

ULSTER COUNTY ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

Dave Haldeman, Chair
Margot Becker, Vice-Chair
Kenneth Panza, Secretary

Minutes for the EMC Meeting of December 11, 2019

A quorum present, the special meeting of the Ulster County Environmental Council was convened at 6:45 PM at the offices of the Ulster County Dept. of the Environment, 17 Pearl St, Kingston, by David Haldeman, Chair. This meeting was held in place of the November and December EMC meetings.

Municipal Members Present

Dave Haldeman, Town of Shawangunk
Emilie Hauser, City of Kingston
Kristen Schara, Town of Hurley

At Large Members Present

William More
Kenneth Panza
Virginia Starke

Department of the Environment

Amanda LaValle, Coordinator
Nick Hvozda, Deputy Coordinator
Ben Ganon, Resource Technician

Guests

Deb Weltsch, John Burroughs Natural History Society (local Audubon affiliate)
Mira Bowin, John Burroughs Natural History Society (local Audubon affiliate)

John Burroughs Natural History Society

Mira Bowin and Deb Weltsch from the John Burroughs Society (local Audubon affiliate) presented “The State of Birds in Ulster County” describing the impact on bird populations due to climate change as well as some concerns for species survival.

The John Burroughs Natural History Society, the local affiliate of the Audubon Society, was organized in 1950 by a group of scientists and educators to serve as a source of information about the flora, fauna, and natural history of Ulster County. The name of the writer-naturalist was chosen because Burroughs lived most of his life in the county.

The society engages in a series of organized bird counts throughout the year. All are welcome to join, and more information can be found on the society’s webpage at <http://jbnhs.org/>

Christmas Bird Count

The Audubon Society’s Christmas Bird Count is the world’s longest running citizen’s science project. Begun in the year 1900, Christmas bird counts have been held for last 119 years. Conservation was in its beginning stage at the turn of last century, and many observers and scientists were concerned about declining bird populations. Beginning on Christmas Day 1900, ornithologist

Frank M. Chapman, an early officer in the Audubon Society, proposed a new holiday tradition – a "Christmas Bird Census" that would count birds during the holidays rather than hunt them.

Winter Waterfowl Count

An annual statewide count of waterfowl, their allies, and eagles. Data collected aids in understanding population trends and conservation practices of Atlantic Flyway waterfowl. The survey includes open bodies of water along the Hudson, Esopus, Wallkill, and Rondout Rivers, and possibly the Ashokan Reservoir and open agricultural areas where geese may graze.

Wallkill Valley Raptors (North American Hawk Watch)

Wintering raptors, congregating waterfowl and gulls as well as half hardies are the focus of this outing. It travels through Blue Chip and Watchtower Farms with stops along the Wallkill River and at Shawangunk Grasslands NWR (Galeville) and the Ulster County Fairgrounds.

The Hawk Migration Association of North America (HMANA) was founded in 1974 “To advance the scientific knowledge and promote conservation of raptor populations through study, enjoyment, and appreciation of raptor migration.” The association collects hawk count data from almost two hundred affiliated raptor monitoring sites throughout the United States, Canada, and Mexico.

Ulster County Big Sit

The annual Big Sit is also the BIG fundraiser for the year which offers friendly competition between three established sits: the Great Vly Sit, the Kingston Point Sit, and the Galeville (SGNWR) Sit.

Big Day Count

An all day count of birds and species in Ulster County.

Breeding Bird Atlas

Breeding bird atlases contain surveys of all the birds breeding within a specific area over a limited time. The first atlas in New York was conducted from 1980-1985. The second atlas, twenty years later covered 2000-2005. Starting in 2020, New York will be among the first states to conduct a third atlas. Over half of the 253 species contained in the atlas show a change since the 1st edition: 70 species show an increase, 58 show decline.

North America Loses 3 Billion Birds

Over the past half-century, North America has lost more than a quarter of its entire bird population, or around 3 billion birds, according to a new estimate published in the journal *Science*. Researchers brought together information collected since 1970 on 529 bird species. The information was collected data from long-running surveys conducted with the help of volunteer bird spotters, such as the North American Breeding Bird Survey and the Audubon Christmas Bird Count, combined with a decade's worth of data on migrating bird flocks detected by 143 weather radar installations.¹

¹ “Decline of the North American avifauna,” *Science*, October 4, 2019, Available at <https://science.sciencemag.org/content/366/6461/120>

Approval of Minutes

Minutes of the **October 30, 2019** meeting of the EMC were presented, discussed, and approved by unanimous consent.

Old Business

Danskammer Holdings LLC is planning to submit its application under Article 10 of state public service law to construct a new gas-fired power plant on the site of the former facility in the Town of Newburgh. The formal application will be submitted on or about December 11.

Route 850 LLC Site Plan. A revised application has been submitted for 850 Route 28 LLC's proposal to construct two 120,000 square-foot buildings for a manufacturing facility that produces steel and precast concrete bridge decking.²

Saugerties Construction Debris Dumping. A state Supreme Court judge has reinstated the town's ban of illegal dumping at the debris-processing facility on Route 212 owned by Joseph and Rachel Karolys.³

New Business

Needs Assessment for Ulster County Water Quality Coordinating Committee

Emilie Hauser, Kingston is EMC's representative to the Ulster County Water Quality Coordinating Committee (WQCC). Each agency and department on the committee was asked to complete a needs assessment related to water quality programs and initiatives in Ulster County. Emilie distributed a Google Forms survey to understand water quality issues for the EMC to complete.

Report from Department of the Environment

Amanda LaValle, Department Coordinator, introduced other department members to the EMC. Ben Ganon previously worked for the Hudson River Estuary Program and joined the department at the end of July. Nick Hvozda is Deputy Coordinator for the department.

The department's 2020 Budget provides funding for an additional person for environmental planning. A budget amendment was approved for an environmental compliance person to insure compliance with the new environmental laws regulating plastic bags, plastic straws and utensils, and composting, but at this time, it's unclear which departments will be responsible for enforcing compliance.

The Department of the Environment will organize an Ulster County watershed meeting to bring a focus on watershed issues and opportunities in Ulster County.

² "Revised application for proposed Route 28 fabrication plant submitted to town of Kingston Planning Board," The Daily Freeman, December 7, 2019, Available at https://www.dailyfreeman.com/news/local-news/revised-application-for-proposed-route-fabrication-plant-submitted-to-town/article_ebe6e8c6-189c-11ea-bd40-db94651f8314.html

³ William J. Kemble, "Judge lets Saugerties enforce ban on dumping at Karolys site," The Daily Freeman, December 9, 2019, Available at https://www.dailyfreeman.com/news/local-news/judge-lets-saugerties-enforce-ban-on-dumping-at-karolys-site/article_05358f6c-1ab9-11ea-93e3-dbee07c7bb75.html

Legislature Report – Energy & Environment Committee

The committee approved for submission to the legislature a list of EMCs members nominated for new, three year terms.

Council Member Roundabout

Dave Haldeman, Town of Shawangunk

Two prisons, the Shawangunk Correctional Facility and the Wallkill Correctional Facility, co-located on 600 acres of prime farmland in the Town of Shawangunk are planning a large solar array. As state facilities, the town has no jurisdiction over this proposal. Town regulations limit solar systems to no more than 20 acres and a maximum of ten acres of forest clearance.

Emilie Hauser, City of Kingston

The Kingston CAC has established a Wood Burning/Air Quality Sub-Committee to address air quality concerns in the City that are not addressed through the Climate Smart Kingston and Sustainability work to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Two particular concerns include: 1) Particulates from Wood Burning and 2) Vehicle Idling.

Burning wood is one of the dirtiest ways to heat your home. It contains tiny particles and toxic chemicals that can seriously affect health. Based on data gathered from the U.S. Energy Information Administration it was estimated that 1,573.63 tons of wood was used as fuel in the City of Kingston in 2010 created 193 tons of CO₂e.

Kristen Schara, Town of Hurley

Short update on the proposed redevelopment of the West Hurley Elementary School.

Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 8:45 pm by unanimous consent.

Respectively submitted,



Kenneth S. Panza, Secretary