



Oswego County
Environmental
Management Council

2010 STATE OF THE ENVIRONMENT

AND

ANNUAL REPORT

SUBMITTED BY THE OSWEGO COUNTY
ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

APRIL 19, 2010

**OSWEGO COUNTY EMC WEBSITE:
WWW.CO.OSWEGO.NY.US/PLANNING/EMC**

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2010 Oswego County Environmental Management Council State of the Environment and Annual Report Executive Summary Outline

State of the Oswego County Environment

The report provides a summary of the environmental issues and concerns in the following areas:

- Oswego County in general, including nuisance aquatic vegetation and invasive species, wetlands legislation, inactive hazardous waste sites, household hazardous waste, oil and gas drilling, wildlife corridors and open county water resources
- Salmon River Corridor and Tug Hill, including potential impacts to the Salmon River, its tributaries and headwaters and unique habitats, DEC initiatives in the corridor and watershed, and impacts of recreational activities on the Tug Hill
- Oswego River Corridor, particularly brownfields assessments and redevelopment, and shoreline erosion
- Lake Neatahwanta reclamation
- Lake Ontario Coastline and adjacent uplands, including the coastal wetlands and dune system, Lake Ontario basin-wide education, collaboration and planning efforts
- Sandy Creek/Lacona, Mexico and Phoenix/Schroeppel water issues, including the proposed integrated beef cattle finishing/processing and closed loop ethanol production facility
- Oneida Lake north shore nuisance and invasive species, and the Oneida Lake watershed management plan
- Lake Ontario water withdrawal, lake level regime changes, lake restoration collaboration, recreational activities and wind power issues
- Air quality issues in the county due to new EPA ozone and particulate standards

Annual Report of EMC Activities

As lead agency for eight major strategies of the Oswego County Comprehensive Plan, the EMC participated in several projects and initiatives to support these strategies. The report provides details on the EMC involvement with the following:

- EMC Strategic Plan and Membership
- Bion closed loop beef finishing/processing and ethanol production facility proposal
- Lake Ontario Coastal Wetlands, Salmon River Corridor and Watershed Conservation Plan
- New York State Association of Environmental Management Councils annual meeting

- Oswego County Aquatic Vegetation Control Program and Invasive Species management
- Local environmental groups such as the Ontario Dune Coalition, Lake Neatahwanta Reclamation Committee, Save Oswego County Land Trust, Salmon River Watershed Conservation Plan, Water Quality Coordinating Committee, St. Lawrence Eastern Lake Ontario Partnership for Regional Invasive Species Management (SLELO PRISM), Oswego County Solid Waste Management Board, Friends of Great Bear, Friends of the Oswego River Canal, and Oswego County Green Team
- Solid Waste Management, including Household Hazardous Waste
- Alternate fuels projects and development in the County, including coal gasification and hydrofracturing for natural gas
- Water resources management via the establishment of a county-wide Water Resources Commission by the legislature

Conclusion

Oswego County continues to possess high quality water supplies and an impressive diversity of species and habitats. The major environmental threat is from development near the most sensitive of these valuable resources. This threat has increased with the recent national economic downturn, which has generated pressure to increase local tax revenues whenever and wherever possible. The primary role of local decision-makers should be to evaluate development and projects in light of potential environmental impacts, and to attempt to promote development compatible with the area's resources. In light of its lead agency status for several Oswego County Comprehensive Plan strategies, the EMC's ability to collaborate, coordinate, facilitate and educate remains an important resource for local planners and developers.

Oswego County Environmental Management Council 2010 State of the Environment Report

INTRODUCTION

The Oswego County Environmental Management Council (EMC) is a volunteer board, authorized for up to 15 members, established in 1971 by New York State Environmental Conservation Law and Resolution 86 of the Oswego County Legislature. Members are appointed by the Chairperson of the County Legislature. By resolution, the council was created “for the purpose of study and recommendations to this Body of procedures and programs which are deemed advisable and in the best public interest, for reviewing and advising local and state governments on matters pertaining to the use and conserving the environment for the protection of all the people...” As such, the EMC seeks to understand and promote the wise use and development of Oswego County’s natural resources.

Article 47 of the New York State Environmental Conservation Law defines the EMC’s primary mission as a review and advisory board to local and state government on matters affecting the protection, conservation, preservation and proper management of the natural resources of Oswego County. Section 47-0107 Paragraph 2 states, “*The council shall review the state of the county environment as a whole, and shall prepare and submit an annual report of its findings to the county’s governing body. This report also shall include an account of the council’s activities and accomplishments which shall be based on accurate records of its meetings and other works.*”

STATE OF THE OSWEGO COUNTY ENVIRONMENT

1. General

A. Nuisance Aquatic Vegetation and Invasive Species: Nuisance aquatic and terrestrial vegetation and invasive species continue to be a problem in Oswego County. Species such as Eurasian water milfoil (*Myriophyllum spicatum*), water chestnut (*Trapa natans*), purple loosestrife (*Lythrum salicaria*), giant hogweed (*Heracleum mantegazzianum*), Japanese knotweed (*Polygonum cuspidatum*), pale swallow-wort (*Cynanchum rossicum*), zebra mussel (*Dreissena polymorpha*), quaga mussel (*Dreissena bugensis*) and round goby (*Neogobius melanstomus*) continue spread unchecked in many areas, impacting native organism habitats and food chains, recreational activities, and aesthetics.

Japanese stiltgrass (*Microstegium vimineum*) was discovered at Selkirk Shores State Park in 2008, the first appearance of this species in all of Central and Northern New York. This species presents a significant threat to open wetland habitats in the

County. State Parks once again held a volunteer work day to remove the infestation, but continued attention will be needed.

NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets reports ten known infestations of giant hogweed in the County, most of which are being treated at least partially by NYSDOT.

In the past few years, pale swallow-wort has also been observed in a number of places, including the Towns of Oswego, Richland, Palermo and Volney, but especially in the Town of New Haven. Control costs, including educational campaigns and eradication will continue to require major planning and economic consideration at both Town and County levels. Oswego County lies within the service area of the St. Lawrence Eastern Lake Ontario Partnership for Regional Invasive Species Management (SLELO PRISM). SLELO is charged with coordinating efforts among all interested partners regarding prevention, early detection/rapid response, management, and education regarding invasive species of all types. New York State budgeted up to \$150,000 last year for support of this effort, and SLELO was promised a state contract last year for this funding to hire a coordinator, to be housed at The Nature Conservancy's Pulaski office, and fund priority inventory and management projects, but the contract is not yet forthcoming. EMC has designated a representative to this body.

Oswego County Soil and Water Conservation District once again coordinated the efforts to control the invasive exotic aquatic species water chestnut. In 2009, between 50-60 acres were physically undercut in the Oswego River areas both north and south of the City of Fulton. Due to the lack of program funding, the remainder of the 2009 control effort could not be carried out.

Potential insect invasions have become a threat to Oswego County. Emerald Ash Borer (*Agilus planipennis*), Asian Long-horned Beetle (*Anoplophora glabripennis*), and Hemlock Woolly Adelgid (*Adelges tsugae*) are approaching and have the potential to decimate timber resources in the County. Prevention is the most cost effective measure for dealing with invasives, and DEC's recent directive to ban movement of firewood further than 50 miles is an effort to prevent arrival of these insects.

Grant applications for invasive species have been submitted by The Oswego County Soil and Water Conservation District and The Nature Conservancy to address various aspects of invasive species management. Should funding be received, these grants would provide some capacity for management of giant hogweed, water chestnut, glossy buckthorn, phragmites, and purple loosestrife in the County in the coming year or two.

B. Wetlands and Wetlands Legislation: Oswego County is home to many agricultural wetlands (particularly mucks) and isolated wetlands (many of which are vernal pools too small to come under the protection of the 1975 NYS Freshwater Wetlands Act and which are essential breeding habitats for local amphibian

populations). State and Federal actions in this arena will bear monitoring in the upcoming years.

Several EMC members are actively participating in the Marsh Monitoring Program (MMP). Bird Studies Canada, in partnership with Environment Canada, developed the MMP in Ontario in 1994. With the financial support of the United States Environmental Protection Agency, Great Lakes National Program Office and the Great Lakes Protection Fund, the MMP was launched throughout the U.S. Great Lakes States in 1995. Carried out by a network of volunteer surveyors, the MMP functions to provide long-term monitoring of marsh-dependent bird, frog and toad species in marsh habitats throughout the Great Lakes basin. Data collected by MMP volunteers is used to determine long-term trends in species diversity, occurrence and abundance, and to directly inform and guide conservation, restoration and management programs for marshes and their bird and amphibian inhabitants.

C. Hazardous Waste Sites: Several inactive or delisted hazardous waste sites currently exist in the County. Among them are the PAS site in Oswego, the Fulton Terminals site in Fulton, and the Clothier site in Granby. These sites are a result of activities at the former Pollution Abatement Services (PAS) property in Oswego in the 1970's and 1980's. The EPA remediation plan for the sites includes regular monitoring to ensure hazardous materials are not leaching from the sites. The zoning and location of some of these sites as industrial areas may make them favorable for future re-development. Any such re-development will need to be assessed in relation to the previous presence of hazardous materials at these locations.

D. Household Hazardous Wastes: In 2008 the County appropriated funds for the construction of a permanent Household Hazardous Waste Facility to be located at the Bristol Hill Landfill. The facility began operation on May 6, 2009. The facility operated on Wednesdays and Saturdays from spring through the end of September. During the first year of the program 947 vehicles were served. The equivalent of 163 drums of hazardous waste was collected. The total cost, not including Department of Solid Waste labor, was \$45,000.

E. Oil and Gas Drilling: As of 2005, approximately 25,000 acres of land in the County have been leased for their oil and gas mineral rights by outside interests. While very few sites have undergone any development at this time, there is potential for environmental impacts (habitat destruction, aesthetic degradation, fire, and chemical spills among others) from access road construction and drilling activities should any of these sites be developed. Review of applications to DEC for the development of such leases will be needed to identify and mitigate possible impacts.

During 2009 New York State experienced rapid expansion in interest in natural gas development of the Marcellus and Utica shale formations utilizing "hydrofracking" well development techniques. While used for many years in other areas of the country, hydrofracking presents a number of environmental challenges, including wastewater disposal and potential surface well contamination. While the Marcellus and Utica

formations do not extend into Oswego County, the Council continues to monitor the use of this technology in near-by counties.

F. Wildlife Corridors: Current definitions emphasize that a wildlife corridor is a linear landscape element which serves as a linkage between historically connected habitat/natural areas, and is meant to facilitate movement between these natural areas. As open spaces have become divided and isolated from each other, wildlife corridors have become increasingly important in allowing movement of plant and animal species from one place to another. Several recent studies have confirmed that such corridors have been successfully used by many species. The continued pursuit of additional development in the County, such as the proposed coal gasification project in Scriba along the Lake Ontario shoreline, needs to be managed in relation to the preservation of open space and wildlife corridors, with development planned to mitigate impacts to these valuable habitats and improve the quality of life for County residents.

G. County Water Resources: Oswego County has been blessed with an abundant supply of high quality surface and ground water resources. Protecting and enhancing these valuable resources is an important objective. Since conservation of resources is generally a step behind development, and appears all too often as an afterthought, the necessity to aggressively address local water quality and quantity is imperative.

The Tug Hill Aquifer is a 47-mile long, 103 square mile aquifer system that extends from southern Jefferson County, through Oswego County and into Oneida County, and is the source of drinking water for eleven municipalities, as well as the source for private wells serving residences, manufactured home parks, camp-grounds and other facilities. Water from the aquifer is also used for manufacturing, the dairy processing industry, agriculture, and the NYSDEC fish hatchery in Altmar. Several streams that are hydraulically connected to ground water in the central part of the aquifer are critical fish habitat for salmon and trout, and help support a significant recreational fishing economy.

Critical issues facing the aquifer are impacts from withdrawal and significant development pressure. The northern portion of the aquifer has been designated as a Sole Source Aquifer by the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). Several large changes in withdrawal rates from the aquifer have occurred or are proposed in the near future including cessation of pumping of a well field for a paper company, purchase of those wells for expanded municipal water systems, potential water bottling operations and declining yields from an aging well field at the state fish hatchery. There are concerns about increased long-term development over the aquifer, especially in the northern part due to development associated with the expansion of the military base at Fort Drum. Local and state governments, commercial, farming, and individual water users need information to understand what effects these activities may have on the aquifer and how to sustain this resource in support of future growth and economic development.

Other potential impacts to County water resources include a proposed offshore Lake Ontario windfarm, the possible development of a closed-loop 72,000 cattle finishing/processing and ethanol production facility, continued decline and public use impairment of Lake Neatahwanta and a proposal to construct a coal gasification plant in the Town of Scriba near the Novelis plant on the shore of Lake Ontario.

2. Salmon River Corridor and Tug Hill

A. **Salmon River Bio-Inventory:** In 2004, NYSDEC initiated a Salmon River Watershed Biodiversity and Ecological Habitat Assessment in order to assess the condition of natural resources within the 173,000 acre Salmon River Watershed. The Tug Hill Commission facilitated the project and administered grant funds awarded by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Field work conducted by the NY Natural Heritage Program (which is a partnership between the Nature Conservancy and NYSDEC) has been completed. This report can be accessed from the Tug Hill Commission website <http://www.tughill.org/Projects%20Files/Salmon%20River/Salmon%20River%20Watershed%20Natural%20Resources%20Assessment.6.30.08.Final.pdf> .

The final assessment report was produced and distributed in the summer of 2008 to the participant agencies, county, town, village governments and the public.

B. **DEC Initiatives:** State efforts starting in 1996 to acquire former Niagara Mohawk Power Corporation land within the Salmon River Corridor have now been negotiated as part of a legal settlement. Surveying of the properties is ongoing and, along with other technical aspects of finalizing the acquisition process, it is now anticipated to be completed in mid 2010.

The DEC is still actively looking for and pursuing opportunities within the Salmon River Corridor where acquisition or conservation easements with willing land owners can take place. The purpose of any acquisition would be to consolidate the ownership of the parcels with future State Forest Lands for improved protection of the river corridor and to provide additional public access to those lands. Acquisition would be consistent with the New York State Open Space Plan and would only be pursued as a friendly purchase from a willing seller. The property would be paid for with funds from the Environmental Protection Fund. In accordance with Environmental Conservation Law [Section 54-0303] whenever funding from that source is used to acquire land not specifically listed on a prior state land acquisition plan, the town where the land is located must be offered the opportunity to object to the acquisition. Recent budget constraints within NYS have limited land acquisitions at the present time.

Projects to be funded from the Occidental Chemical Settlement were announced in January 2008 and all of the Salmon River Projects were accepted for funding. These included Stream Bank Restoration and Trail Development along the main stem of the river, Educational and Interpretive Development at the Salmon River Hatchery, and new well water exploration and development at the hatchery. Presently the well water

development project is proceeding and design and implementation of the stream bank restoration and the educational / interpretive projects are being initiated. Additional funding may become available for stream bank restoration through the Army Corp of Engineers and the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative.

NYSDEC Region 7 Lands & Forest staff have started the Upper Salmon River Unit Management Planning process of DEC managed lands. These include five State forests, a fishing access site, Conservation Easement Lands, and a pending new acquisition from National Grid on the Salmon River Reservoir. A public scoping meeting was held May 7, 2009 at the Salmon River Hatchery to gain public comments. Development of the management plans for these properties was initiated in the winter of 2009/2010 by DEC staff members and will continue through 2010 followed by a draft management plan that will be presented to the public for further comment.

NYSDEC, USFWS, and SUNY Oswego are investigating the potential removal of the Fallbrook Dam on Rice Creek. This dam has been in place since the late 1800's and is presently much deteriorated. Removal of the dam would provide ecological benefits of reconnecting the stream without barriers to aquatic life, provide a naturally flowing stream, and open the opportunity to reintroduce brook trout as part of the East Coast Brook Trout Restoration Initiative. The brook trout initiative is a partnership of all the East Coast States, USFWS, and Trout Unlimited. This would also represent a viable "green project" for SUNY Oswego and give students unique research opportunities to work within a restored stream system.

C. **Tug Hill:** Early in 2002 the Nature Conservancy and the NYS DEC announced that they had negotiated the purchase of 45,000 acres of the Tug Hill core forest. Most of the area purchased is in DEC Region 6, with only a small portion in Region 7, which encompasses Oswego County. However, the purchase will help protect the watershed and headwaters of the Salmon River and its tributary streams, so there is a net environmental benefit to Oswego County from the transaction. The area was not removed from the tax rolls, and will remain open to the public for hunting and fishing providing enhanced recreational opportunities in the area.

D. **Other:** Potential threats to the Salmon River Corridor and Tug Hill that will need review, monitoring and evaluation in the near future include:

- Snowmobile use, especially in the Tug Hill region, has resulted in an increased winter population, which in turn requires more services (gas stations, restaurants, etc.). Increased residential and seasonal camp development will have associated increases in solid waste, water supply needs and septic issues.
- ATV operation on County and State lands raises environmental concerns including degradation of trails and landscape due to ruts, soil erosion, clogging

of culverts and sedimentation problems in adjacent waterways, as well as trespassing onto adjacent private lands.

- Invasive species, both aquatic and terrestrial, need to be monitored and a threat assessment determined.
- Water withdrawal projects, such as the one proposed by Nestle Waters of North America Inc. for the Tug Hill Aquifer, need to be monitored and a threat assessment determined. State regulations need to be enacted for mandatory base flows in all streams. A United States Geological Society (USGS) study of the Tug Hill Aquifer needs to be funded in order to have a better understanding of the possible impacts such water withdrawals could have on the streams, wetlands, and the aquatic environment of the region. Due to budget constraints and lack of funding the USGS has been only able to do limited field work and data collection for what would have been an intensive 5 year study of the Tug Hill Aquifer. Enactment of the Great Lakes Annex, which will regulate water withdrawals from the watershed, has been ratified by all the bordering states and Congress. Loopholes that do not address the withdrawal of bottled drinking water (which is exempt because the containers hold less than 5.8 gallons individually) need to be closed. Presently Nestle has decided not to pursue sites for a water bottling facility along the Salmon River and the Tug Hill Aquifer.

3. Oswego River Corridor

A. General Setting: Over the past several years, the EMC has been active with many groups and programs involving the Oswego River Corridor, including the Oswego River Remedial Action Plan (RAP). The Oswego River watershed includes the Finger Lakes, industries, the city of Syracuse and other municipalities, extensive areas of farmland and forest and encompasses an area of over 5,000 square miles. The Oswego River is second only to the Niagara River in size as a tributary to Lake Ontario. Upstream pollutants are known to have traveled through the river and harbor impacting the Lake Ontario ecosystem. The Oswego River still has Mirex contamination from previous industrial activities along its shoreline. Oswego County is the only local body addressing problems within the river corridor.

In July 2006, the Lower Oswego River and Harbor were delisted as a Great Lakes Area of Concern (AOC) by the International Joint Commission due to the efforts of several state and local groups and agencies. The delisting of Oswego Harbor and River up to the Varick Dam is addressed as an AOC under other programs.

Region 7 Staff in the Bureau of Fisheries, Lands & Forests and Real Properties working with Oswego County Planning and Development, the City of Oswego, and non-government organization (NGO) The Trust for Public Land have been working actively to hopefully in the future acquire Leto's Island on the Oswego River. Leto's

Island is located on the east side of the Oswego River below the Varick Dam and is privately owned by the Riley family of Oswego. The property is for sale and represents the only public access on the east side of the river. Thousands of anglers use this section of the river each year. This area is a highly popular fishing access site especially during the fall salmon run and provides access to commercial fishing guides to launch their drift boats. Presently the Open Space Institute of NY is negotiating the purchase of the property and has approval from their Board of Directors for the purchase. The property would then be turned over to the State of NY through the NYSDEC. Recent technical problems with the NYS Canal System bridge connecting the Island have caused a delay in the purchase. This is a unique opportunity to provide public access in an urban area that could be easily lost if delays in acquisition by the state continue when the Rileys feel the necessity of selling.

B. Brownfield Assessments: Brownfields are defined as abandoned, idle or underused properties where expansion or redevelopment is complicated by real or perceived hazardous substances, pollutants, or contaminants. A project entitled *The Oswego Canal Transformation Project: An Old Pathway to a New Economy* was implemented under the auspices of the Oswego County Department of Planning and Community Development in the 2004. The objective of this project was to use US EPA Assessment Grant funds to perform environmental assessments on the most critical brownfield sites within the Corridor. The project identified the most critical sites through a standardized process of inventorying sites within the Corridor and prioritizing those sites based on key community and municipal objectives. The two objectives of this project were to: (1) evaluate sites which are petroleum contaminated; and (2) evaluate sites that are contaminated with non-petroleum or hazardous substances.

To date 107 brownfield sites have been identified in the Oswego Canal Corridor. 24% of these sites have had Phase I Environmental Site Assessments completed. Five sites were prioritized and Phase IIs are underway at two sites in Fulton and one in Oswego. Upon completion of the Phase II work, 308 Harrison Street will be sold by the City of Fulton to a private owner and placed back on the tax rolls. Upon completion of the Phase II work at 62 N 5th Street, the site will be transferred to an adjacent property owner. In Oswego, site 68 West First Street will be transferred to a private developer for redevelopment.

The county has a website which describes recent brownfield activity and progress. It can be found at: <http://co.oswego.ny.us/planning/brownfield.html>.

C. Shoreline Erosion: In 2004, the Department of Planning and Community Development received the Oswego River Shoreline Restoration Program Habitat Evaluation Design report from Dru Associates. The report outlines a quantitative model that can be used to easily evaluate a property's condition with respect to wildlife use and bank stabilization. According to the report, the aim of this initiative is to "show riverside landowners how to increase their property values for wildlife and improve stream bank stabilization through a program that teaches and rewards

landowners for undertaking actions that stabilize or restore riparian habitats that 'mimic' the original native shorelines."

D. **Other Corridor Initiatives:** Friends of Great Bear is a group of residents of Oswego County interested in the conservation and protection of the Great Bear property. This unique area is owned by the City of Fulton, Town of Volney, the Canal Corporation and private landowners. The City of Fulton's property has a number of its municipal water wells on site. The adjacent property is owned by the Town of Volney. A diversity of flora and fauna can be found on the property and the bordering Oswego River and Canal. In cooperation with the City of Fulton, Town of Volney, and other landowners, the group's goals are advocacy for the preservation and protection of this natural environment so that the public may share and make use of the property wisely as a recreational resource. During the 2008 season, a new trail was developed, color coded and marked. New bridges were built across streams.

SUNOCO is in the process of modifying and reopening the former Northeast Biofuels ethanol plant south of Fulton. All environmental, emergency, safety and logistical issues identified with the Northeast Biofuels operation will remain as SUNOCO moves forward. Start-up is currently scheduled for June.

4. **Lake Neatahwanta**

Lake Neatahwanta in the City of Fulton and Town of Granby has been under evaluation for over 15 years by the Lake Neatahwanta Reclamation Committee to diagnose the causes of its water quality problems and to develop possible remediation solutions.

The lake is experiencing cultural eutrophication due primarily to high phosphorus levels. The primary remediation goal is to reduce algae and suspended sediment levels to allow swimming and other recreational activities. Possible watershed management strategies proposed by consultants include dredging constructed wetlands to help filter and retain sediments and nutrients, riparian restoration along tributary streams and possible in-lake bio-manipulation of the food chains.

In 2007 the EPA released funds from a \$750,000 federal grant for watershed improvements, including best management plans (BMPs) and educational efforts. The CNY Regional Planning and Development Board assisted the Committee throughout 2008 to move ahead with the grant.

Funding for all of these BMPs and project coordinator assistance as provided by the US EPA expired in December 2008. The majority of agricultural improvements for water quality in Lake Neatahwanta Watershed ended at that time, along with grant funded community outreach and educational efforts.

Currently, consideration is being given to limited dredging to assess effectiveness and feasibility of future efforts.

5. Lake Ontario Coastline and Adjacent Upland Areas

According to NYS Department of State's 2007 Dune Management Study, the sand dunes along the eastern shore of Lake Ontario are an integral part of a coastal barrier environment that consists of beaches, sand dunes, embayments and wetlands. This barrier system, which extends for roughly 17 miles, contains the largest and most extensive freshwater sand dune formations in New York State and is among the most extensive in the northeast. The dune system contains several rare or unique habitats with associated threatened and endangered species.

The dune wetland complex is a priority conservation site within the Nature Conservancy's Binational Blueprint for Conservation of the Great Lakes and a DEC designated Natural Heritage Area. DEC recognizes several significant fish and wildlife habitats within the complex, and the NYS Department of State has delineated several significant coastal fish and wildlife habitats within the complex as well.

A. Coastal Wetlands: The fall flight of the bog buckmoth (*Hemileuca sp.*, NY Endangered) was monitored once again on state properties at Selkirk Fen and Deer Creek Marsh Wildlife Management Area, as well as the Nature Conservancy's Rainbow Shores Preserve (and Silver Lake Fen near SUNY Oswego). The 2009 flight showed a slight rise from much reduced 2008 numbers, except that the population in Deer Creek Marsh was nearly non-existent. This has been observed before, followed by dramatic increase after a few years of low water in Lake Ontario. The data continue to demonstrate that the bog buckmoth population in Selkirk Fen is the largest of the six known colonies in Oswego County (and in New York). This species is found in New York State only from Oswego County, and there are only four other known locations in the world.

Bog turtle (*Glyptemys muhlenbergii*) (Federal: threatened; New York: endangered) research is also in its fifth year. The Nature Conservancy's grant proposal for invasive species management includes work on Selkirk Fen to remove glossy buckthorn in Selkirk Fen to improve habitat for bog buckmoth and bog turtle.

B. Basin-wide Collaboration - Education: The Eastern Lake Ontario dune system and the adjacent Salmon River Corridor support significant holdings of public conservation lands. Both areas are prized for public recreation. Within Oswego County, these resources include Deer Creek Marsh Wildlife Management Area and Sandy Pond Beach Natural Area, as well as Sandy Island Beach State Park and State Forest holdings in the Salmon River Corridor. For the past five years, NYS Department of State Environmental Conservation has contracted education of its public recreation users of both systems to New York Sea Grant through a Coordinated Steward Program. In 2009, Sea Grant fielded two six-month Salmon River Stewards and four summer Dune Stewards. The mission of the Stewards was to educate visitors to use the areas in an environmentally responsible way. The response to the program has been very favorable, from the standpoint of both land managers and resource users. Unfortunately, 2009 marked the last year of state funding for this very cost effective program. At this juncture, funding for continuation of

the Steward Program has been sought from a number of sources, but in these uncertain fiscal times, the future of the program is in question.

With a grant from NYS Department of State, Sea Grant has developed “Traveling Trunks”, an education program geared to middle school aged children. The project is nearly completed, but final production is on hold, due to withheld funding. Each trunk will be a plastic tote filled with materials for a hands-on lesson on dunes. Materials cover birds, fish, muskrats, plants, the bog buckmoth, sediment and invasive species. Twenty trunks will be distributed among school districts and various other venues where leaders of children’s groups may access them. The trunks will come with lesson plans and information on all covered topics.

New York Sea Grant’s Entergy-funded dune signage project is nearing completion, and will provide educational signage for use on public and private dune properties. Signage is expected to be available for the summer 2010 season.

On behalf of New York Sea Grant, the Oswego County Soil and Water Conservation District received funding in 2008 from NYS Department of State for a comprehensive set of interpretive panels about the Dune/Wetland Complex as well as the riparian areas upstream of the shore. Sea Grant is working with contractor Bob McNamara and an Advisory Committee to develop these educational materials. Eight kiosks are under development, for placement at highway accessible locations, some within Oswego County, others further north. The contractor is in the process of developing digital drafts. Production is slated to be completed spring 2010.

The Ontario Dune Coalition has hosted Dune Fest, a dune education program in early June for middle school youth from southern Jefferson County, for the last few years. In 2009, the Sandy Creek seventh and eighth grades participated in the program for the first time. Students spent a school day at Southwick Beach State Park learning firsthand about the unique resources in their own back yard.

C. **Planning:** The Ontario Dune Coalition, a partnership of 29 public and private organizations with common interest in the preservation and optimum use of the Eastern Lake Ontario dune system, received the completed NYS Department of State 2007 report, entitled *New York’s Eastern Lake Ontario Dune and Wetland System: Guidelines for Resource Management in the 21st Century*, available online at <http://www.nyswaterfronts.com/downloads/ny%20elodws/default/nys%20elodws.htm>. The report acknowledges dramatic improvement in resource protection and management over the past 20 years and features a 16 point Stewardship Vision for continued collaboration. To begin adoption and implementation of the Stewardship Vision, NY Sea Grant hosted a Dune Management Conference at the State Fair Grounds in November. About 50 participants brainstormed next steps, including what each member organization of the Ontario Dune Coalition could contribute. Oswego County EMC stands ready to support grant proposals and help with educational materials as needed.

Highlights of the vision include:

- Recognition that the dunes and wetlands they shelter are one system and the goal is to develop widespread public appreciation of the system
- Active management should aim to benefit the resource as well as local residents, visitors, and the general public
- Coordination of the work and interests of all entities is crucial
- Management plans are needed for the various public properties, and these plans should reflect balance between conservation and beneficial use
- Regulation should address issues of public health, safety, and welfare and include dealing with the potential impacts of flooding and erosion, as well as motorized water traffic
- Activities should seek sustainable economic benefits while considering the issues of carrying capacity and cumulative impacts
- Shoreline management should respect the natural protective features and use non-structural methods as much as possible
- Planning should occur at the municipal and county level as well, especially for inlet management at Sandy Pond
- Adequate funds should be developed for effective planning and management
- All plans need to allow for response to changing conditions

Additional Planning efforts underway in the Eastern Lake Ontario include:

- Comprehensive Plan for Pulaski/Richland (contractor is CNY Regional Planning and Development Board)
- Comprehensive Plan for the Town of Sandy Creek (contractor is CNY Regional Planning and Development Board)
- Salmon River Watershed Plan was completed (contractors are Tug Hill Commission and The Nature Conservancy)

The Sandy/South Sandy Creek Ecosystem-based Management Project contractors are Tug Hill Commission and The Nature Conservancy. While the watersheds of Sandy and South Sandy Creek lie to the north of Oswego County, this project includes the shoreline beaches and dunes as well as the watersheds of Deer Creek, Little Sandy Creek, Lindsey Creek and Skinner Creek, all of which lie largely within the County. EMC was

part of the stakeholder team that identified invasive species, agriculture and forest fragmentation as the three top priority issues. Preliminary proposals were prepared but all is on hold pending improvement in the State's fiscal health.

6. Phoenix/Schroepfel Area

The Village of Phoenix and Town of Schroepfel have a history of water concerns, including water supply and quality, proposed water districts and zoning issues regarding minimum lot size requirements to protect the extensive Sand Ridge Aquifer. Based on 2000 census data, parts of the Village of Phoenix and Town of Schroepfel fall within the Syracuse urban area as defined by the new Phase II Storm Water Regulations. As such, the Town and Village have been designated as municipal storm sewer systems (MS4), requiring them to implement education and management practices to protect the quality of local water bodies. Progress is being accomplished with new water lines, new water districts and new sewage lines being established, and a new water tower completed and online. With the proposed development of Destiny USA in northern Onondaga County (a retail, research and tourism center, which would include the largest shopping mall in the United States) as well as suburban sprawl from Syracuse, there may be increased pressure for development to the north, into the Phoenix/Schroepfel area. Such development will require detailed assessment and planning to ensure the continuation of a high quality water supply to the residents of the southern part of Oswego County.

In 2009, Bion Environmental Technologies, Inc. began investigating the feasibility of developing a large scale integrated beef cattle closed-loop project somewhere in Oswego County. The project's initial phase would include finishing facilities for 72,000 head of beef cattle, ethanol production and an associated beef processing plant. Bion has shown interest in siting the main facility in the town of Schroepfel. As currently proposed, there remain significant environmental, infrastructure, transportation and community services concerns with this project (See 2009 *Report of Activities*, page 27).

7. Sandy Creek/Lacona and Mexico Area Wellfields

The Towns of Sandy Creek, Lacona and Mexico have all investigated identifying and developing new wellfields as municipal water sources to support the increasing needs of their residents. The EMC previously delineated the current municipal wellfields and recharge areas for Sandy Creek/Lacona, and provided recommendations regarding associated compatible development within the various recharge zones. Similar information would be very beneficial for any new wellfield development in these towns, as well as for other wellfields presently in use throughout the County. This will become even more beneficial as towns, and perhaps even the County, establish new water districts in the future. Previously, the EMC was able to accomplish these studies using grant money with matching funds from the involved municipalities. With

the loss of EMC funding at the County level, the EMC will likely not be able to support these types of studies in the near term.

8. **Oneida Lake North Shore**

A. **Land Use:** Real estate speculators are buying large parcels of forest land north of Oneida Lake, especially near water bodies. Often they are then harvesting the timber without regard for sustained yield, subdividing the land and marketing it to buyers in large urban areas around the country. These forest blocks are being fragmented, taken out of production and many are being occupied by low value structures that exploit a loophole in the state building code. A memorandum of understanding from the New York Department of State defines a classification of building referred to as “Group U” that is not required to conform to the standards set forth in the Uniform Fire Prevention and Building Code for residential structures. One caveat of the definition is that these structures can not have plumbing, sinks, toilets, or utilities of any kind. Mixed use development is spreading along major roadways into townships that have little or no land use control. The absence of planning and zoning in these communities allows a chaotic and inefficient development pattern to occur. In some places, public utilities are being extended into these unplanned areas without consideration of the impact of the consequential development.

Traffic flow on NYS Route 49 is increasing dramatically and, in the absence of any land use planning or control of driveway penetrations, congestion is occurring, traveling is less safe and commuting times are increasing. Linear development of mixed uses is spreading along the highway exacerbating the problems and adversely impacting the rural character of the area.

B. **Nuisance/Invasive Species:** The north shore of Oneida Lake (the largest body of water wholly within New York State) forms a large part of the southeast border of the county and represents a major recreation area for residents and visitors. The lake supports populations of at least three invasive plants. Eurasian milfoil has been documented in the lake since the 1970s, although its population appears to have been kept in check by a non-native insect (*Acentria*) which feeds on the plant. Water chestnut appeared in the western part of the lake in 1999 and has the potential to severely impact shallow water habitats in the lake. Purple loosestrife has out-competed native cattails and other native plants and dominates many marsh areas along the lake. Loosestrife is not used extensively by any native birds or mammals as a food supply and may result in their abandoning areas dominated by this plant. Water chestnut and loosestrife may require extensive remediation efforts in Oneida Lake.

Invasive plant species are making inroads into the interior of the county and they are currently unchecked. Phragmites (*Phragmites australis*) is following the highways northward from the lakeshore and invading the roadside wetlands. The plant is established along the road edge in many places and beginning to spread through the adjacent wetlands.

Japanese Knotweed has established robust stands along State Route 69 and is present in many populated areas. This plant can become dominant and almost impenetrable along stream banks compromising important riparian habitat and preventing recreational access.

The double crested cormorant (*Phalacrocorax auritus*), a large fish eating bird, has been implicated in the reduction of walleye, yellow perch, and other fish populations in Oneida Lake, as well as disturbing nesting common terns - a threatened species in New York State. A USDA economist estimated that cormorants ate so many Oneida Lake fish from 1995 to 2005 that the local economy suffered a loss in revenue of between \$100 to 500 million. In 2004 the USDA funded a \$1 million cormorant harassment program on Oneida Lake which was reduced to \$643,000 by 2009. The program was effective, with the lake's perch and walleye population making a significant recovery. The Federal funding for Cormorant control on Oneida Lake has been eliminated from the 2010 federal budget. There is grave concern that the elimination of this program will have devastating effects on Oneida Lake.

Zebra mussels are present extensively throughout the Lake basin. Zebra mussels filter plankton from the water, which removes a major food source of young fish, and the subsequent improved water clarity may expose young fish to predators. Zebra mussels also have reportedly caused the extirpation of most of the Lake's native clams.

Researchers have also speculated that within the next few years the round goby (already present in the Great Lakes) will invade the Lake in large numbers. Gobies eat zebra mussels, which collect botulism bacteria. Other fish and birds that eat the gobies can become infected and die.

Studies of Oneida Lake by Cornell University and other researchers are regularly identifying new invasive species. The ecological and economic impacts of these species will be an object of concern for many years to come.

The Oneida Lake Watershed Management Plan, a multi-agency project, was recently established to address water resource protection for the Oneida Lake watershed. Project Information is available at www.cnyrpdb.org/oneidalake. The project addresses several levels including funding for watershed improvement projects and public education programs and activities. A *State of Oneida Lake and Watershed Final Report* is available online or through the Central NY Regional Planning and Development Board.

9. Lake Ontario

A. **Water Withdrawal:** In December 2005 The Great Lakes Governors and Premiers signed agreements at the Council of Great Lakes Governors' (CGLG) Leadership Summit that provide protection for the Great Lakes–St. Lawrence River Basin.

The agreements include the following points:

- There will be a ban on new diversions of water from the Basin. Limited exceptions could be allowed, such as for public water supply purposes in communities near the Basin, but exceptions would be strictly regulated.
- The States and Provinces will use a consistent standard to review proposed uses of Great Lakes water.
- The collection of technical data is to be strengthened and the States and Provinces will share the information which will improve decision-making by the governments.
- Regional goals and objectives for water conservation and efficiency will be developed, and they will be reviewed every five years. Each State and Province will develop and implement a water conservation and efficiency program.
 - Lasting economic development will be balanced with sustainable water use to ensure Great Lakes waters are managed responsibly.
- The waters of the Basin are recognized as a shared public treasure and there is a strong commitment to continued public involvement in the implementation of the agreements.

B. **Lake Level Regime Change:** For the past eight years, The International Joint Commission has been reviewing regulation of water levels and flows for the Lake Ontario-St. Lawrence River system. After considering public comment on a draft proposal released in March, 2008, Commissioners concluded that regulation should be based on a revised set of goals and criteria aimed at more natural flows while respecting other interests. It proposed a one year process to resolve outstanding issues and obtain the concurrence of the federal governments. Under this process, IJC has commissioned a Working Group of representatives from each of the federal governments, as well as from New York State, Ontario, and Quebec, to develop both Orders of Approval and a Regulation Plan that will embrace mitigation measures for any economic hardships that would result to any of the interests affected by the Plan, as well as an adaptive management framework for evaluating the Plan and adapting to changing conditions. IJC's charge to the Working Group includes a report to IJC by June 2009. Additional information may be found at <http://www.ijc.org>.

C. **Lake Restoration Collaboration:** Following a public comment period, the final *Great Lakes Regional Collaboration's Strategy to Restore and Protect the Great Lakes* was released in December 2005. The Governors of the eight Great Lakes States expressed strong support for the Great Lakes Collaboration Implementation Act introduced in the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives. These bills would implement the recommendations of the Great Lakes Regional Collaboration, a

strategic planning effort in which the Governors played a leadership role. New York Governor George Pataki said: "This legislation is critical to preserving and sustaining these valuable resources and we look forward to continuing to work with our partners as we move forward to implement the Great Lakes Regional Collaboration Strategy." In February 2008, the Great Lakes Commission released the following statement regarding the region:

"A united Great Lakes region calls on Congress to strengthen national investment in Great Lakes restoration and protection as outlined in the *Great Lakes Regional Collaboration Strategy to Restore and Protect the Great Lakes*. Increased support from the Federal government is needed to implement recommendations in the Strategy and to match the significant investment of state and local governments, Tribes and private funds in Great Lakes restoration. The following highest priority actions – a subset of the Strategy recommendations – are consistent with the requests of the Governors of the Great Lakes States. We urge Congress to act on these regional priorities to address significant threats and capitalize on high-value restoration opportunities.

- **Stop Aquatic Invasive Species:** Enact comprehensive legislation such as the *National Aquatic Invasive Species Act* (S. 725) to address aquatic invasive species. If passage of a comprehensive bill was not possible in 2008, we urge Congress to strengthen and pass legislation to ensure that commercial vessels entering the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence system meet uniform ballast water discharge requirements and legislation to screen species that might invade the region from non-ballast pathways. Fully fund the Great Lakes Fishery Commission to control sea lamprey and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to complete construction and operation of the dispersal barrier system on the Chicago Sanitary and Ship Canal.
- **Clean Up Toxic Sediments:** Reauthorize the Great Lakes Legacy Act at \$150 million annually and fully fund the Act in FY2009 to continue to clean up contaminated sediments and restore Great Lakes "toxic hot spots."
- **Restore Great Lakes Wetlands:** Continue existing support and appropriate an additional \$28.5 million for Federal programs to partner with the States, Tribes, local governments and other non-federal partners in restoring 200,000 acres of Great Lakes wetlands. Appropriate \$16 million for the Great Lakes Fish and Wildlife Restoration Act.
- **Protect Water Quality:** Restore funding and prevent further cuts to the Clean Water State Revolving Fund (reduced by more than one-third in FY2008) by appropriating \$1.35 billion for FY2009. Great Lakes States will lose approximately \$143 million in funding this year as a result of the FY2008 cuts."

For more information, go to <http://www.glc.org/restore/>.

D. **Sport Fishing:** Research continues on the impact of zebra mussels and quagga mussels on the Lake Ontario food chain and the Lake's salmon and trout fishery. Reports indicate that the filter feeding mussels have removed large amounts of zooplankton and phytoplankton (microscopic and nearly microscopic animals and plants) from the water column. This has the dual effect of increasing water clarity and decreasing the amount of food available for the bait fish which rely on this plankton for food. This in turn reduces the available population of bait fish preyed upon by major game fish such as salmon and trout. The number of game fish and their average size may experience a decrease as a result, which would have an impact on the local sport fishing industry. Round gobies, another exotic in Lake Ontario, have been implicated as a vector in the transport of Type E botulism to sport fish and birds. On a positive note gobies are being predated upon by numerous predator species in the Lake and are providing a new alternative food source for many game fish such as bass. New exotic species seem to appear regularly and the impact of these exotics on the natural ecology of the lake is still unknown. Federal regulations governing ballast water discharges / impacts from ocean going ships that traverse the St. Lawrence River and Lake Ontario have somewhat effectively addressed a way to stop the continuing spread of exotic species. Sport Fishing in Oswego County and Lake Ontario provides a multi million dollar economic impact to the local communities along the shoreline.

Many species of the algae genus *Cladophora* may represent impairment to fishing and boating activities in some localized areas. *Cladophora* can exist either attached to a below surface substrate or as large free floating mats or colonies. It is currently believed that the improvement in water clarity due to the presence of zebra mussels in the Lake has allowed *Cladophora* to form large colonies at much deeper depths. A large fixed colony may be dislodged by wave action and get washed into near-shore areas as a free floating mat. While these colonies represent a temporary impact to fishing, boating and even water intake structures, typically wind, storms and lake currents move these mats from place to place, and the impairment is thus short-term.

In the late spring and early summer of 2009 for the first time since the late 1800s, naturally reproduced Atlantic salmon were found in the Salmon River. 43 young of year [YOY] Atlantic salmon were found in two locations on the river. Atlantic salmon have been stocked at low levels in the Salmon River since 1996 to provide a presence of this native species, to provide trophy angling opportunities, and continue researching the potential of future restoration. It was believed that Atlantic salmon in Lake Ontario feeding on a diet of alewives, a non native forage species which has high concentrations of the enzyme thiaminase, would cause reproductive failure and reduce the opportunity for restoration. Recent changes in Lake Ontario's forage base may be creating a more diverse food source for Atlantic salmon and therefore increasing their ability to reproduce successfully. There has been a marked increase in sportfishing catches of Atlantic salmon in Lake Ontario the past two years.

Personnel using the mass marking trailer that NYSDEC was able to purchase as part of the Occidental Chemical Settlement have now been fin clipping all hatchery reared Chinook salmon since the spring of 2008. This technology allows for the first time all

1.8 million Chinook salmon to be fin clipped so as to identify hatchery produced Chinook from naturally reproduced Chinook salmon. The Salmon River is known to have reproduction of Chinook salmon in the millions on an annual basis but until now there was no way to know what the actual survival rate of these fish is and their contribution to the fishery. With marking of all hatchery fish this question can now be addressed.

E. Recreational Diving: The vastly improved water clarity resulting from zebra and quagga mussels has contributed to an increase in recreational diving in Lake Ontario. In addition, due to the cold, freshwater conditions present here, the rusting and marine life growth that claim many shipwrecks elsewhere (particularly in saltwater) aren't present to the same extent. The southern shore of Lake Ontario has many documented shipwreck sites which have proven to be popular locations for recreational divers to explore.

F: Wind Power Development: Proposals to develop wind powered turbines along the southeast shore of Lake Ontario have generally included turbines sited off-shore. The southeast shoreline of Lake Ontario is widely regarded as an important avian migratory pathway. In the spring, large concentrations of raptors (birds of prey such as hawks, falcons and eagles) have been well documented along the lake's on shore and near shore regions. The impact of wind turbines on these species needs to be further assessed in regard to this particular section of Lake Ontario. The focus of the 2005 New York State Association of Environmental Management Councils annual meeting was on wind powered turbines, indicating the widespread interest and concern over the impacts of developing this resource. In 2006, construction of a large wind farm on the Tug Hill Plateau was completed. Another wind farm is proposed for Jefferson County.

In early 2010 NYPA proposed locating a large number of wind-powered electricity generating turbines in Lake Ontario waters off the Oswego County shoreline. While the Council favors the development of renewable energy in general, this proposal must be fully evaluated in order to fairly weigh all factors involved, including environmental benefits, environmental drawbacks, tourism impacts, property rights, and aesthetics.

10. Air Quality

In general Oswego County continues to maintain excellent air quality. In late 2009 EPA proposed tightening standards for ozone and fine particulates. Depending upon the final level determination, Oswego County could once again find itself in non-attainment of Federal air quality standards. The setting of the final standards and development of an implementation schedule will take a number of years, so local impacts will not be felt in 2010. Typical compliance strategies include enhanced mobile source inspections and lowering of industrial emission limits.

Because all of New York State is part of the Northeast Ozone Transport Region, Oswego County will remain part of that area for purposes of ozone compliance classification.

Open Burning Regulations: In October of 2009 DEC amended the Air Resources regulations Part 215 (Open Fires) to prohibit many types of open burning- including trash. “Backyard” burning of trash is the largest single contributor of dioxin to the air. DEC ENCON officers will be the primary enforcers of this regulation.

DEC is also holding public comment sessions on proposed Part 247 regulations to control smoke emitted from outdoor wood boilers.

OSWEGO COUNTY ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT COUNCIL 2009 ANNUAL REPORT OF ACTIVITIES

INTRODUCTION

By State law and County resolution, the EMC's primary mission is to serve as a review and advisory board to Local and State government on matters affecting the protection, conservation, preservation and proper management of the natural resources of Oswego County. In 1996, the Council agreed to serve as lead agency for the purpose of implementing eight major strategies of the Oswego County Comprehensive Plan. These strategies are:

- II.4.b. Identify potential wildlife movement corridors between major open space areas and encourage their incorporation into greenway, trail and local comprehensive planning efforts
- II.4.d. Work with the NYS Natural Heritage Program to inventory habitats of threatened, rare and endangered species throughout Oswego County and identify areas with unique or important ecosystems that warrant protection
- II.4.e. Encourage landowner agreements or donation of conservation easements by waterfront industries for the purposes of habitat protection, especially along Lake Ontario and major waterways
- V.2.a. Develop a comprehensive inventory of all data on municipal wellfields, zones of contribution, recharge areas, aquifers and potential aquifers in the County and seek funding to more accurately determine these areas
- VIII.3.b. Identify resources that have scientific or educational importance and natural heritage value and encourage education, interpretation and research opportunities relating to these resources
- IX.3.c. Encourage development of and develop nature interpretive facilities focused on the major natural resource areas of the County
- IX.5.b. Advocate proactive solutions and flexible regulatory approaches to environmental issues so that regulations do not become a hindrance to appropriate development
- X.4.b. Develop environmental education and research programs to enhance knowledge and awareness of the local environment

MAJOR EMC ACTIVITIES

1. EMC Strategic Plan and Membership

In February, EMC members approved the 2009 EMC Strategic Plan. Major activities in the Plan included spearheading an effort to re-activate the County Water Quality Coordinating Committee or otherwise establish a countywide body to oversee water resource issues, leading a countywide Earth Week cleanup effort, participating as EMC representatives to many local environmental organizations, review and update of the status of invasive species throughout the County, regular review of the Environmental Notice Bulletin for projects with potential impact on Oswego County

natural resources, researching and developing informational materials as requested by local governing bodies and continuing the EMC guest speaker program for education about current environmental issues. Reports by members were provided at monthly meetings as progress was made on the many aspects of the plan.

The EMC actively recruited new members during the year to fill vacancies, meet permissible membership levels, broaden the Council's knowledge and experience base and establish a broader geographic distribution of its membership. In 2009, long-time EMC Chair Dave Hertzler stepped down to serve as Vice Chair. Tim Carroll was appointed EMC Chair by Barry Leeman, Oswego County Legislature Chair. Carey Pelc was appointed as a new member in July 2009 and Jim Best and John Puppato resigned effective December 31, 2009.

2. Bion Closed Loop Beef Finishing/Processing and Ethanol Facility Proposal (Strategy IX.5.b)

In order to facilitate its assessment of the proposal on behalf of the County Legislature, the EMC had a Bion representative provide a presentation and question and answer session at an EMC meeting. The Council submitted a further list of questions to and received answers from Bion. We also reviewed the Bion wastewater treatment technology patent paperwork and technical references available on the Bion website, and researched related information from several other sources.

While the proposed technology shows promise, EMC members are concerned with the lack of performance data from an operational facility employing the Bion process. In the absence of feasibility data and site specific information, the EMC determined it would be unable to provide meaningful comment on the proposed project. Once data and site specific information on potential impacts to watershed resources, air, solid waste, health, infrastructure, transportation and community services become available the EMC will review the project again and attempt to make an informed recommendation to the Oswego County Legislature.

3. Ontario Coastal Wetlands/Salmon River Watershed/Salmon River Corridor (Strategies II.4.d, II.4.e, VIII.3.b, IX.5.b.)

The EMC originally contracted with the Natural Heritage Program (NHP) in 2001 to conduct a biodiversity inventory of selected coastal wetlands in Oswego County. In early 2004, the contract to perform a biological inventory on several wetland communities in the Salmon River corridor was amended and extended to September 30, 2005. The New York State Natural Heritage Program (NYSNHP) was contracted to carry out the work. Since the completion of the studies, EMC has continued to monitor and discuss efforts to both protect and develop land in these areas. In June 2009, EMC invited Katie Malinowski of the Tug Hill Commission to speak on the use of Ecosystem Based Management (EBM). EBM is a state led effort to get nine state agencies working together and embracing environmental management at an ecosystem scale, including people and economy, rather than on a piecemeal basis.

4. Oswego County Aquatic Vegetation Control and Invasive Species (Strategy IX.5.b.)

In 2009, the EMC continued distribution of its series of pamphlets on nuisance aquatic vegetation found in Oswego County. The information was made available at the annual open house at the Salmon River Hatchery in Altmar and at the Fulton Going Green Day at the Fulton YMCA. Revisions and reprints of the pamphlets are made when needed.

EMC members also supplied reports during meetings regarding the Tug Hill Invasives workshop, the spread of European frogbit (*Hydrocharis morsus-ranae*) and the possible intrusion of the Asian long-horned beetle (*Anoplophora glabripennis*) and emerald ash borer (*Agrilus planipennis*) into Oswego County.

5. Local Involvement (Strategy IX.5.b. and X.4.b.)

EMC members have served as members and liaisons on several local environmental groups and initiatives including The Ontario Dune Coalition, Lake Neatahwanta Reclamation Committee, Save Oswego County Land Trust, Salmon River Watershed Conservation Plan, Water Quality Coordinating Committee, St. Lawrence Eastern Lake Ontario Partnership for Regional Invasive Species Management (SLELO PRISM), Oswego County Solid Waste Management Board, Friends of Great Bear, Friends of the Oswego River Canal and Oswego County Green Team. Periodic reports to the EMC regarding the activities of these groups add to the breadth and depth of EMC knowledge regarding environmental issues in the County.

In November, Sandy Bonanno represented the Oswego County EMC at the New York State Association of Environmental Management Councils annual meeting in Watkins Glen. She attended presentations on land use, resource conservation, green jobs and reported back to the Council.

EMC also sponsored a proclamation in the County Legislature in 2009 for Earth Week, encouraging local residents to participate in Earth Week Clean-ups and Celebrations and to proudly accept responsibility for their part in securing a safe and healthy environment for the generations to come. The proclamation was publicized by Oswego County Promotion and Tourism. Over 20 groups committed to participate.

6. Household Hazardous Waste Collection (Strategy IX.5.b.)

During 2008, EMC provided the County Legislature with a study recommending the reinstatement of Household Hazardous Waste Collection efforts in the county. That year, the Oswego County Department of Solid Waste finalized plans for a permanent Household Hazardous Waste drop-off station at the Bristol Hill landfill. The facility opened in May of 2009 and established hours on Wednesdays from 8:00 AM-2:00 PM and Saturdays from 8:00-11:00 AM.

7. Solid Waste Management (Strategy IX.5.b.)

EMC members Carlton Salvagin and Mike Kerker served as representatives on the Solid Waste Management Board. Through monthly reports they kept the EMC informed on solid waste issues such as flow control (intended to keep all trash generated in the county here to increase revenues through tipping fees), the landfill gas project, recycling efforts, repairs and improvements at the several transfer stations and the ferrous metals recovery system.

8. Alternate Fuels (Strategies IX.5.b and II.4.e)

Although no progress was made by the developer of the proposed Transgas Coal Gasification plant in the Town of Scriba, the EMC continued to monitor technological developments in coal gasification and associated environmental impacts.

EMC members also reviewed and discussed the state of hydrofracturing technology used to retrieve natural gas from the Marcellus Shale formation. Although Marcellus Shale is not present in Oswego County, the so called hydrofracking technique could be employed if economic conditions ever become favorable to mine natural gas from other formations in the county.

9. EMC Website and Information (Strategy X.4.b)

In accordance with its strategic plan, the EMC has established a website with a list of members, links to the Annual Report and other projects. For more information, go to <http://www.oswegocounty.com/planning/emc>.

EMC also continued progress with making electronic copies of minutes, agendas, reports and other educational materials so they can be more readily available for search, copy and electronic transfer.

10. County Water Management (Strategies V.2.a and IX.5.b)

In October 2007, the EMC presented a report to the Legislature on County water resource management and the potential impacts of a water bottling facility on the Tug Hill Aquifer. The report recommended that a water resources management plan be developed to protect, preserve and establish wise use guidelines and regulations for Oswego County water resources. It also recommended that a county commission be created to oversee and direct the water resources management plan.

In May 2009, the EMC convened a meeting with representatives of several county and state agencies including Oswego County Department of Community Development, Tourism and Planning, Tug Hill Commission, Oswego County Soil and Water Conservation District, Central New York Regional Planning and Development Board, North Shore and Salmon River Councils of Governments, New York State

Department of Environmental Conservation Region 7 and Oswego County Health Department. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss strategies to develop and implement a County water management plan and the possible reactivation of the Oswego County Water Quality Coordinating Committee.

Over the course of the year, EMC, in consultation with the May meeting attendees, developed a practical initial strategy for creating a Water Resources Commission and developing water resources management plan in the near term, while laying the groundwork for a long-term vision. It is intended to be an example of how the goals, strategies and composition of the Commission could be established.

In November 2009, EMC submitted a proposal, recommending the County Legislature appoint a task force which would use this proposal as a framework to create a County Water Resources Commission.

11. Other EMC Activities

During 2009, EMC wrote letters to local, state and federal representatives in support of several environmental programs and initiatives, including senate bill S6047 – Electronic Equipment Recycling and Reuse, continued funding of the United States Geological Survey Tug Hill Aquifer Study, continued funding of DEC’s Division of Lands and Forests Saratoga Tree Nursery and support for the Bigger Better Bottle Bill.

CONCLUSION

Oswego County continues to possess high quality water supplies and an impressive diversity of species and habitats. The major environmental threat is from development near the most sensitive of these valuable resources. This threat has increased with the recent national economic downturn, which has generated pressure to increase local tax revenues whenever and wherever possible. The primary role of local decision-makers should be to evaluate development and projects in light of potential environmental impacts and to attempt to promote development compatible with the area’s resources. In light of its lead agency status for several Oswego County Comprehensive Plan strategies, the EMC’s ability to collaborate, coordinate, facilitate and educate remains an important resource for local planners and developers.

PUBLICATIONS AVAILABLE FROM THE EMC

"Biodiesel and Biofuel Information Report", Oswego County Environmental Management Council Report: 2005.

"Eurasian Watermilfoil Alert", Oswego County Environmental Management Council: 2002.

"Household Hazardous Waste Clean-up Day Funding Report", Oswego County Environmental Management Council Report: 2005.

"Oswego County Water Resource Management and Nestlé's Water Bottling Plant Impact Report" Oswego County Environmental Management Report: October 2007.

"Purple Loosestrife Alert", Oswego County Environmental Management Council: 2002.

"Transgas Development Systems Coal Gasification Proposal Report to County Legislature" Oswego County Environmental Management Report: February 2008.

"Water Chestnut Alert", Oswego County Environmental Management Council: 2002.

"Welcome to the Oswego River and Canal, Boating Wakes and Shoreline Erosion." Oswego County Environmental Management Council: 2001.

"Wind Power Resource Materials: Oswego County Wind Power Project." Oswego County Environmental Management Council Resource Paper: August 2003.

"Backyard Burning, A growing pollution problem.", NYS Legislative Commission on Solid Waste Management.

2009-2010 EMC Membership

Tim Carroll, Chairman	Town of Granby
Dick Drosse, 1st Vice Chair	Town of Minetto
Mike Kerker, 2 nd Vice Chair	Town of Volney
Sandra Bonanno, Secretary-Treasurer	Town of Volney
Legislator Barbara Brown	Towns of Palermo/Hastings/Schroeppel
Dr. David Hertzler	Town of New Haven
Dr. Peter Rosenbaum	Town of Minetto
Don Ross	City of Fulton
Hal Smith	City of Oswego
Carey Pelc	Associate
Dr. Carlton Salvagin	Town of Hannibal
Fran Verdoliva	Town of Mexico
Karen Noyes, Ex-Officio	Oswego County Department of Community Development, Tourism and Planning
John DeHollander, Ex-Officio	Oswego County Soil and Water Conservation District