



# 2022 Annual Report

Tompkins County Water Resources Council

121 E. Court Street, Ithaca NY 14850

607.274.5560

<http://tompkinscounty.ny.gov/committees/wrc>

# **Tompkins County Water Resources Council**

## **2022 Annual Report**

### **Introduction**

The Tompkins County Water Resources Council (WRC) advises the Tompkins County Legislature on matters related to water resources management and planning. The Council is also charged with identifying problems, proposing priorities, and promoting the coordination of activities in the management and protection of the County's water resources. The WRC provides a public forum for local communities and stakeholder groups to address and discuss their concerns regarding water resources. It is the intent of the group to coordinate the water resources-related efforts of local governments, public and private institutions, and agencies and organizations throughout Tompkins County.

### **2022 Meeting Presentations**

Meetings often include presentations by guest speakers, as well as by WRC members. The following talks were given in 2022:

- Draft 2020-2022 Clean Water Act Section 303(d) List of Impaired Waters - What It Is, Why It Matters, and Concerns with Current Draft – *Roxy Johnston & Monitoring Partnership Committee*
- Town of Enfield Drinking Water Protection: Background and Local Law – *Steven Winkley, New York Rural Water Association, and Stephanie Redmond, Dan Walker, Nancy Spero, Town of Enfield*
- New State Legislation Connects the Dots: Soil Health-Water Quality-Climate Change – *David Wolfe, Cornell University*
- Resiliency & Recovery Plan Update – *Scott Doyle, Tompkins County Planning & Sustainability Department*
- Earth Source Heat and the Cornell University Borehole Observatory – *Sarah Carson, Olaf Gustafson, Anthony Ingraffea, and Teresa Jordan, Cornell University*
- A Novel Approach to Estimating Nutrient Transport and Its Applications – *Steve Penningroth, Community Science Institute*
- 2020 Water and Sewer Evaluation Update – *Kurt Anderson, Ithaca Area Economic Development, and David Herrick, T.G. Miller, PC*
- Proposed NYS Legislation to Include Watershed Health and Coordination in Soil Health and Climate Resiliency Act – *Megan Brosterman*
- Update on NYS Wetlands Policy – *Roy “JR” Jacobson, NYS DEC*
- Phosphorus Offset Tool for Cornell University – *Kara Bugis, Cornell Environment, Health, and Safety*

## 2022 WRC Committees

Every January, as part of its annual organizational meeting, the WRC reviews existing and forms new committees to help focus its efforts for the year and accomplish actions of the Water Quality Strategy. The following committees met in 2022:

### **Executive Committee**

The WRC chairperson and executive committee act on behalf of the Council to provide letters of comment and advocacy to local, state, and federal agencies. Letters are drafted by WRC members or committees and approved by the WRC as a whole. When a timely response is needed and deadlines for comment do not fall conveniently within the WRC's normal meeting schedule, the executive committee will approve and submit letters on behalf of the WRC. In 2022, the WRC chairperson and executive committee delivered several letters.

In January, the year started off with a bang, with comments provided on the proposed changes to the Draft 2020-2022 Clean Water Act Section 303(d) List of Impaired Waters. The changes included the de-listing of the southern end of Cayuga Lake as impaired by sediment, which was of particular concern as it relates to the Draft Total Maximum Daily Load for Total Phosphorus in Cayuga Lake (dTMDL). In June 2021, the WRC provided detailed sediment comments/questions to the dTMDL, which had not yet received a response, and concerns were raised as to how the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) will address sediment related phosphorus loading to Cayuga Lake in the absence of a listed impairment or Nine Element Plan recognizing the role of sediment. The WRC's draft 303(d) list comment letter addressed these questions, as well as new impairment listings: Lower Fall Creek and Upper Cayuga Inlet for pH and Lower Fall Creek for iron.

In March, proposed changes to NYS DEC Draft SPDES General Permit for Stormwater Discharges from Municipal Separate Storm Sewer Systems necessitated a letter of comment by the Water Resources Council in light of the previously mentioned proposed changes to the 2020/2022 draft 303(d) list.

In April, a letter of support was provided for the Town of Lansing's Consolidated Funding Application to the NYS DEC's Water Quality Improvement Project Program to fund the Salmon Creek stream realignment project. This project would help to reduce sediment going into Cayuga Lake, as well as work to provide streambank stabilization and protect the roadway from storm damage.

In November, a comment letter was sent to the NYS DEC for the Draft New York Great Lakes Action Agenda 2030 (GLAA), expressing the importance of the inclusion of the Finger Lakes when considering the Great Lakes Watershed. The inclusion of partners such as Soil and Water Conservation Districts, the Cayuga Lake Monitoring Partnership, and environmental non-governmental organizations in these actions will provide increased participation and benefit, as well as inclusion of metrics outlined in watershed management plans.

In December, the WRC provided comments to the New York State Department of Health on the proposed regulations for PFAS6 maximum contaminant levels and regulations on additional

emergent contaminants, expressing our full support for the recognition of the potential dangers of the class of chemicals referred to as “forever chemicals.” The letter included 20 points of interest for their consideration.

### **Cayuga Lake Monitoring Partnership Committee**

Members of the Monitoring Partnership Committee remained steadily engaged and active throughout 2022. Here are a few highlights from their work over the year:

- Reviewed NYS DEC’s Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations (CAFO) and Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) permits, and provided input for WRC comment letters on both permits.
- Continued work on Dave Bouldin’s (Emeritus Professor, Cornell University) carbon, calcium, and nutrient model for Cayuga Lake. Gained interest of NYS DEC Finger Lakes Water Hub and will seek funding.
- Received regular updates on Cornell’s Earth Source Heating project, tracked its progress as well as monitoring results.
- City of Auburn (Cayuga County) and the City of Ithaca reported on completion of their Drinking Water Source Protection Plans.
- Received a presentation on Cornell University’s Phosphorus Offset Program.
- Provided a monthly venue to engage with local watershed organizations and resource managers to exchange information about their work and upcoming events. Regular participants include Cayuga County Planning Department, Community Science Institute, Cayuga Lake Watershed Network, Cayuga Lake Environmental Action Now, Tompkins County’s Environmental Management Council, Planning & Sustainability Department, Environmental Health Division, and Cornell University.

### **Membership & Nominating Committee**

The Membership & Nominating Committee recommends prospective members to fill vacancies on the Council, which is composed of 21 voting members, non-voting ex officio members from relevant federal or state agencies, and associate members with committee-level voting rights. The committee assisted in adding several new members to the Council, especially with the valuable input and recruitment efforts of County planner Darby Kiley. The committee also presented the 2023 slate of officers to the Council for nomination.

### **Municipal Training Committee**

In October, this WRC committee hosted a “Streams 101 for Highway Professionals” training workshop on the fundamentals of stream processes as they relate to building and maintaining roads. Held at the Tompkins County Public Works Building, the all-day training was led by instructors Mike Lovegreen, retired from the Upper Susquehanna Coalition, and Tom Mallory and Angel Hinickle from the Tompkins County Soil & Water Conservation District.

The training included a three-hour classroom portion that covered the following topics: Streams/Watershed 101: Why Do Streams Look the Way They Do?; Diagnostics: How Do We Evaluate What's Wrong?; and Corrections: How Do you Deal With What's Wrong? Participants then visited two sites in the Town of Enfield where stream work has been done. Fourteen people attended the training, with representatives from the towns of Newfield, Ithaca, Lansing, and Danby, as well as the City of Ithaca, Tompkins County, and TC Soil & Water.



Committee members also initiated a needs assessment of highway staff in the county to help direct future programming.

### **Regional Watershed Coordination Committee**

The Regional Watershed Coordination Committee was formed in 2022 and included not only members of the WRC but also representatives from other counties in the Cayuga Lake watershed. The committee tentatively decided to work on regional collaboration and outreach around ditches. However, with the release of the draft Great Lakes Action Agenda, the committee used their meeting times to discuss and develop comments that were submitted to the full WRC for its consideration.

### **Watershed Rules & Regulations Committee**

This committee includes representatives from the Tompkins County Health Department and the three surface water public drinking water utilities: Bolton Point, Cornell University, and the City of Ithaca. All three utilities are participating in NYS DEC's Drinking Water Source Protection Program (DWSP2). The committee meetings provide a place to share information as the utilities move through DWSP2 process. Members reviewed the state's framework document and example protection strategies in detail. They also had an in-depth conversation with Andy Zepp, executive director of the Finger Lakes Land Trust, about opportunities to enhance source protection

working collaboratively with the land trust. The City of Ithaca's DWSP2 Plan was adopted on November 2, 2022. Other topics discussed were EPA's upcoming fifth Unregulated Monitoring Contaminant Rule (UCMR 5) sampling program and NYS Department of Health's proposed new PFAS (used generically for 'forever chemicals') monitoring requirements. Rassil Sayess from Cornell University's Water Resources Institute gave a presentation on the NYS DOH proposal. Discussion of Watershed Rules and Regulations (WRR) for Cayuga Lake is on pause while the committee waits for movement on Owasco Lake's draft WRRs, which were submitted to the state for consideration in December 2020.

## **2022 WRC Members**

### **Leadership**

Cynthia Brock, Municipal Government  
Chair

Frank Proto, At-large  
First Vice Chair

Liz Cameron, Co. Environmental Health  
Second Vice Chair

### **Voting Representatives**

Annie Bastoni, At-large  
Shawn Bossard, Agriculture  
Amanda Champion, Co. Government  
Jenna DeRario, Cornell Cooperative Extension  
Michelle Henry, Environmental Management Council  
Kristen Hychka, Municipal Government  
Emelia "Mia" Jumbo, At-large  
Darby Kiley, Co. Planning & Sustainability Dept.  
Patrick King, Business & Industry  
Liz Kreitinger, Watershed Organization  
Lynn Leopold, Municipal Government  
Jon Negley, Soil & Water Conservation District  
Holly Payne, At-large  
Frank Proto, At-large  
Brian Rahm, Environment  
Stephanie Redmond, At-large  
Steve Riddle, Water Purveyor  
Elizabeth Thomas, Recreation  
Linda Wagenet, At-large

**Associates (non-voting)**

Chris Bordlemay Padilla

Roxy Johnston

Rebecca Minas

Elaine Quaroni

Grascen Shidemantle

Tom Vawter

**A Little Bit More About the WRC**

The public is welcome to attend WRC meetings, and Tompkins County residents are invited to apply to become voting members. WRC membership consists of 21 voting members appointed by the County Legislature. These members represent various water-related interests and serve on a number of standing and special committees. There are also seats for non-voting ex-officio and associate members. Agendas and meeting minutes can be found on the WRC website.