



St. Lawrence County Environmental Management Council
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MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday January 18, 2023 at 6:00 PM
2nd-Floor Conference Room, Public Safety Complex and Zoom
49½ Court Street, Canton, NY

- 1. Call to Order.** Vice-Chair Sue Rau opened the meeting at 6:05 pm. All present introduced themselves.
- 2. Land Acknowledgement.**
Sue Rau read a Land Acknowledgement, provided by Tony David, SRMT Environment Division, and used with permission:

“As we meet today, let us first give thanks and acknowledge that the land upon which we are gathered is part of traditional indigenous territories, including the Rotinoshionni (Low-dee-no-SHOO-nee), the People of the Longhouse, also known as the Iroquois Confederacy; and the Kanienkehaka (Ga-nyun-geh-HA-gah), the People of the Land of Flint, also known as the Mohawk Nation.”

- 3. Comments from the Public / Speaker.** The speaker at the January meeting was Lucas Hanss, EMC member and a naturalist at the Nicandri Nature Center in Massena. Lucas made a presentation on NYS during the Ice Age.

Lucas reported that the last glacial maximum was approx. 18,000 years ago. At that time, 25% of all land was covered by glaciers. Surface temperatures were, on average, 11° F colder than today. During the last glacial peak,

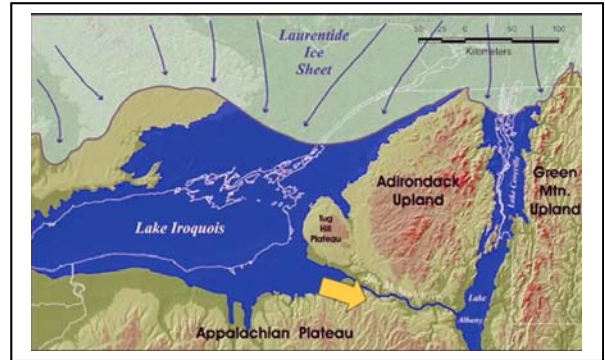
the only parts of modern-day New York that were not covered with ice were Long Island, and the extreme southwest portion of the state, in and around Allegheny State Park.

Hanss explained that glaciers develop by snowfall that doesn't melt. Over time, new snowfall packs down the existing snow into ice. Glaciers accumulate more and more snow/ice over time. He reported that, at one point the Adirondacks were covered by ice over two miles thick. This extreme weight, combined with the fact that glaciers expand and contract, contribute to scouring of land, and deposition of material in low-lying areas.



EMC: Everybody Must Care!

Lucas stated that, at one point, the Adirondack highlands were essentially an island, surrounded by Lake Iroquois, the Champlain Sea, and Lake Albany; on the northern edge was the Laurentian Ice Sheet. The Champlain Sea was actually saltwater, which enabled whales and other ocean creatures to inhabit that area. (See <https://www.adirondackexplorer.org/stories/the-dunes-of-brasher-forest>)



On land, Hanss speculated that saber-toothed cats (*Smilodon*), weighing up to 700 lbs., hunted steppe bison, camels, woolly mammoths, and other mega-fauna; *Smilodon* have been found in areas surrounding NYS, but not yet found in the State. Giant beaver (*Castoroides*) were also present in NYS; these were as large as modern black bears, approx. 300 - 400 lbs. There are Indigenous oral traditions that talk about humans hunting mammoths and *Castoroides*.



Lucas also reported on the Cohoes Mastodon, which can be observed in the New York State Museum, in the Empire Plaza in Albany. This specimen was discovered in 1902, virtually intact. It is estimated to have died in a battle with another mastodon almost 13,000 years ago, then likely fell into a river and was preserved as a fossil.

Hanss reported that current trends in climate change lead scientists to conclude that humans may have disrupted the natural cycle of ice expansion and contraction.

John Tenbusch reported that the Map For All Seasons, which had been produced by the EMC, had included a very good short description of the Ice Age in northern NY. (See “St. Lawrence County Geology” by Rob Badger, on the text page of the Map For All Seasons <https://stlawco.org/Departments/Planning/MapforAllSeasons>)

4. Roll Call, Determination of Quorum.

Members present: Sue Rau, *Vice Chair*; Herb Bullock; Sean Cunningham; Lucas Hanss; Lance Rudiger; Nicole Terminelli, *BOL Liaison*; Brian Washburn.

A QUORUM WAS NOT OBTAINED.

Members absent: Catherine Bennett, *Chair*; Richard Marshall; Tiernan Smith; William Stephens III. *There are five vacancies on the EMC.*

Staff: John Tenbusch.

Guests: John Gennett (BOL – District 13); Shannon Hurlbut; Neil Woodworth.

5. **Acceptance of Order of Business, Items for New Business, Items for Unfinished Business.**
Sue Rau asked to add a report on the Save Winter conference that was held in conjunction with the FISU Games in Lake Placid. Accepted by consensus.

6. **Approval of the Minutes of the September, October, November 2022 EMC Meetings.**
Due to lack of quorum, Minutes from the September, October and November EMC meetings were NOT approved.

7. **Report by Nicole Terminelli, Representative of the Board of Legislators.**
 - Nicole reported that the BOL had approved a resolution requesting the NYS EFC increase those areas where funds to repair/replace deficient septic systems may be used.
 - Currently, Septic program funds can only be used by property owners on the St. Lawrence River, west of Ogdensburg; the Raquette River, downstream from Potsdam; and the Little River in Clifton-Fine.

 - The BOL approved the resolution developed by the EMC that would require the BOL to report on any action or non-action taken pursuant to a policy or project that the BOL had explicitly asked an advisory board to undertake.
 - For example, in 2022 at the request of the BOL the EMC developed a policy and position on nuclear energy; what action did the BOL take regarding this policy/position?
 - There are over 30 advisory boards to the BOL.

 - The BOL will begin to see resolutions to clean up sites of hazardous waste spills. Currently there are 7 such sites that have been identified.

 - The BOL opposed a potential reconfiguration of Soil & Water Conservation Districts that would take them away from local oversight and control. **See attached BOL Resolution.**
 - *After some discussion, it was agreed by consensus that John Tenbusch will draft a letter supporting the BOL's position that SWCD should remain locally focused.*

It was at this point that the ZOOM connection malfunctioned; the meeting was adjourned soon thereafter.

Items left for Unfinished Business included:

- a. EMC Bylaws
- b. Visioning Process
- c. Schedule of Activities for 2023

Items left for New Business included:

- a. Report on the Save Winter Conference held in conjunction with the FISU Winter Games in Lake Placid.

Minutes prepared by John Tenbusch

January 3, 2023

Finance Committee: 12-19-2022

RESOLUTION NO. 26-2023

OPPOSING ANY ALTERATIONS TO NEW YORK STATE LAW THAT WOULD CHANGE THE MISSION AND FUNCTION OF SOIL AND WATER DISTRICTS WITHOUT INPUT FROM THE COUNTY BOARD OF LEGISLATORS AND SUPERVISORS, NEW YORK FARM BUREAU, NYS DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND MARKETS, AND THE FOUR-WAY PARTNERSHIP OF THE SOIL AND WATER DISTRICT SYSTEM THAT INCLUDE NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE (NRCS), NEW YORK ASSOCIATION OF CONSERVATION DISTRICTS (NYACD), THE STATE COMMITTEE, AND THE EMPLOYEE ASSOCIATIONS

By Mr. Acres, Chair, Finance Committee
Co-Sponsored by Mr. Lightfoot, District 3; Mr. Smithers, District 5;
Mr. Denesha, District 6; Mr. Burke, District 12; and Ms. Curran, District 15

WHEREAS, there are 58 County Soil and Water Districts in New York State that provide programs and services to conserve, enhance, and protect soil and water resources across the State, and

WHEREAS, a group known as the “NYS Watershed Health Coalition” recently introduced a 35-page draft legislative bill that would fundamentally change State Soil and Water Conservation Law, and

WHEREAS, titles in the draft want to change the makeup of local Soil and Water Conservation Boards by weaving the environmental justice groundwork laid by the New York Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act and the Climate Action Council’s Draft Scoping Plan more deeply into the Soil and Water Conservation Districts law and the Agriculture and Markets law through a greater representation at the SWCC and SWCDs and in stakeholder engagement, and

WHEREAS, the proposed changes to the Soil and Water Conservation District Law would marginalize districts and empower environmental groups and lake associations, and

WHEREAS, there are serious concerns that this proposed legislation would negatively affect farmers across that State, including a proposed fertilizer tax and removing key Farm Bureau expertise from the Soil and Water Boards, and

WHEREAS, the changes being proposed would limit the ability of the Soil and Water Conservation Districts to protect the natural resources of New York, to implement conservation practices and to serve its farmers and landowners,

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Board of Legislators opposes any alterations to New York State law that would change the mission and function of Soil And Water Districts without input from the County Board of Legislators and Supervisors, New York Farm Bureau, NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets, and the four-way partnership of the Soil and Water District System that include Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), New

January 3, 2023

York Association of Conservation Districts (NYACD), the State Committee, and the Employees Associations, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that certified copies of this resolution be forwarded to Governor Kathy Hochul; Senator Joseph Griffo; Senator Mark Walczyk; Senator Dan Stec; Assemblyman Ken Blankenbush; Assemblyman Billy Jones; Assemblyman Robert Smullen; Assemblyman Scott Gray; NYS Soil and Water Conservation District; Franklin County Board of Legislators; Herkimer County Board of Legislators; Hamilton County Board of Supervisors; Jefferson County Board of Legislators; and Lewis County Board of Legislators.

STATE OF NEW YORK)
) ss:
COUNTY OF ST. LAWRENCE)

I, Kelly S. Bigwarfe, Deputy Clerk of the St. Lawrence County Board of Legislators, **DO HEREBY CERTIFY** that I have compared this Resolution No. 26-2023 Entitled “Opposing Any Alterations to New York State Law that would change the Mission and Function of Soil and Water Districts without Input from the County Board of Legislators and Supervisors, New York Farm Bureau, NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets, and the Four-Way Partnership of the Soil and Water District System that Include Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), New York Association of Conservation Districts (NYACD), the State Committee, and the Employee Associations”, adopted January 3, 2023, with the original record in this office and that the same is a correct transcript thereof and of the whole of said original record.

Kelly S. Bigwarfe
Kelly S. Bigwarfe, Deputy Clerk
St. Lawrence County Board of Legislators
January 4, 2023