



St. Lawrence County Environmental Management Council
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MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday September 21, 2022 at 6:00 PM
2nd-Floor Conference Room, Public Safety Complex and Zoom
49½ Court Street, Canton, NY

- 1. Call to Order.** In the absence of the Chair, Vice Chair Sue Rau opened the meeting at 6:10 pm. Chair Bennett arrived immediately thereafter, and assumed control of the meeting.
- 2. Land Acknowledgement**
Tenbusch read a Land Acknowledgement, provided by Tony David, SRMT Environment Division:

“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 Rotinonshionni (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. Roll Call, Determination of Quorum**
Members present: Catherine Bennett, Chair; Sue Rau, Vice Chair; Dustin Bowman, Secretary; Herb Bullock; Sean Cunningham; Lucas Hanss; Lance Rudiger; Nicole Terminelli, BOL Liaison; Brian Washburn. **A QUORUM WAS OBTAINED.**

Members absent: Joe Brant; Richard Marshall; Tiernan Smith; William Stephens III; Rod Tozzi.

There are two vacancies.

Guests: Dr. Katherine Cleary, Assistant Professor of Environmental Studies at SUNY Potsdam
- 4. Acceptance of Order of Business, Items for New Business, Items for Unfinished Business**
Accepted by consensus.
- 5. Approval of the Minutes of the July 2022 EMC Meeting.** Minutes of the July meeting were approved (Bullock / Rau).

EMC: Everybody Must Care!

6. **Comments from the Public / Speaker:** The speaker was Dr. Kate Cleary. She discussed “Connectivity Research in the A2A (Algonquin to Adirondack region) and Lessons From Other Biological Corridors”.

Dr. Cleary reported that she has conducted wildlife research in Central America, working with birds in Guatemala, and with bats in Costa Rica. Her work looked at the effectiveness of biological corridors for these species. She has continued to work with bats since she came to Potsdam, and has been able to show that bats contribute to pest control, positively affecting yield of corn. She is also working on a longitudinal study of bat populations in different parts of the County.

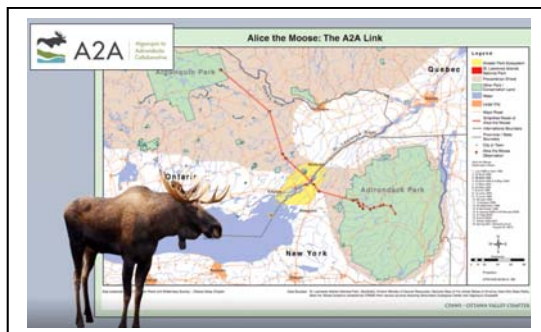
In 2023, Kate will begin a study of road ecology in St. Lawrence and Jefferson Counties, as part of the A2A biological corridor. She has been on the Board of the Algonquin to Adirondacks Collaborative for several years.

She explained that humans have developed relatively small percentages of the earth for cities and roads. However, approx. 40% of the earth’s surface is used for agriculture; this has had the largest impacts on biodiversity.

She wants to study how biological corridors can be a conservation tool for wildlife.



Biological corridors are not regulated, like parks. In some places, incentives are offered to landowners; some infrastructure modifications can be built to assist animal movements across the landscape.



Cleary related the story of “Alice the Moose”, who had been fitted with a tracking collar. Over a period of two years, Alice travelled from the Adirondacks all the way to Algonquin Park, thus demonstrating the potential viability of a biological corridor in the region. For more information see <https://www.a2acollaborative.org/alice-the-moose.html>

Kate reported on a meta-analysis of 35 studies, which found “that corridors increase movement between habitat patches by approximately 50% compared to patches that are not connected with corridors”. Corridor studies typically use camera traps, telemetry (as was the case with Alice the Moose), and genetic data.

Using genetic research, flying squirrels, fishers, pine martins, and lynx have been found to have moved northward along the A2A corridor.

Dr. Cleary suggested that the EMC could help this upcoming road ecology study by:

- Increasing public awareness of the importance of wildlife connectivity.
- Helping researchers connect with NYS DOT and with local highway departments to coordinate the study, especially in Jefferson and St. Lawrence Counties.
- Advising the County Board of Legislators to include funds for wildlife crossings in future transportation budgets.
- Letting her know about relevant grant opportunities.

She also promoted the A2A Science Symposium, scheduled for Kingston, ON next April.

In response to questions, Dr. Cleary noted that animals frequently use riparian buffer areas for migration; she was unsure about the practicality of bio-swales.

There was general discussion about how to encourage citizen scientists to participate in the proposed road ecology study.

The Council thanked Dr. Cleary for her presentation. There was a 5 minute break.

7. Report by the Representative of the Board of Legislators (Nicole Terminelli)

- The BOL will consider a remote-attendance policy for advisory boards at their October meeting.
- The Northside Solar Energy project, located in Brasher-Massena-Norfolk, has been denied. The developer is likely to re-apply.
- The BOL has approved \$900,000 for removal of ash trees along County roads.
 - \$200,000 has been appropriated annually for future ash tree removal.
- A draft resolution has been prepared, which asks the BOL to consider adoption of policies or opinions compiled by advisory boards at the BOL's request.
 - Brian Washburn noted that the BOL had asked the EMC for an opinion, not a policy.
 - Sue Rau noted that the two resolves do not mention other advisory boards, but only the EMC.
 - o Nicole suggested that a resolution be presented asking to BOL to consider adoption of policies developed by advisory boards. A second resolution could then be presented to the BOL asking them to consider adoption of the EMC position on nuclear energy (which had been requested by the BOL).
 - There was some discussion about whether other advisory boards would be affected by this proposed resolution. Discussion indicated that not much is known about some of those advisory boards.
 - o Brian Washburn noted that other advisory boards could post minutes of their meetings, so that their activities might be public knowledge.
 - Nicole suggested that this draft resolution be tabled, pending further discussion at the next EMC meeting. By consensus, all agreed.

8. Report of the Committees

a. **Executive Committee.** The Executive Committee met on September 14th. See attached Committee report.

- Tenbusch summarized the Executive Committee meeting report:
 - With the reduction of staff (Dakota Casserly has left County employment), it is not feasible for one remaining staff person to staff the four standing committees. There appear to be two options:
 - Each committee can meet autonomously. This would mean that they would schedule meetings, make their own reports to the EMC, etc.
 - All standing committees can be abolished for now, and the EMC would operate as a committee-of-the-whole. At EMC meetings, plans, activities, events, etc., could be discussed; ad hoc committees could be appointed to do those activities, etc.
 - The Executive Committee recommended that the EMC operate as a committee-of-the-whole.
 - Ad hoc committees could be appointed to do those activities, etc.
- Tenbusch also reported that the Executive Committee had discussed whether the EMC should continue its existence. He mentioned problems with attendance/participation by EMC members at committee meetings, EMC meetings, or EMC activities; he cited the low participation at the recent Household Hazardous Waste collection event.
 - The Executive Committee did not agree to forward that proposal to the whole EMC for consideration.
- Brian Washburn stated that the Bylaws need to be reviewed and possibly updated.
 - There was some discussion about when and how the Bylaws could be amended.
 - Brian noted that the EMC Bylaws are available on the EMC Web site.
- By consensus, Brian Washburn was asked to Chair an ad hoc committee to review the Bylaws.
- Lance Rudiger suggested that changing quorum requirements might be misguided. He felt that, if the work of the EMC is relevant, people will attend committee meetings and EMC meetings.
- Nicole proposed that the agenda for EMC meetings be adjusted, so the speaker is the first item on the agenda. The business portion of the meeting could all be moved to after the presentation. By consensus, the EMC agreed to this change in the agenda.

9. **Report of the Staff.** None.

10. **Unfinished Business.** None.

11. New Business.

- Report on the **Household Hazardous Waste collection event**, held September 17th at the Human Services Center, 80 SH 310 in Canton.
 - There were four EMC volunteers: Bullock; Rau; Tenbusch; Washburn.
 - John Tenbusch reported that over 300 cars came through the line.
 - This number was significantly higher than the average (227 cars/event). We have exceeded 300 cars five other times over the 31 events held since 2006.
 - The high number might have been influenced by the fact that the recycling contractors are now accepting latex paint. They had not accepted latex paint for a number of years.
 - There was a constant crush of cars. On numerous occasions, the line of cars extended out onto SH 310, and even down to the railroad tracks.
 - This extensive backup occurred in spite of staff efforts to have double- or triple-lines, to maximize the number of cars on the HSC property and out of the street.
 - Many participants reported waiting times of more than 1 hour.
 - Tenbusch stated his belief that the HHW events need to be re-thought, to deal with the safety issue of cars queuing on the public highway, and to reduce the wait time.
 - Brian Washburn reported that he had suggested having an “express lane”, for those with only a few items, or for those with only latex paint.
 - Sue Rau saluted Herb Bullock, who flagged down a passing sheriff’s deputy to handle traffic that was on the road.
 - Dustin Bowman asked if other persons could be recruited to help staff the HHW events.
- Sue Rau reported on a public meeting concerning the Grasse River Remediation project in Massena.
 - The cap over contaminated sediments, which had been completed last year, was scoured away over last winter.
 - The cap will be replaced. It was unclear whether the new cap would be “armored”.
 - Some local representatives stated that all contaminated sediments should be removed, or else this will be a recurring problem.

12. Announcements. None.

13. Message to Board of Legislators. None. By consensus, there was an agreement to remove this agenda item.

14. Adjournment. The meeting adjourned at 8:29 pm by consensus.

Respectfully submitted,



Dustin Bowman, Secretary

Minutes prepared by John Tenbusch



St. Lawrence County Environmental Management Council Executive Committee Meeting Wednesday, September 14, 2022

Mtg started at 7:05 pm. Present was Cat Bennett, EMC Chair/Chair, Conservation of Resources Committee; Sue Rau, EMC Vice-Chair/Chair, Invasive Species Committee; Dustin Bowman, EMC Secretary; Brian Washburn, Chair, Watershed Management Committee.

John Tenbusch attended as staff.

John described the agenda for the meeting: how should the EMC operate moving forward.

He described that, with the departure by Dakota Casserly from the Planning Office, changes have had to be made among remaining staff concerning duties. John will be the sole staff for EMC moving forward; he has already begun to assist writing Project Reviews for the County Planning Board. In addition, he has informed the Black Lake Association that he will not be able to continue working on the Black Lake project.

John said that he was concerned about how EMC committees might be staffed in the future. He does not think that he can staff four committees. He proposed two alternatives:

- The committees continue to operate without staff. Each committee would be responsible for its own agenda, meeting reports, etc.
 - If the committee needs staff support for a project/activity, they could ask for such.
- The EMC might disband the four committees, and operate as a “committee of the whole”.
 - Any project/activity would be an EMC project, rather than a committee project.

Brian Washburn reviewed the “Staff Responsibilities” section from the EMC Bylaws:

Staff Responsibilities. The staff shall have the following responsibilities: recommend preliminary work programs, budgets, and annual reports; keep written and bound record of all business transacted by the Council, give notice to all members of all regular Council meetings, keep on file all official records of the Council and serve notice of all hearings and public meetings; conduct such day-to-day business of Council as requested; carry out such work plans of the Council as requested by the Council; other duties as requested by the Council. (Article III, Section 2)

Tenbusch summarized this Section as requiring staff to do basic record-keeping for the EMC; he noted that the Section does not include staffing committees.

- Brian suggested that committee meeting reports might become the responsibility of the committee chair.
- Sue Rau suggested that the standing committees might be replaced by ad hoc committees formed to do a specific project/activity. Such ad hoc committees would be dissolved upon completion of its project/activity.
 - Sue thought that these ad hoc committees should be authorized at EMC meetings, or by the Executive Committee between meetings.
- Cat Bennett agreed that project-specific committees made sense.

Brian reviewed the section in the Bylaws “Duties of the (EMC) Chair” regarding committees:

The Chair shall be authorized to appoint committees and designate the Committee Chair(s). If no Committee Chair is designated, the Committee shall elect its own from

among its members. The Council Chair shall be an ex-officio member of all committees. (Article II, Section 2, Subpart (3))

Tenbusch suggested that, during EMC meetings, instead of individual committee reports, that period of time could be used to discuss, decide on specific projects/activities, and appoint ad hoc committees to accomplish those.

Washburn stated that he is in favor of eliminating all standing committees.

Rau suggested that any committee reports should be distributed to EMC members in advance of the monthly EMC meetings. During the meeting, time could be set aside for questions or comments on committee reports, rather than listening to the reports being given.

There was a brief discussion about the value of the invited speakers. Consensus seemed to be that the speakers provided information that EMC members could use to develop projects or activities.

- Public presentations could be separated from the EMC business meetings. This suggestion was not pursued.
 - Tenbusch reported that attendance by EMC members tends to suffer if there is not a speaker at the EMC meeting.
- Washburn suggested that speakers' presentations should be better publicized, since speakers' presentations fulfill part of the duties prescribed by the BOL in their Resolution establishing the EMC.

Tenbusch summarized the discussion so far: the EMC should abolish standing committees, and proceed with ad hoc committees.

There was some brief discussion about achieving quorum at EMC meetings. No decisions were made.

There was some discussion about whether the SLC EMC should continue to exist. The point was made that EMCs are authorized by state law to do many more things than our EMC accomplishes. Washburn reported on activities of other EMCs around the state. He also reported that EMCs are required to complete annual reports of activities, and on environmental conditions in the county. There was no consensus to dissolve the EMC.

Dustin Bowman suggested that the EMC might concentrate on a limited number of concerns; he listed community outreach and support, adaptation to climate change, regenerative agriculture, water quality, waste reduction.

Bowman also stated that the EMC might seek to re-define its mission. There are problems that our county will face in the foreseeable future; the EMC should work on those issues, regardless of whether the issues are "politically correct".

- Bowman felt that the EMC should become a "trusted voice" on issues of environmental importance.

Sue suggested that we look at what other EMCs are doing, as models for our future activities. She also suggested that we do a better/more complete job of orienting new EMC members.

Cat Bennett made the point that there are so many other environmental groups in the County that do not have a connection to County government. She suggested that the EMC might reach out to these groups, to form co-ordination and coalitions on various issues.

The meeting ended at 7:55 PM.