

MONROE COUNTY ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

March 19th, 2025

In Attendance:

EMC

At Large - Tom Dooley; EMC Chair
At Large - Mark McDermott
At Large - Deb Muratore
Town of Brighton- David Briden
Town of Chili - Larry Lazenby
Town of Clarkson- Jake Straub
Town of Gates - Charles Johnson
Town of Irondequoit – Alexandra Ferrente
Town of Mendon- Margaret Bailey
Town of Ogden – Bill Parkhurst
Town of Hamlin- Steve Rutherford
Town of Henrietta- Bill Santos
Village of Honeoye Falls – Andy Less
Town of Penfield – Cynette Cavaliere
Town of Perinton - Mark Gaul
Town of Pittsford – Caroline Kilmer

Town of Riga – Jennifer Balonek
Town of Sweden – Meg Zimmer
Town of Webster - Chuck Zlotkus
Ex Officio Alternate – Steve Olufsen; Planning & Dvpt
Ex Officio Alternate – Clement Chung; MC DES
Monroe Co. Legislature LD4- Virginia McIntyre
Monroe Co. Legislature LD14 - Sue Hughes-Smith
Recording Secretary – Liz Kaptein

Guests

George Smith - Town of Brighton
Scott Maka – Genesee Regional Offroad Cyclists
Sally Howard- Federation of Monroe County
Environmentalists
Lance Lascari – Trout Unlimited
Madison Quinn – MCDES Sustainability Coord.

Meeting location:

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

Call to Order:

- Meeting was called to order at 4:02pm by Chairman Tom Dooley.

Introductions:

- Introductions were made from all present.

Review of Minutes:

- Motion to approve February- Motion by Steve Rutherford, second by Bill Santos.

Meeting Topic(s): *Buckland Creek Restoration Project- Caroline Kilmer*

Project with the storm water coalition – 2012-2016.

Goals of project: Install rain gardens, rain barrels, and native shrubbery to mitigate erosion.

How does development impact water quality? Why were these tools chosen?

-When you have an undeveloped condition (forest, field, etc) you will get about 50% recharge, 40% evaporation and 10% runoff from precipitation. Development changes the hydrologic cycle and introduces impervious surfaces and changes the runoff amount to about 55% with a 20% recharge rate.

With development it brings increased transport of pollutants to waterways due to this increased runoff. This leads to flooding and poor water quality. Greater volumes of water will cause more erosion of stream banks due to climate change, increased rain events.

How do we help mitigate the issue? Green infrastructure practices, stream buffer protection and rainwater barrels, downspout disconnection, porous pavement, rain gardens.

Downspout disconnection is disconnecting gutter spouts that connect to the ground. When connected to the ground they put the water into storm water channels, increasing volume to waterways and mix relatively clean rainwater with dirty/polluted storm water.

What is a rain garden?

A rain garden is a landscaped basin that is designed to collect and infiltrate runoff from a roof or driveway. It isn't a pond or wetland, it is designed to slow the water and reduce flooding. It also has the added benefit of beautifying the community, and can provide habitat and protects water quality. They also allow 30% more water to soak into the ground compared to a lawn.

Rain barrels capture and store rainwater and reduce runoff from peak flows to storm drains and can hold up to 100 gallons, and can be used industrial and residential and commercial areas.

Fun Fact: A ½ inch of rainfall on a 1000sq ft. roof produces over 300 gallons of water.

If that water can be captured, it can be recycled – for this project they used barrels donated by Genesee brewery because they were food grade.

Stream buffers are natural storm water treatment, the water is filtered by natural vegetation and helps to promote infiltration of water to the ground. They also provide right of way for flood events, and habitat for animals.

Buckland Creek Project was grant funded, to test for rain garden suitability they conducted perc tests and community partners assisted in plant installation.

To acquire a rain barrel- residents would sign up, attend workshop on education on storm water pollution, water quality, and rain barrel maintenance. Everyone assembled their own barrels- everything was free of charge for residents.

Streambank planting program: Only residents who had Buckland creek on their property were eligible. The Town of Brighton created list, and a letter was sent to residents asking if they would be interested. The town's participation added credibility to program.

Even though only 20 of the 135 homes would receive plants, all received education materials. Selected residents could choose 4 native shrubs with varying light requirements and plant sizes.

Challenges of the program: People wanted to be able to see the water, and didn't understand importance of natural vegetation, and didn't understand how pesticide and fertilizer could impact waterway, they also did not understand the implications of a lack of vegetation causing erosion. They had a 60% survival rate for plants. Plantings reduced erosion significantly in about 50% of the homes that were selected.

Watercourse Protection EPODs can help to protect vulnerable environmental features. For example, they could protect 75 feet or more including wetlands, steep slopes, floodplains. They could require part of a stream buffer is to be maintained with native vegetation and would define allowable uses for sensitive areas and have enforcement and education requirements.

Grant funding for SWCD- FLOPA lake Ontario protection – Recognition within municipality of benefit and getting buy-in. NRCS natural resource conservation service, NYSDEC, MC Soil and water conservation district and Storm water coalition of Monroe County were also partners in the project.

Questions:

Q: Most homes have 4 downspouts, is there a better side to use?

A: No, but it is important to be mindful of adjacent properties to not flood them out.

Q: For the rain gardens- Broccolo's offerings- were they chosen specifically for the use?

A: Yes, NYSDEC has list of rain garden plants that have longer roots and assist in infiltration of water.

Q: For the Rain barrel, is there a debris trap to capture anything that comes off the roof?

A: Yes, there was open systems that had a screen in some of the barrels, but eventually they moved to close systems that filter.

Q: For Storm water pollution- have any efforts been made to further educate the community about the usage of pesticides and fertilizers that would impact water quality?

A: Yes, H2O Hero Program. Some Chemicals and nutrients have been banned in recent years. Our soils here are locally rich in phosphorus. NYSDEC passed law that phosphorus free fertilizer, Harmful algal blooms are promoted by phosphorus and Non-point source pollution is difficult to regulate.

Q: Did people who received the plants have to sign document promising to maintain the plants?

A: Yes, but unsure which died of neglect vs failure to thrive.

Q: Any wildlife issues?

A: Not that we heard of.

Q: What was homeowner reaction?

A: Excitement for free plants! They gave ratings for 5 out of 5-stars.

Committee Reports:

- **Program and Presentations**
 - April Presentation- Cornell Co-op- Soil to sustenance, building healthy ecosystems
 - Potluck in May 21st – Reserved Community Center at Ontario Beach Park – we will be reaching out formally.
- **Nominating and Community Liaison**
 - Met on 3/4- We worked on Youth EMC mission and vision and membership/supervision, it has been sent along to the executive committee and legal. We would like the youth members to give input.
 - Next meeting is 3/26
 - We want to update community liaison list, continue to have liaisons in attendance and keep active.
- **Natural Resources**
 - Met on March 12th, Reviewed layers that the county had available, made requests to add the layers that would be applicable for EMC tool. Madison will be reaching out to GIS.

Monroe County Staff Reports:

- Steve Olufsen, Planning & Dvpt – In beginning of 2025 NYSDEC came out with new wetland regulations – they are looking to do jurisdictional determination in areas prone to being wetlands. NYSDEC Mapper tool is a resource for areas that may be wetlands. New regulations require everyone to get delineation of wetlands, with the intent of preservation of areas that may not be on record. The goal is to make educated determinations of likely areas. NYSDEC will come out and look at the area, but that may add an additional 90 days to projects. Corresponding grant funding for delineation is not yet available.
- Madison Quinn, DES Sustainability – Few Updates- There is now a contract for the CARP- community events for April and Earth Day are filling up. Applications are in for the sustainability engineer.
- Clement Chung, MCDES- Climate solutions summit is April 4-5- Registration is open. PFAS is a pressing issue for wastewater- Anticipating state regulation on Biosolid application for agricultural use. The Introduction of PFAS complicates sending bio solids to landfills, which harms communities. PFAS are being manufactured and given to consumers and then the burden for disposal is falling on the taxpayer, consistency on policy is needed across the country.

Other Business/Announcements

- Sierra Club is giving away trees on April 26- Webster Park, Seneca park, Genesee valley park, Northampton park. Bare root plants. Arbor Day.
- County Planning has CFE out for review- Public comment period is open and closes on 3/20/25.
- Penfield is doing arbor day celebration for tree city celebration
- Gates also has earth day event on the 26th.
- There are 5 comment periods open right now relating to SEQR, Wetlands, Federal protections.
- NYSDEC & Trout Unlimited are hosting a family-friendly fishing event on April 26th from 1-4pm at Cobbs Hill Park.

Adjourn:

- Meeting was adjourned at 5:20 by Tom Dooley.