



Genesee/Finger Lakes Regional Planning Council

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Minutes

REGIONAL ROUNDTABLE: COUNTY WATER QUALITY COORDINATING COMMITTEES

*Friday, May 18, 2012
9:00 a.m. to Noon*

Attendees

See attendance sheet.

Welcome & Introductions

Dave Zorn, Executive Director, G/FLRPC

Jayne Breschard Thomann, Senior Planner, G/FLRPC

Regional Roundtables are a series of meetings put together in an ongoing attempt on the part of G/FLRPC staff to bring experts together to discuss issues of regional importance. This is the fourth roundtable Jayne has organized, including topics on historic preservation planning, waterfront development, and green infrastructure for stormwater management.

Water Quality Coordinating Committees (WQCCs) serve as communication and collaboration vehicles for water quality activities in most counties across New York State. WQCC membership is voluntary and includes local agencies and organizations actively involved in water quality management, such as County Planning Departments, Soil and Water Conservation Districts, County Health Departments, Farm Bureaus, and Cooperative Extension Service, as well as academia and lake associations. G/FLRPC assists its County WQCCs with identifying water resource priorities and provides other assistance on an as needed basis. We look forward to an open conversation about WQCCs as a tool to support and promote water quality and water resource management. Our goal is to better understand the role and function of WQCCs and emerge with solutions for improved effectiveness. The intent of this roundtable is to bring all of the WQCCs and related stakeholders together in order to consider similarities at the regional level, share information and foster relationships that can help each individual WQCC function more effectively.

Defining the Issue: What are the primary functions of the County WQCC?

Genesee County WQCC

- History - started through the Mini-Grant Program from NYSDEC. Money was awarded to create a water quality strategy. In the late 1990s, a water quality strategy update was completed.
- Most of the funding received has been from the Mini-Grant Program.
- Genesee County has an active WQCC. The group meets four times a year. They have a diverse group including representatives from Ducks Unlimited, four watershed committees, county representatives, G/FLRPC, ag/farm representatives, NRCS, Tonawanda Indian Reservation, etc. Meetings are about two hours long on Wednesday afternoons. Approximately 12-20 people attend. One of the most important priorities is to share information between groups within the county and between watersheds.
- George Squires, District Manager, Genesee County SWCD attends watershed meetings and shares information with the WQCC and county representatives. Limestone Bedrock/Karst areas have been an issue.

- Most of the WQCC focus is on issues within the county, unless partnering on a grant program such as watershed planning or non-point source pollution.
- WQCC oversees the Finger Lakes - Lake Ontario Watershed Protection Alliance (FOLLOWPA) program and guides use of FOLLOWPA funding.

Livingston County - Conesus Lake Watershed Technical Committee

- This WQCC is different in that it's not county-wide, but rather focused on the Conesus Lake Watershed.
- History – in the late 1990s, the Conesus Lake Association pushed for the creation of a watershed management plan. In the late 1990s/early 2000s, the Watershed Characterization was created.
- Funding comes from an Intermunicipal Agreement as well as from FOLLOWPA.
- The Annual work plan is approved each year. It focuses on Ag Best Management Practices (BMPs), education and outreach, and water quality monitoring and testing (performed by Ecologic, SUNY Brockport, and SUNY Geneseo).
- Public Education and Outreach Committee
 - Members from County Planning, Center for Environmental Health at Livingston County Department of Health, and Cornell Cooperative Extension.
 - Formed a task force on invasive species.
- Ag Committee (meets 1-2 times per year)
- Water quality responsibilities:
 - SWCD - administers many water quality programs, education (often one-on-one)
 - County Planning Department oversees the Conesus Lake Watershed Management Plan.
 - Center for Environmental Health inspects the lake watershed to insure compliance with rules & regulations.
- Recently updated Characterization report with Ecologic. Planning to apply for an EPF-LWRP grant through the Consolidated Funding Application (CFA) for an update to the Watershed Management Plan.
- Beginning a stream bank remediation project.
 - Applied for funding through EPF, slow to arrive, later applied for funding to continue the project.
 - Awarded both Phase I and II grants at once.
 - Issued an RFP to hire an engineer for survey and design work.
- Center for Environmental Health
 - Conducts inspections, investigates complaints, collects water samples, and provides guidance and education to homeowners, lake area visitors, business owners, and the farming community.
 - Especially important because two villages get their water from the lake.
 - These villages do not touch the lake so it's hard for them to do enforcement. Instead, they contribute funding to the county and other towns for a watershed inspection program.
 - Center for Environmental Health partners with Planning Dept., Highway Dept., and Code Enforcement Officers.
 - Has the authority to issue violations, but try to do education first.
 - Three regulated beaches where water quality is monitored to ensure the water is safe for recreation.
 - Blue Green Algae is a concern and is monitored. Possibly caused by runoff/infiltration issues relating to fertilizer and septic systems.
 - Fortunate to have a sewer system that surrounds the lake, helping to prevent issues related to septic systems.
 - They monitor other areas that do have septic systems. If there is an issue, they look into it. Setbacks for septic systems on Hemlock Lake are in place.
 - Have been working to reduce phosphorus in partnership with Conesus Lake Association.
- Brockport received funding to determine if BMPs in the watershed were improving water quality.
 - Conducted "active sampling program" at mouths of streams.
 - BMPs were effective.
 - Once complete, no further funding available for continuous monitoring.
 - Some areas are periodically tested with FOLLOWPA money.

Monroe County WQCC

- Prior to creating WQCC, Monroe County had issues with the Genesee River, Irondequoit Bay, etc.
- Thirteen waste water treatment plants were dumping into Irondequoit Bay.
- Early water quality management:
 - Pure Waters Master Plan
 - Irondequoit Bay Harbor Management Plan
 - Water Quality Management Agency
- Agencies involved with water quality included Parks Dept., Health Dept., Highway Dept., Water Authority, City of Rochester, and SWCD.
- Water Quality Advisory Committee was created as subcommittee of the Water Quality Management Agency. Their role was to advise the Water Quality Management Agency, Conservations Boards, Environmental Management Council, etc. It was made up of county and state representatives, not many citizens.
- Around 2000 the Water Quality Advisory Committee and the technical committee of the Irondequoit Bay Coordinating Committee were combined to form the WQCC.
- WQCC used to have 50-60 people including representatives from all towns villages, public interest groups, county departments, etc. They work to identify/prioritize problems and solutions, obtain funding, and improve water resources.
- In early 2000s, fiscal issues developed, had staff cut (from 4 to 1), cut meetings down from 12 a year.
- Stormwater Coalition was formed as a subcommittee. Municipalities now attend this meeting instead of WQCC.
- Currently 4 meetings occur a year, which consist mostly of information sharing. A work plan exists but it has not been updated in awhile. Using Remedial Action Plan (RAP) in the last 8 years. Lack funding to support as much staffing and activities as in the past.
- Once received up to \$85,000 for the county, which is now down to \$38,000.
- Currently a “transition” committee is looking at the structure, trying to redevelop the focus, prioritize projects, reformatting the work plan and trying to reform in a way that would make the WQCC more effective.
- Attempting to utilize universities and students to do research. University faculty are currently coming to meetings and identifying projects for students.
- Intent is to become more organized so that when there are funding sources available, ready to apply.
- Utilizing a GIS person at the county to create a Google docs account to share information with the whole committee, to conserve staff time so that everyone does not need to contact Charlie Knauf. The Google system allows sharing of information, projects, contacts, etc. and is searchable.
- TMDL – there are impaired waterbodies in the county. More TMDLs are to be expected with regulations, trying to be in a better position for the future.
- Pure Waters
 - Using the Pure Waters Master Plan over the last 40 years trying to reduce sewer overflows.
 - Previously 40 treatment plants, down to 2 major plants.
 - They regulate the industry for water quality issues.
 - A new Pure Waters Master Plan is being created with more focus on stormwater.
- Stormwater Coalition
 - MS4 program – the 29 municipal member group works on creating a coordinated effort to deal with federal stormwater regulations.
 - Many highway departments involved.
 - Desire to reduce phosphorus runoff.
 - Historically, stormwater was not a priority. The 1968 plan only mentions stormwater once. Sanitary sewers have been the priority.
 - Wondering if charging water/sewer users a fee would work to help with funding?
 - Exploring concept of charging a fee based on amount of impervious surface coverage as well.
- FLOWPA funding used for:
 - A cooperative agreement with National Geological Survey.
 - Restoration of Irondequoit Bay, including removal of sewers, injection of oxygen, etc.
 - Public education though the Stormwater Coalition of Monroe County.
 - Inventory of erosion problems in the county.

Ontario County Water Resources Council (WRC)

- Diverse group that is very involved. Includes Finger Lakes Institute (FLI), Finger Lakes Community College, watershed inspectors, watershed managers, lake associations, county administrators and departments, etc
- Board of Supervisors is involved and has made water quality a priority.
- WRC “mini-grants” are available for small projects. The Board of Supervisors sets aside \$15,000 each year to be used in this competitive grant process. Projects include implementing BMPs, education/outreach, etc. Grants are available to all member groups. WRC involves partners in order to have an informative funding process.
- FLOWPA funding is often channeled to continue existing projects, so the mini-grants are very important.
- Planning Department is involved. They take minutes, provide financial reports, etc.
- Ontario County has five Finger Lakes. Many groups are very active and involved in water quality practices and are awarded grants.
- Meetings consist of information sharing between groups.
- Finger Lakes Institute:
 - Actively involved on WRC.
 - Mini-grants funding allows FLI to partner with WRC members such as G/FLRPC.

Orleans County WQCC

- Meet quarterly at SWCD.
- Attended by County Tourism, Planning Dept., NRCS, SWCD staff, and County Federation of Sportsmans Clubs.
- Usually less than 10 in attendance.
- Committee looks to SWCD staff for direction and to answer questions.
- Receives funding through SWCD either from FLOWPA or Ag and Markets grant programs.

Seneca County WQCC

- Started a similar time as others when NYSDEC awarded Mini Grants.
- Partnered with a local school to do stream bank restoration.
- WQCC tries to meet every other month.
- Funding has dried up, so now it’s more about sharing ideas and supporting other agencies.
- Currently updating watershed strategies.
- Health Department used to do more work with septic issues but lost their engineer a few years ago.
- Hope to get more WQCC involvement and membership in the future.
- Watershed Regulations are from the late 1960s. They are still used but are outdated and don’t touch on the majority of issues.
- WQCC wants to make a push to get Watershed Regulations updated. Update started a few years ago but funding ran out.
- Funding is a big issue. The committee is not a major priority to the Board of Supervisors
- Perhaps the hydro-fracking issue will bring attention to water quality? (Some attendees don’t think they should take a stance on hydro-fracking and be a “lobbying group;” thus putting themselves in an environment vs. economic development position. Others think it is the duty of WQCCs to take a stance based on potential effects on water quality.)

Wayne County WQCC

- Has been in existence for about 20 years. Meets every other month.
- Conducted a SWOT analysis to confirm the Watershed Management Plan which was created in the 1990s.
- Membership is mostly made up of representatives from the county such as SWCD, Highway Dept., etc.
- Certain members have voting privileges. About 15 additional people attend including lake association representatives and citizens.
- The WQCC parent organization is the SWCD which provides technical support, runs and organizes meetings, etc.
- Some small amounts of funding are received from sources such as NRCS and a small stipend from the county.

- Funding is an issue, progress is slowed by lack of money.
- Function more for the purpose of exchanging information between groups.
- The county does not have a Health Department to provide assistance.
- Blue Green Algae is one of the concerns/issues.
- Hope to reach out to more demographic groups, especially regarding septic system management and general water quality issues.

Wyoming County WQCC

- Staffed by SWCD. Meet quarterly. Attended by a diverse group including members of the Board of Supervisors, Health Dept., lake associations, Trout Unlimited, USDA, NRCS, G/FLRPC, County Planning, Tonawanda Indian Reservation, and interested citizens.
- Wyoming County is a high point in terms of elevation and therefore much of the water in the region originates there and travels downstream to other counties.
- Dairy is the #1 industry, and crop farming is a major industry as well. Both have an effect on water quality.
- Silver Lake is the source of public water for the Castile, Perry, Dansville, Mt. Morris and Covington. There is a commission that oversees Silver Lake.
- SWCD is very active in implementing:
 - Ag BMPs.
 - Agricultural Environmental Management (AEM) programs.
 - Administering FLOWPA funds.
 - Working with Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations (CAFOs) and related regulations.
 - Conducting stream bank stabilization and restoration and log clearing.
- They also partnered with Genesee County and Erie County frequently on projects since both are downstream from their rivers and streams.
- Each year they do tour of one of the water quality projects that were put into place.

New York State Federation of Lake Associations (NYSFOLA) <http://nysfola.mylaketown.com/>

- Represents over 200 lake associations.
- Good resource for water quality information and contacts.
- Additional information is available for members (you do not have to be in a lake association to join).
- Annual *NYSFOLA* conference.

NYS DEC

Dixon Rollins, Water Engineer, Region 8

- Includes all G/FLRPC member counties, except Wyoming (Region 9).
- DEC is responsible for stormwater construction permitting, CAFO program, flood control projects and floodplain management (with money from FEMA).
- Funding was obtained to remap coastal areas along Lake Ontario in 2013-2014.
- Another round of DEC grant funding is now available through the CFA for municipalities to obtain engineering services for sewer system creation/expansion.
- Updates to floodplain maps in the region were started (Monroe was completed), but this is now on hold.
- DEC does not currently have funding to do sampling. EPA does pretreatment sampling for large facilities.
- Wetland maps are supposed to be updated, but Dixon does not know the timeframe for completion.

Brainstorming Feasible Solutions: How can we get the most out of our County WQCC?

Invasive Species

- There is a bill that has passed the State Assembly called the Invasive Species Act. Could go to the Senate any day. It gives more power to regulate and enforce.

Conesus Lake Watershed Technical Committee

- Has an invasive species subcommittee.
- The invasion of hydrilla on Cayuga Lake has increased their awareness and concern.
- Starting a management/response plan to be prepared in case any priority invasive enters the lake watershed.

- Some members of the Technical Committee serve on this subcommittee to write and work on the plan.
- Plan will include determination of funding, monitoring, education, response, and prevention.
- Their technique is heavily based on public education, especially related to cleaning boats and trailers before entering water.
- Bathymetric map of the lake has been created.
- A survey was completed for the lake. Information such as maps and invasive species info and prevention will be targeted to boaters.
 - Partnering with the tourism organization.
 - Kiosks available with educational materials posted.
 - Creating a partnership with NYS OPRHP that runs the boat launch.

Silver Lake

- Also concerned about invasives species.
- There is a state boat launch and two private launches.
- There has been some information posted and given out to boaters (transferring invasives from lake to lake).

FLI

- Starting a training program called Water Craft Stewardship Program (i.e. Sodus Bay, Canandaigua, etc.)
- Includes educational materials for boaters, fishermen, etc. about how to inspect and clean boats at boat launches.
- FLI has a response plan with invasive species information.
- FLI is reaching out to NYS OPRHP, DEC, and municipal launches and staff.
- Setting up tables and distributing information brochures at events regarding invasives, boat cleaning, etc (i.e. Seneca Lake Trout Derby).
- NYS OPRHP has invasive species education (i.e. Keuka Lake State Park-Hydrilla and Canandaigua-Asian Clam).

Wayne County

- Has an aquatic vegetation management plan.
- SWCD and EPA can give information and some technical assistance.
- Creating and updating kiosks, Sodus has a major kiosk that includes wayfinding, notices and invasive information (had previously focused on zebra mussels and milfoil).
- Created a placemat about invasive species for restaurants.

Information Sharing

G/FLRPC

- Information shared at water quality meetings includes what other WQCCs are doing within the nine county region, as well as other water quality work that G/FLRPC is involved.
- The main goal of this roundtable was to share organizational structure and process between groups.
- Perhaps this is a role that G/FLRPC can expand and do more with?
- WQCCs could share methods, information, and materials for others to use. With limited resources, it makes sense to cooperate and use what others have already created rather than recreating methods, materials, etc.
- G/FLRPC stores information and past projects available for download and review on our website:
www.gflrpc.org
 - Watershed management planning
 - Green infrastructure planning
 - Regional Impervious Surface Scan
 - Local law reviews
 - Floodplain management and hazard mitigation planning

FLI – Information Clearinghouse

- FLI has a database with over 2,000 documents relating to water quality information/education.
- Perhaps the WQCCs should officially designate FLI as the group to house information (14 county service area includes all G/FLRPC counties except Orleans, Genesee, and Wyoming Counties).
- Each WQCC could send documents to FLI and all groups could access this information.

H2O Hero

- Monroe County WQCC and the Water Education Collaborate (WEC) have developed the H2O Hero character/campaign as a marketing tool for water quality education. This was done through a partnership with the Rochester Museum and Science Center and Rochester Ad Council.
- The Ad Council, which has the rights to the H2O Hero, would allow other counties and regions to use it throughout the state.
- There is a ‘Hero’ commercial (and another being made) and a comic book to appeal to children.
- Marketing of the idea would be more effective if it were throughout a larger area.
- Links to WQCCs and other water quality organizations could be added to the H2O Hero website.
- The ‘Hero’ could be added to signage throughout the region to increase awareness.
- The ‘Hero’ emblem is currently placed on storm drain curbs throughout Monroe County to alert the public not to dump waste into storm sewers.
- The marketing campaign also includes magnets, t-shirts, temporary tattoos, clip art, and bumper stickers.
- In Wayne County, the SWCD is doing water quality training with 6th graders at three schools. They would like to use the ‘Hero’ including comic books and perhaps even bring the ‘Hero’ mascot
- The Rochester Museum and Science Center also does training which includes educating teachers. SUNY Brockport has been hired to create an approved NYS curriculum
- ‘Hero’ mascot has been at some Amerk and Redwing ‘mascot day’ games.
- The ‘Hero’ is an effective way to educate children. The concepts can be incorporated into science programs.
- It may be possible to add a small charge to water bills to fund this work. Owasco Lake has done something similar. Monroe County Water Authority is not currently willing to do this.
- WQIP Round 10 funding is paying for the 2nd commercial.
- Some ‘Hero’ materials were paid for with FLOWPA funds.
- Q – would other counties need to purchase the rights? A – No just need to approach the Ad Council. Funding would probably be needed to produce additional hard copy materials though (some materials are available in PDF form).
- Water quality issues are regional and extend beyond county boundaries. Some materials already expand beyond Monroe County such as radio and TV ads.
- Perhaps more grant funding would be awarded if it were applied for on a regional basis.
- G/FLRPC might be able to help coordinate this type of regional grant approach.

G/FLRPC Roles

Q – Can the WQCCs have a running list of what water quality services are available from G/FLRPC? This information can be shared with municipalities, other groups, etc.

A – Yes. Below are some services:

- Working and participating with WQCCs is the 1st priority for the Baseline program.
- Additional priorities include stormwater, floodplain management, and green infrastructure planning.
- Jayme is now a Certified Floodplain Manager and can assist municipalities.
- G/FLRPC can do outreach, site tours, and presentations.
- We are interested in doing more green infrastructure outreach and implementation (i.e. creating/improving local codes and ordinances and removing barriers to implementation).
- G/FLRPC also has a watershed management program and is currently working on two watershed management plans.
- Educational sessions relating to water quality are often available at the G/FLRPC biannual Regional Local Government Workshop.
- Currently applying to the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) to create green infrastructure design guidelines. The “blue book” is available, but it is too engineering specific for many users.

New user-friendly guidelines could be more useful for planning boards, municipal officials, code enforcement officers, highway depts., and citizens for stormwater BMPs and green infrastructure.

Next Steps

- Each county could create a summary document which could be distributed to other WQCCs.
- G/FLRPC will continue to update WQCCs on what others are doing and disseminate information.
- Everyone agrees that this type of roundtable should be done annually.
- It was generally agreed that fall would be a good time to meet. This ensures that seasonal residents are still around, and it would be a good time to brainstorm ideas to be worked on during the winter and incorporated into spring plans.