

St. Lawrence County Environmental Management Council
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Draft

MEETING MINUTES

July 17, 2019

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

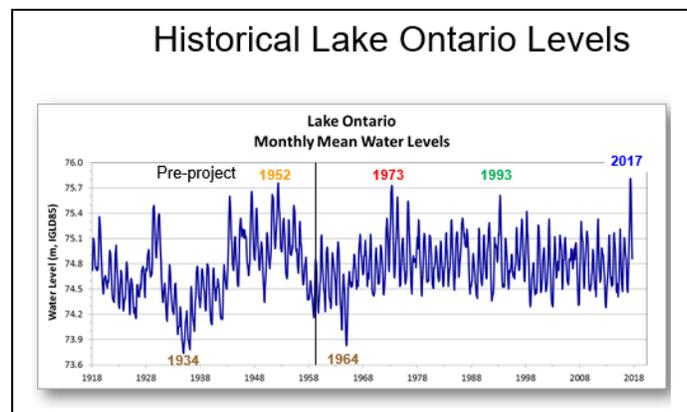
Action items in bold italics / Motions underlined.

Blue boxes indicate internal links to sections of these Minutes.

- Call to Order:** In the absence of the Chair, Vice-Chair or Secretary, John Tenbusch called the meeting to order at 6:05 PM.
- Roll Call, Determination of Quorum:** A quorum was achieved during the presentation.
Members present: Aaron Barrigar; Catherine Bennett; Jennifer Berbrich; Ryan Burkum; Richard Marshall; Sue Rau; Tiernan Smith; Rod Tozzi; Brian Washburn.
Members absent: William Barnes; Joseph Brant, *Chair*; Don O'Shea, *Vice Chair*; Lance Rudiger; Nicole Terminelli, *BOL Liaison*; Pat Whalen, *Secretary*.
Guest(s): Katie Buck, SLCPO Intern; Emily Sheridan, DEC; Lee Willbanks.
Staff: John Tenbusch; Keith Zimmerman.
- Acceptance of Order of Business:** The Order of Business was accepted by consensus.
- Hearings, Comments from the Public.**

Presenters for this meeting included John Tenbusch, Planner II, and Keith Zimmerman, Director of Planning for St. Lawrence County.

Tenbusch presented slides that had been presented in June by Tony David, Director of the Environmental Division at St. Regis Mohawk Tribe, and also a member of the International Lake Ontario – St. Lawrence River Board. David's presentation had been about how the ILOSLRB manages water levels on Lake Ontario and the St. Lawrence River.



Tenbusch reported that historical water levels on Lake Ontario have varied, on roughly 20-year cycles.

In 2019, water levels on all of the Great Lakes have experienced record high-water levels. There are no flow-control structures upstream from the Iroquois Dam in Waddington, NY throughout the whole Great Lakes system, except for a dam at Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan, which regulates water flow through the Soo locks from Lake Superior. Therefore, there is no way to manage the flow of water into Lake Ontario and into the St. Lawrence River.



The ILOSLRB regulates water levels on Lake Ontario and the St. Lawrence River by managing the release of water at the Moses-Saunders Dam and Long Sault Dam in Massena NY – Cornwall Ont. The Board works to benefit navigation and production of hydroelectricity. Secondly, the Board tries to protect the interests of shoreline owners; restore the natural environment to support wetlands, birds, amphibians, fish, and mammals; protect recreational boating.

In order to lower water levels on Lake Ontario, it is necessary to dramatically lower water levels on the St. Lawrence River. Such lowering of the River has two primary effects: water levels on the River drop, and speed of the water’s current rises. Tony David had stated that, in order to drop water levels on Lake Ontario by one inch, it would be necessary to release so much water from the dams in Massena that the river’s current would be too fast for ships to travel safely. This rate of water release would need to continue for up to one month; thus shipping could not use the system for up to one month. David had estimated that shippers lose \$3 million per day when they cannot use the Seaway.

In addition to managing high-water levels on Lake Ontario and the St. Lawrence River, the ILOSLRB must also ensure that Montreal, Quebec does not flood during high-water events. This is complicated by the fact that water levels in Montreal are also affected by the flow of the Ottawa River; the Ottawa River is outside the control of the ILOSLRB (since it is entirely within Canada, as opposed to Lake Ontario and the St. Lawrence River, which are shared by both countries, and are managed under international treaty).

Tenbusch reported that the International Joint Commission (IJC, of which the ILOSLRB is a subordinate group) had developed Plan 2014 as a mechanism for controlling water levels on Lake Ontario and the St. Lawrence River. As is well known, at the time when Plan 2014 first came on line in 2017, water levels rose to historic highs; erosion and damage to shorelines was extensive. Such conditions have occurred again in 2019. Plan 2014 has come under increasing criticism for not controlling or alleviating the damage.

However, one of the significant improvements in Plan 2014 is the Great Lakes Adaptive Management process (<https://ijc.org/en/glam>). This involves a Committee that reviews actual weather data and damage reports over time; based on their findings, Plan 2014 can be modified to better deal with actual water levels.

Keith Zimmerman discussed the Lake Ontario Resiliency and Economic Development Initiative (REDI), which Gov. Cuomo announced on June 10th in response to this year's high-water conditions on the Lake and on the St. Lawrence River (<https://www.governor.ny.gov/news/governor-cuomo-announces-formation-lake-ontario-redi-commission>).

Zimmerman noted that Gov. Cuomo had set a limit of \$300 million to be invested under REDI. Zimmerman reported that the Lake Ontario – St. Lawrence River shoreline had been broken into sections; Jefferson and St. Lawrence Counties are combined into one section.

Keith noted that the REDI Regional Planning Team for our region includes

- Basil Seggos, Commissioner of NYS DEC;
- Gil Quinones, President and CEO of NYPA;
- Randall Young, Region 6 Acting Director, NYS DEC;
- Stephen Hunt, North Country Regional Director for Empire State Development;
- Joe LaBella, Ass't. Commissioner of NYS Homeland Security;
- Seth Belt, the Governor's regional representative.

Communities along the St. Lawrence River, in both Jefferson and St. Lawrence Counties, are putting together initial proposals for projects that might be funded through REDI. Zimmerman stated that all proposals will be reviewed, and prioritized; the Regional Planning Team will produce a list of recommended projects by a deadline to September 12th.

Zimmerman reported that the Regional Planning Team is “looking for vital infrastructure that, if it fails, would devastate its community”.

Emily Sheridan, Eastern Great Lakes Watershed Coordinator; Great Lakes Program with NYS DEC, distributed information about the DEC Great Lakes Program (<https://www.dec.ny.gov/lands/25562.html>). She also discussed the Community Risk and Resiliency Act (<https://www.dec.ny.gov/energy/102559.html>).

Ryan Burkum asked how damage to shorelines would affect assessed property values for landowners.

5. **Approval of the Minutes of the June 2019 EMC meeting:** On a motion by Rod Tozzi (Tiernan Smith), the Minutes were approved.
6. **Report by Representative of the Board of Legislators.** No report.
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):** Jennifer Berbrich reported. See attached.
 - c. **Environment + Economy Committee (E+E):** Aaron Barrigar reported. See attached.
 - d. **Invasive Species Committee (ISC).** John Tenbusch reported. See attached.
 - i. **Watershed Management Committee (WMC).** Brian Washburn reported. See attached.

9. Report of the Staff: Due to the late hour, Tenbusch did not give a report.

10. Unfinished Business: None.

11. New Business:

- Jennifer Berbrich made the suggestion that, during the “Comments From the Public” portion of EMC meetings, EMC members refrain from interrupting speakers to ask questions. Questions might be held until the completion of the speaker’s remarks.
 - Berbrich reported that, during “Comments From the Public” at an earlier EMC meeting, questions from EMC members during the presentation had seemed to put the speaker off-track.

There was some general discussion about the topic; no decision was made.

12. Announcements: John Tenbusch announced that the 18th Annual EMC Picnic will be held at the Waddington Town Beach on Thursday August 22nd. All EMC members and their guests are invited. Further information will be sent out.

13. Message to the Board of Legislators: EMC members were asked to let their assigned BOL members know about the International Lake Ontario – St. Lawrence River Board; to explain how the ILOSLRB works to manage water levels on the Lake and the River; and inform their Legislator about the Great Lakes Adaptive Management process, which can adjust the water-management regulations used by Plan 2014.

14. Adjournment: The meeting adjourned by consensus at 8:12 PM.

Respectfully submitted:

Patrick Whalen

Secretary

Minutes written by J. Tenbusch



St. Lawrence County Environmental Management Council Conservation of Resources Committee Meeting Wednesday July 10, 2019

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).
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Present: Jennifer Berbrich; Rick Marshall. J. Tenbusch attended as staff.

The meeting began at 4:49 PM.

Item 1: Review Report of Last Meeting. No meeting was held in June.

Item 2: Discussion of Items on CRC “To Do” list.

- Request by Luke Martin at EMC meeting, 6/19/2019.
 - Tenbusch reported that Luke Martin and several others had spoken during the “Citizen Comments” portion of the EMC meeting on 6/19/19.
 - Tenbusch reviewed some of the major points made by Luke Martin and several others during the “Citizen Comments” portion of the EMC meeting (taken from EMC Minutes, 6/19/19):

“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.”

- Jennifer Berbrich suggested that landowners adjacent to County- or Town-owned ROWs might volunteer to maintain those ROWs; therefore they wouldn’t need to be sprayed.
- Rick Marshall suggested that this might become a legal issue.
- John Tenbusch will discuss the situation with Don Chambers, SLC Highway Superintendent.
- Tenbusch reported that he had spoken to Larry Legault, SLC Solid Waste Operations manager/Recycling Coordinator, about the Trashpresso concept; Tenbusch had also sent to Legault several Web links and other documents about the Concept.
 - Tenbusch reported that Legault expressed interest in the idea.
 - Legault wants to bring the concept to the attention of the Development Authority of the North Country (DANC), which manages solid waste for Jefferson, Lewis, & St. Lawrence Counties.
 - FYI, the three Counties are developing a joint recycling center in Harrisville.
- J. Tenbusch reported we have finally obtained a commercial copy of the video “Plastic Paradise: The Great Pacific Garbage Patch”. We can now show it anywhere / as often as we wish – as long as we do not charge admission.
 - It was suggested that we schedule additional viewings of the movie.
 - It was suggested that we lend the movie to outside groups, if asked.
 - It was suggested that we show the movie at an upcoming EMC meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:35 PM.

The next meeting of the CRC will be held on Wednesday September 11th at 4:45 PM.



St. Lawrence County Environmental Management Council Environment + Economy Committee Meeting Monday, July 8, 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:** Aaron Barrigar; Cat Bennett; Erica Leonard; Tiernan Smith. J. Tenbusch attended as staff.

Item 1: Review Report of Last Meeting.

- Tenbusch reviewed the report of the last Committee meeting. It included:
 - Further discussion about the presentation that had been made to the EMC by David Fisher on issues with agriculture in St. Lawrence County.
 - The possibility of putting together a workshop to include representatives from different areas within ag; for example: Cornell Cooperative Extension; organic farmer(s); Gardenshare; etc.
 - o Such a workshop would probably be a stand-alone session.

Item 2: Priority Projects for E+EComm

- Fish Ladder on Grasse River in Town of Madrid.
 - This idea had been proposed by Rod Tozzi at the last E+E Committee meeting (6/17/19).
 - o It seems like a good idea. A fish ladder would open another 20+ miles of Grasse River for muskie and salmon spawning/sport fishing.
 - It is unknown whether the Town of Madrid supports such an idea.
 - o Tenbusch will inquire.
- Outreach to Clarkson for workshop about technology supporting the environment and economy.
 - Tenbusch will check with Ryan Burkum and with Rod Tozzi about contacts they may have made.
- EMC Speaker on Plan 2014 / Resilience & Economic Development Initiative (REDI).
 - Tenbusch will inquire about possible speakers.

The meeting adjourned at 5:35 PM.

The next E+E Committee meeting will be held on Monday September 9th at 5:00 PM.



St. Lawrence County Environmental Management Council Invasive Species Committee Meeting Monday July 9th, 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
-

Meeting started at 1:05 PM.

Present: Don O’Shea, Chair. John Tenbusch attended as staff.

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

Item 2: Projects for 2019

- ***Blue-Green Algae Blooms, aka Harmful Algae Blooms, aka Cyanotoxins***
 - During last month’s meeting, John Tenbusch had volunteered to contact Greg Boyer, of SUNY ESF, an expert on the topic of cyanotoxins.
 - o Tenbusch has arranged with Dr. Boyer to speak to the EMC at their October meeting (10/16).
- ***Emerald Ash Borer***
 - Don O’Shea reported that Ryan Burkum has injected the three remaining ash trees located in Groulx Park in Ogdensburg.
 - o O’Shea and Burkum were the only ones present.
 - o Burkum took photos of the injection process.
- ***Invasive Species Awareness Week, July 14-20***
 - After discussion, Tenbusch will draft a PSA about Eurasian Watermilfoil.
- ***Septic Smart Week, September 16 – 20.***
 - O’Shea stated that he would like to see an emphasis on how nutrient loading impacts invasive species.

The meeting ended at 1:30 PM.

Next ISC meeting will be at 1:00 PM on Tuesday September 10th.



St. Lawrence County Environmental Management Council Watershed Management Committee Meeting Tuesday, July 9th, 2019

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. J. Tenbusch attended as staff.

Item 1: Review Priority Projects.

- Shoreline Resilience Planning Project. Washburn and Tenbusch discussed the draft report that had been submitted by the consultants at the end of June. Each one had read and commented on the draft; those comments were returned to the consultants.
 - The consultants are to submit a “final” draft of their report before the end of July.
- St. Lawrence River Watershed Revitalization Plan.
 - Washburn had reviewed the “Project Fact Sheet”, and the “Overview of St. Lawrence River Subwatersheds” (included with last month’s Committee report).
 - Washburn volunteered to work with the St. Lawrence River Watershed Advisory Committee.
 - o Tenbusch will try to make arrangements.

Item 2: Other Items From To-Do List.

- Harmful Algal Blooms, aka cyanotoxins. Tenbusch reported that the Committee Chair, Joe Brant, had referred to Dr. Greg Boyer, of SUNY ESF (<https://www.esf.edu/faculty/boyer/>), as a leading expert on cyanotoxins in NYS. Tenbusch has contacted Dr. Boyer, and made arrangements for Dr. Boyer to speak to the EMC at the October meeting (10/16).
- “Septic Smart Week”, September 16 – 20th. The Committee will work with the Planning Office to promote this event.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:35 PM

The next meeting of the Watershed Management Committee will be held on Tuesday, September 10, 2019 at 4:00 PM.