

MONROE COUNTY ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

April 17, 2024

In Attendance:

EMC

At Large - Tom Dooley; EMC Chair
At Large – Haines Lockhart
At Large - Deb Muratore
Town of Brighton – Paul Johnson
Town of Chili - Larry Lazenby
Town of Gates - Charles Johnson
Town of Honeoye Falls - Andy Less
Town of Ogden – Bill Parkhurst
Town of Perinton - Mark Gaul
Town of Pittsford - Caroline Kilmer
Town of Riga - Greg Adams
Town of Webster - Charles Zlotkus
Ex Officio Alternate - Clement Chung; MCDES
Ex Officio Alternate - Steve Olufsen; MC
Planning & Development
Ex Officio Alternate – Starr O’Neil; MCDPH
Recording Secretary - Ryan Parra-Merrell

Guests

Dr. Christy Tyler - Presenter
Ryan Elliott – NYSDEC Great Lakes Program
Virginia McIntyre – MC Legislature
Dick Spade
Sally Howard - FMCE

Meeting location:

- Monroe County Fleet Center, Building 1 Conference Room
145 Paul Road, Rochester 14624

Call to Order:

- Meeting was called to order at 4:03pm by Chairman Tom Dooley.

Introductions:

- Introductions were made from all present

Review of Minutes:

- Motion to approve March minutes by Caroline Kilmer; seconded by Mark Gaul. All in favor; approved.

Meeting Topic(s):

Research at the High Acres Nature Area (HANA)

Christy Tyler, Ph.D., Thomas H. Gosnell School of Life Sciences, RIT

- The High Acres Nature Area (HANA) was established in 2008 as a natural area and wetland mitigation began the following year
 - Good location for hiking and birding

- Partnership with RIT began in 2011. More than 100 students have been involved with the project.
- Waste Management is another key partner and funds students in the summer working at HANA
- HANA has strong volunteer base.
- Wetlands
 - Defined as areas where water is present for part of the year, and including water-saturated soils and aquatic plants.
 - Wetlands are valuable because they control flooding, filter water, remove excess nutrients from the environment, and provide habitat for various plants and animals, as well as recreation for people.
 - The United States has lost much of its original wetland area in the last 125 years. 53% has been lost across the US, and 60% of New York's; generally due to commercial development, urbanization, pollution, and invasive species. Habitat loss is the leading cause of extinction and loss of ecosystem function.
 - Wetlands are the largest natural source of GHG, particularly methane and nitrous oxide.
- Ecosystem restoration - requires ACTIVE human intervention to restore or renew disturbed or degraded ecosystems under the Clean Water Act.
 - Differs from conservation, which works to preserve an area before it is affected by habitat loss.
 - Restoration can be done by various methods including reforestation, stream bed restoration, and invasive species removal.
 - The goal of restoration is to restore the positive impacts of wetlands without the negative (producing greenhouse gases).
- Can we make "real" wetlands?
 - Natural wetlands occur under different environmental conditions than restored wetlands, and artificially restored wetlands attract invasive species more than natural wetlands.
 - "Assembly rules" for creating a wetland: Dispersal filter, environmental filter, and biotic interactions change the species makeup in a wetland, and have to be considered when restoring a wetland habitat.
- HANA Wetland Restoration – three areas (gravel mine, row crop agriculture, and cow pasture) turned into wetland, emergent, and wooded areas, but there have been issues over time:
 - Area 1 – cattails took over after mitigation and had to be manually removed
 - Herbivory by geese was knocking out plant habitation which reduced plant cover, reduced plant diversity, but also decreased methane levels
 - Needed to research carbon sequestration and grazers
 - Planted water lilies, as geese don't eat them. However then the water lilies took over. Working on experimental removal of the water lilies
 - **Restoration is hard to do!** It requires continual maintenance and monitoring for significantly longer times than is required under CWA.
 - **Community engagement and partnerships are important!** Want to volunteer? Reach out to WM Community Relations – Nicole Simonetti

Microplastics

- Just announced - RIT and UofR received grant funding to operate the new Lake Ontario Center for Microplastics and Human Health in a Changing Environment. RIT News article: [New microplastics research hub aims to unravel health impact in changing climate | RIT](#)

Committee Reports:

- **Program and Presentations**
 - Next meeting May 15, 2024. Presenter is Brian Eshenaur from the Cornell Cooperative Extension of Monroe County. He will be speaking on tree cover and invasive species.
- **Nominating and Community Liaison**
 - Student representatives on the EMC will be starting as a pilot with just a few schools participating. Per Larry, six student members are expected along with three advisors at the May meeting and they will be joining the EMC through the next school year. Long term, will be looking at a possibility of a student committee on the EMC. Student essays on why they want to join the EMC will be shared.
- **Natural Resources**
 - GIS still developing application; should be completed by next month. Development was delayed due to involvement with eclipse. Paul will be reaching out with dates to reschedule May meeting (conflict with CAP public workshop and other meetings)

Monroe County Staff Reports:

- Steve Olufsen (Planning & Dvpt) - Fishery Advisory Board had meeting discussing management practices for trout. Speaker from Trout Unlimited scheduled to speak at October 2024 EMC meeting.
- Starr O'Neil (Public Health)
 - As regulator of drinking water, MCDPH is working with the City of Rochester regarding security measures at reservoirs.
 - More recent restaurant closures due to health code violations.
 - The EPA finalized PFAS and PFOAs ("forever chemicals") rules for drinking water.
 - Hiring for Environmental Health Project Analyst – posting online now: <https://www.monroecounty.gov/hr-apply/view/7080>
- Clement Chung (Environmental Services)
 - May 8th - Third and final public workshop for Climate Action Plan
 - EPA pilot program on predictive modeling and precipitation events
 - Presenting at the Climate Solutions Summit Panel on Saturday, 4/20
 - Sierra Club tree giveaway at four local parks on 4/27 from 10-3
 - Pick up the Parks and pharmaceutical collection for Earth Day weekend

Other Business/Announcements

- Caroline Kilmer nominated to join the Executive Committee as one of the three EMC Member seats. Motion to put nomination to a vote made by Chair Tom Dooley; seconded by Deb Muratore. All in favor. Caroline appointed to Executive Committee.

Privilege of the Floor

- Charles Johnson (Gates): Earth Day event in Gates this Saturday, 3/22; will also be having tree planting ceremony
- Ryan Elliott (NYSDEC):
 - The USEPA and federal partners are seeking input on the draft Great Lakes Restoration Action Plan IV, which outlines goals and objectives of the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative for 2025-2029. The public comment period is open until May 24th. The draft plan and means to comment can be found here <https://glri.us/action-plan>

- Link to EPA's press release - <https://www.epa.gov/newsreleases/epa-and-federal-partners-look-for-public-input-great-lakes-action-plan>
- The next round of Great Lakes Action Agenda Sub-Basin Work Group meetings is scheduled for later this month/early next month. People should register if they intend to participate in these meetings so they can plan accordingly.
 - Southwest (SW) Lake Ontario (hybrid meeting)
 - May 8th, 1:00pm to 4:00pm
 - [Click to Register](#)
 - Chili Community Center, Rm 213; 3237 Chili Ave, Rochester, NY 14624
- Upcoming Meetings Related to the Genesee River Watershed
 - [Genesee/Finger Lakes Regional Planning Council Local Government Workshop \(5/16\)](#)
 - [Genesee River Basin Summit \(5/22\)](#)
- Sally Howard (Federation of Monroe County Environmentalists) – Seeking ways to guide public to not include plastics for food scraps programs (things that appear to be paper, but are really plastic). Clem suggested that she reach out to Yasmin Guevera, MCDES, as she deals with the Monroe County Food Scraps program
- Deb Muratore (At Large) – Inquired about plastics in microfiber bed sheets that may break down in washer; referred her to Kate Walker, Executive Director for the Center for Sustainable Materials Management

Adjourn:

Meeting was adjourned at 5:22.