

# Dutchess County Environmental Management Council

## 2022 Annual Report

### May 2023

**A. Membership:** The Dutchess County (DC) NY Environmental Management Council (EMC) enabling legislation provides for a total of eleven at-large seats.

The 2022 at-large appointed members of the EMC and their council expirations are listed below:

1. Jim Frederickson, Chair, 30 June 2023
2. Constance Kustas, 30 June 2023
3. Peter Berasi, 30 June 2023
4. Candis Merrill Sutherland, Vice Chair, 30 June 2023
5. Victoria Kelly, Recording Secretary 30 June 2023
6. John Peraskeva, 30 June 2024
7. Nancy Severns, 30 June 2024
8. Lora Schilling, 30 June 2024
9. Keri Ann Wright, 30 June 2024

EMC at large members donated approximately 1125 hours of work on EMC projects that benefitted Dutchess County (estimated at 2.75 hours per week for 8 appointed members and 0.5 hours per week for one member of the EMC). At a NYS rate for volunteer hours of \$28.54/hour( the value stated in" is\_2021\_annual\_report\_final-1.pdf"), this totals an amount of more than \$32,108 donated by EMC members for their time and expertise provided to the county in 2022.

EMC Ex-Officio Members: In addition to the eleven available at-large seats, the DC EMC membership consists of six Ex-Officio members, and 21 Conservation Advisory Council (CAC) members, for a total of 35 members. Ex-Officio members include: a member of the Dutchess County Legislature, the Chairman of the county planning board, Commissioner of public works, the County Attorney, Chairman of the board of directors of the Soil and Water Conservation district, and the President of the Dutchess County Cooperative Extension Association. It's important to note that this is an onerous number of members; most members don't participate and a quorum is impossible to reach. For this reason, the EMC has suggested a revision of the enabling legislation that would alter the membership structure. As of 2022 the proposed

revisions have not been taken up by the Legislature. See below (Section G) for a description of the enabling legislation. Regular participants in EMC activities during 2022 were: Cornell Cooperative Extension Dutchess County (Carolyn Klocker or staff) and Dutchess County Planning and Development (Brad Barclay and Devin Rigolino). (Note DC Planning and Development is not currently an Ex-Officio member of the EMC).

In 2022 the group decided to rejoin NYSACC, New York State Association of Conservation Commissions after consideration of their renewed level of activity.

**B. EMC Meetings:** In 2022, the EMC held its meetings predominantly on the 4th Wednesday of each month. In accordance with Governor Hochul's executive orders (202.91 and others), which suspends certain provisions of the Open Meetings law, all meetings, were held via Zoom and recorded due to the pandemic. The August meeting was cancelled. In March, the EMC presented at the aggregate meeting that Cornell Cooperative Extension Dutchess County (CCEDC) holds for all Conservation Advisory Councils (CAC) in the county. In 2022, the EMC prepared and approved minutes for all its regular meetings, which are available on EMC's website (<http://dutchessemc.org/>).

**C. Partnership with Cornell Cooperative Extension Dutchess County Environment and Energy Program:** Cornell Cooperative Extension Dutchess County is an Ex-Officio member of the EMC and actively participates with and advises the Council. The CCEDC Environment and Energy Program received a Dutchess County Agency Partnership Grant in 2022 and, as part of the grant contract, CCEDC Environment and Energy Program staff attended EMC meetings and provided the group minimal administrative support. Also, as part of this grant contract, CCEDC organized the CAC and EMC Roundtable Forum in March 2022 for members. Due to the limited funds CCEDC currently receives to support the EMC, they are unable to offer more significant support to the Council.

**D. 2022 EMC Committees and Members:** The EMC had established subcommittees carried over from 2021 to address issues relevant to its mission and supportive of the County Legislature and CACs. Subcommittees are formed to focus the Council's efforts on these issues. Those committees were:

Environmental Advocacy Group Monitoring-Monitors the other Environmental Group and Environmental Agency web sites for issues that could affect Dutchess County for EMC awareness. Examples of websites to be monitored, but not limited to, include: Scenic Hudson, Riverkeeper, Clearwater, NYPIRG, NYS DEC, EPA, and Sierra Club. Educational and advocacy

positions on environmental issues are discussed along with the status of related topics such as the NY State Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act.

Subcommittee members: Candis, Nancy

Reduce, Reuse, Recycle (including Household Hazardous Waste)-Looked for opportunities for public outreach and education to promote the reduction of waste and encouraging recycling. Three Household Hazardous Waste events were held in 2022. Existing electronics take back programs and other programs that are ramping up (such as paint take back) are expected to reduce the demand for the Household Hazardous Waste events held by the county.

A decision was made to de-activate this subcommittee in order to concentrate resources on the natural resource inventory update.

Road Salt-Researches ways to reduce the use of road salt and provide information on the effect of road salt on the environment. The town of Northeast and the village of Millerton requested a cost benefit analysis on switching to brine from rock salt and to provide options for ways to fund the purchase of new equipment. In June, the report was distributed to the CAC/EMC listserve, all Dutchess County highway superintendents and municipal clerks with a request to forward to municipal councils, the County Legislature and several members of the County public works department. The group discussed having a forum – in person, hybrid or online. A suggestion was made to have small focus group meetings as opposed to one big forum. A potential field trip to the Rhinebeck facility was discussed.

Subcommittee members: Vicky, John, Jim

Climate Change and Alternative Energy-Advocates for energy practices that help reduce the effects of climate change and promote the use of alternative energy.

A decision was made to de-activate this subcommittee in order to concentrate resources on the natural resource inventory update.

Green Infrastructure-Promotes the use of green infrastructure practices to treat stormwater runoff and provide green infrastructure information to the local Conservation Advisory Councils (CACs).

A decision was made to de-activate this subcommittee in order to concentrate resources on the natural resource inventory update.

In summary, 3 sub-committees (Reduce/ Reuse/ Recycle, Climate Change, and Green Infrastructure) will become dormant. Instead of these 3 topics, EMC members will focus on supporting the update to the Dutchess County Natural Resource Inventory (NRI).

CCEDC wrote a grant proposal to update the former (2010) Dutchess County Natural Resources Inventory. The enabling legislation for the EMC calls for updating this document. Brad Barclay (Dutchess County Planning and Development) provided background on the NRI, the value of the document, updating it, making it more useful and targeted for the people who need to use it. Devin Rigolino, who is now the liaison from Dutchess County Planning and Development to the EMC, discussed the goals of the update- to make it more interactive and current, especially for climate data and maps. It is a 2 year project and will guide the county's planning for environmental issues for years to come.

The NRI climate & climate change chapter will be significantly different and the Climate Smart Communities Task Force will be involved. There will be a new environmental landing page on the county website where the dynamic NRI will sit, have an interactive mapping application and more.

#### **E. External Communications and Interactions:**

EMC Website: The website created and maintained by the Dutchess County Environmental Council continues to be visited by many users. In all, the Dutchess County EMC website consists of 14 topics or pages of menus that are loaded with links to environmental websites of groups and agencies that would be of interest to citizens of Dutchess County exploring environmental issues. All meeting minutes, reports, agenda items or items that the Council has explored has a presence on the Council's website. Every agenda, meeting minutes, generated report or investigation completed by the DC EMC is present on the council's website starting from the year the Board was reconstituted (2009) to the present date. The website incorporates recent environmental information in addition to the year's agendas and meeting minutes. In addition, a copy of the Dutchess County Resource Inventory created by the DC EMC is present on this website. One of the significant values of this website is that it maintains a dialog and connection among the county CACs. It is notable that the maintenance and development of this digital effort is completed entirely by volunteers. Counting "volunteer" hours, the maintenance of the website generally involves 5 or 6 hours per month.

Social Media: Upon request for an EMC Facebook page in 2020, the legislature responded that the Climate Smart Communities Task Force will be responsible for the social media outreach.

Comments and Inquiries: Occasionally a citizen will send an inquiry or provide information to which the EMC, or a member, responds.

**F. CAC Contacts:** In addition to the review of CAC activity held in March, the EMC met in February on a Fishkill Creek proposal regarding the watershed which crosses several municipalities. Recommendations were made back to the Fishkill CAC on next steps.

**G. EMC Funding/Expenses:** The EMC is an all volunteer council. In 2022 the EMC had a working fund of \$300 from the legislature. It consisted of \$100 for the EMC website and \$200 for Training/Conferences/Workshops. In addition, there are much appreciated funds, managed by CCEDC as the EMC's fiscal sponsor which the EMC has received through several grants from IBM under its volunteer Program for Retirees. As of December 31, 2022, the fund was \$3723.82. The program provides the opportunity for IBM retirees to request an annual grant up to \$500 in respect of 40 hours of volunteer support at a non-profit organization. The grant was requested by at-Large member Peter Berasi and then awarded to CCEDC for credit to the EMC account.

The EMC submitted a 2023 budget amount of \$1000-\$100 for the website and \$900 for training, conferences, and workshops in addition to outreach campaigns. It was approved by the legislature.

While these amounts are appreciated it would be helpful if the Legislature would provide a small budget for additional administrative support, and travel expenses for appointees to attend training conferences.

These figures are an example of the funding needed for a well functioning council:

EMC Initiative	Funding Amount (\$)
EMC website/Social media outreach	500
Operations support from CCEDC	5000
Supplies	500
Community Recognition Program	500
NYS Association of Conservation Commissions	75
NYS Association of Conservation Commissions Conference	500
Other conferences,training, and workshops	1000

**G. Enabling Legislation and By-Laws:** The enabling legislation for the DC EMC was adopted by the DC Legislature in 1972 and amended in 1989. The DC EMC drafted revisions to this legislation and sent these updates to the Chairman of the Legislature at the end of 2014 for consideration. The EMC followed up on the proposed revisions several times. As of 2022 the proposed revisions have not been considered by the Legislature. The draft revisions consolidate and clarify membership of ex-officio and Conservation Advisory Council members and update the power and duties of the EMC by eliminating participation in the no longer existent Scenic Roads Committee and updating the language on powers and duties of the EMC to incorporate currently relevant needs, resources, and materials. Final wording and adoption of the revised enabling language is still pending and is with the Legislature's attorney.

**H. 2023 Outlook:** The EMC expects to work specific actions within the framework of the Natural Resource Inventory project in 2023. The focus of the NRI in 2023 will be the mapping and interactive portion. Launch of the NRI will be in November 2023. Followup work will be completed on the road salt/brine initiative.

The EMC will continue to monitor local environmental issues and address those that exist at the county level. In addition, the EMC will facilitate communications between the local CACs.