&pgtype=sectionfront>
 10. **Unfinished Business:** None.
 11. **New Business:** None.
 12. **Announcements:** None.
 13. **Message to the Board of Legislators:** EMC members were asked to let their assigned BOL members know about Luke Martin’s request that the County highway crews change their spraying practices regarding glyphosates. Also let their Legislators know that the EMC’s Conservation of Resources Committee is looking into the matter. Finally, tell their Legislators about Dr. Mason’s work on micro-plastics; suggest that the Legislators watch the video:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5Xaq4d3QuUE>
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14. **Adjournment:** The meeting adjourned by consensus at 8:25 PM.

Respectfully submitted:

Patrick Whalen

Secretary

Minutes written by J. Tenbusch



St. Lawrence County Environmental Management Council Environment + Economy Committee Meeting Monday, June 17, 2019

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.
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Meeting started at 5:02 PM. **Present:** Ryan Burkum, Chair; Erica Leonard; Tiernan Smith; Rod Tozzi. J. Tenbusch attended as staff.

Item 1: Further Review of Presentation by David Fisher to EMC in April.

- Rod Tozzi reported speaking to David Fisher after Fisher's presentation. Tozzi asked Fisher what he might be able to do to increase profits.
 - Per Tozzi, Fisher indicated that some farmers might be considering making cheese. Fisher had given him some threshold figures for number of cows/milk needed and investment requirements; these seemed attainable.
- There was some discussion about whether the EMC could or should try to find grant opportunities to help farmers (or other businesses) to improve their businesses.
 - Ryan Burkum suggested that the EMC should NOT be looking for grants.
 - o He felt that we should instead be working with local businesses to help them find opportunities to improve their business, and improve their business' relationship with the environment.
- Tozzi suggested that we ask David Fisher to speak to the EMC again at some point.
 - John Tenbusch wondered if we might take up too much of Fisher's time, sine he has numerous jobs/tasks. We might ask Fisher who he could suggest for a further presentation to the EMC.

Item 2: Other Thoughts on Ag Topics

- There was discussion about how we proceed to learn about ag topics. A suggestion was made to invite a speaker from Cornell Cooperative Extension (local), or from Ag & Markets (Albany). Such a speaker might be able to bridge our knowledge gap between how farmers operate and what potential changes/improvements might be viable.
 - Tenbusch will look into getting a speaker from one or another of these agencies.

- There was a suggestion that we invite 2 or 3 speakers to make a joint / panel presentation on ag topics.
 - This way, we could get a more complete overall picture of the conditions and difficulties faced by farmers.
 - Such a meeting might need to be convened separately from a regular EMC meeting.

Item 3: Other Topics

- Tozzi proposed that the Committee look into the feasibility of getting a fish ladder installed on the Grasse River in Madrid. According to reports, this would allow salmon to return all the way upriver to Pyrites, thereby opening another 20 miles of river to salmon habitat and to sport fishing.

The meeting adjourned at 5:45 PM.

The next E+E Committee meeting will be held on Monday July 8th at 5:00 PM.



St. Lawrence County Environmental Management Council Invasive Species Committee Meeting Monday June 11th, 2019

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
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Meeting started at 1:05 PM.

Present: Don O’Shea, Chair. Aaron Barrigar; Joe Brant. John Tenbusch attended as staff.

Item 1: Review Previous Meeting Report. No comments were made.

Item 2: ISC Projects for 2019:

- ***Blue-Green Algae Blooms, aka Harmful Algae Blooms, aka Cyanotoxins***
 - Joe Brant, who works with NYS Dept. of Health, had sent out information about cyanotoxins.
 - o Brant explained that lakes in St. Lawrence County that are subject to contamination by cyanotoxins are typically NOT sources of drinking water
 - o Thus, health risks posed by cyanotoxins are minimized.
 - Brant reported that two lakes in St Law Co test positive for cyanotoxins; these include:
 - o Silver Lake, in the hamlet of Cranberry Lake.
 - o Black Lake, which has contamination every year, for long duration
 - Brant reported that the largest source of phosphorus in Black Lake is the Fish Creek watershed. This is unusual, because much of the Fish Creek watershed is within a NYS Wildlife Management Area.
 - Other possible contributors to excess phosphorus load in Fish Creek might be faulty septic systems in camps & homes upstream, or manure deposition practices by the Amish.
 - Brant reported that Greg Boyer, of SUNY ESF, does a lot of work on cyanotoxins.
 - o Tenbusch will try to schedule Boyer as an EMC speaker.

- Discussion about what role the EMC might have in reducing phosphorus emissions around water bodies that suffer from cyanotoxins
 - o Outreach to the Amish community
 - o Outreach to the general public about maintenance of septic systems
 - o Outreach regarding the advisability of buffer zones along stream corridors

- Brant and Tenbusch reported that Septic Smart Week will be observed in NYS during September 16 – 20th.
 - o It would be good for the EMC to work in conjunction with the Planning Office to do outreach / public awareness of the topic.

The meeting ended at 1:35 PM.

Next ISC meeting will be at 1:00 PM on Monday June 10th.