

Thursday, February 17, 2011

Minutes

CALL TO ORDER – Chair Tom Santulli called the meeting to order at 4:25 PM in the STC Conference Room.

ATTENDANCE

Chemung County – Ted Bennett; John Burin; Tom Santulli; G. Thomas Tranter

Schuyler County – Dennis Fagan; Tom Gifford; Danielle Hautaniemi; Kelsey Jones; Tim O'Hearn

Steuben County – Mark Alger; Amy Dlugos; Joseph Hauryski; Scott Van Etten

Staff – Marcia Weber; Susan Cratsley; Victoria Ehlen; Meghan T. Jacquet; Chelsea Robertson; Daniel Wilhelm

WELCOME/INTRODUCTIONS – Chair Tom Santulli welcomed everyone to the meeting.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES – the minutes of the January 20, 2011 meeting were approved on a motion by Dennis Fagan, seconded by Mark Alger, and carried.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

1. **Audit Committee**
Abstract of Claims - On behalf of the Audit Committee, Tom Tranter gave the report. Tom reported that two abstracts were reviewed and approved totaling \$14,337.66. On a motion by Tom Tranter, seconded by Scott Van Etten, the abstracts were approved.
2. **Nominating Committee** – T. O'Hearn
 - a) **Report** – Tim O'Hearn presented the board's slate of officers for 2011. They are as follows:

Chair	Joseph Hauryski
Vice Chair	Dennis Fagan
Executive Secretary	Marcia Weber
Treasurer	Patrick Donnelly

- b) **Vote on 2011 – 2012 STC Board Officers** – on a motion by Thomas Tranter, seconded by Mark Alger, the slate of officers for 2011 – 2012 were approved and carried.

REGIONAL PROGRAM ACTIVITIES

1. **Telecommunications Update** - M. Weber reported that it was announced earlier this week that the funder for the new telecommunications project, Southern Tier Network, Inc., is Corning Inc. Marcia stated that e-mails were sent and phone calls made before the announcement to inform the region's Member of Congress and Senators as well as the state elected and appointed representatives of the upcoming announcement. The Appalachian Regional Commission was informed that its relatively small planning grants to STC for telecommunications led to a large private sector investment in the region. Corning Incorporated will invest almost \$10 million that will cover the projected capital costs for the project, which will use Corning fiber and equipment as specified during the final design phases. The three STC counties have committed the following amounts: Chemung - \$789,947, Schuyler - \$188,370 and Steuben - \$1,227,786. In exchange for this financial support, each of the counties will use the new network to reduce existing communications costs for public safety and interoffice communications. The project will begin in June 2011 and be completed in 30 months.

Throughout the course of the day there were many interviews held with area newspapers and television stations. To see local news coverage videos and newspaper articles, go to the STC website at www.stcplanning.org.

Marcia noted that the next step will be an organizational meeting of the Southern Tier Network board on February 24 at the STC office.

2. **Federal Funding Situation and STC Action** – M. Weber reported that she heard from the National Association of Development Organizations (NADO), which has been a supporter of the Economic Development Administration (EDA). NADO alerted STC that the House had planned to cut \$80 million for EDA, a significant cut. NADO asked that planning agencies talk to their members of congress to explain the value of EDA, which Marcia did when she received a call from Member of Congress Tom Reed that week. Mr. Reed called to tell Marcia about the ARC funding situation: that they were planning to reduce the ARC funding to \$68.4 million, which would be a 10% cut for 2011. Marcia told Mr. Reed that ARC and EDA bring significant money into the community and are very valuable to the STC region. Regarding EDA, Marcia reported that an amendment was presented by Representative Michaud from Maine who requested that the \$80 million be restored to EDA. After the phone call, STC faxed a letter to Tom Reed's office describing the benefits of the EDA program: the CVS Distribution Center bringing in \$1.4 million from EDA, and Vulcraft, Town of Erwin, and South Yards projects bringing hundreds of jobs to the area. The amendment to put the money back in EDA was passed, with Representative Reed voting in favor of it. Marcia noted that STC will send a letter to him thanking him for his support and asking that EDA continue to be supported in the future.

Marcia stated that the ARC funding status is not certain. In publicity for the new telecommunications project, she made sure that ARC was mentioned as having funded the telecommunications studies that led up to the \$12.2 million project. Marcia said that STC will develop a sample letter for board members to send in support of ARC.

Marcia reported that another source of funding that is threatened is the Workforce Investment Act. CSS Workforce asked for support of that funding source. Marcia stated that STC would put some of the NADO slides from their presentation on the STC website for those who would like more information on the 2012 budget.

3. **Letter Supporting Federal Funding for River Gauges** (in packets) – J. Thigpen reported that in packets is a proposed letter to be sent to STC’s representatives stating once again that this area is having a problem with funding for river gauges. Janet stated that the region cannot produce river forecasts without good reliable gauge data, and that is not available if no one has paid for the gauges. A number of gauges in this region and throughout the Susquehanna Basin were paid for by Susquehanna Flood Forecast and Warning System through an earmark in the federal budget; this year there are no earmarks. Slated to be discontinued are gauges at four out of six river forecast locations in this region and two other gauges.

Janet proposes sending a letter to representatives of this area to restore full funding for the National Streamflow Information Program (NSIP). This program was started due to problems with the cooperative funding approach that USGS had used for gauges. The idea was to identify the federal priority gauges – those that are essential for federal programs – and have a single federal funding stream for those gauges. The funding level for that program has never gone above 25%. If the NSIP program were fully funded, it would pay for the gauges needed for the NWS River Forecasts. Janet stated that the River Forecast gauges are critical. The Board approved signing and sending the letter.

4. **Floodplain Mapping Project for the Chemung and Cohocton River Watersheds** – J. Thigpen reported the project started as a Chemung County floodplain mapping project under FEMA’s Map Modernization program. At the time the NYSDEC was a Cooperating Technical Partner (CTP), doing much of the mapping work for FEMA. Chemung County collected high quality topographic data (LiDAR) and other data. This local funding increased the County’s priority for new maps. After several years of delays, the situation had changed: (1) DEC was no longer a CTP, so the project would be done by contractors, (2) the funding for restudies was no longer available, and (3) FEMA made some post-Katrina policy revisions regarding accreditation of flood control levees, so the old procedure of DEC forwarding CEO inspection results is no longer sufficient.

Janet stated that when the Chemung County officials saw early drafts of maps showing no levee protection and expressed concern, FEMA came to Chemung County for several meetings. Because the technique they were proposing for including levee protected areas in the floodplain was technically inappropriate, FEMA agreed that restudies would be done for the levee-protected areas. In order to fund these restudies, the project was rolled into the new Risk MAP program, which is done on a watershed basis. FEMA held a kickoff meeting for the Chemung Basin Risk MAP project covering the Chemung and Cohocton watersheds in all three counties.

Janet has been working with Jimmie Joe Carl (the Chemung County Stormwater Engineer) and others to review the draft Chemung County maps. They were astonished to find that in addition to the inclusion of areas protected by levees, they added numerous other areas to the floodplain, including Airport Corporate Park, Consumer Square, Miracle Mile, Lake Road/South Main Street in the Town and Village of Horseheads, and significant residential areas in the Village of Horseheads and Elmira Heights. They took a closer look and discovered that in some areas they failed to use existing information. In

other places, the simplified mapping techniques used were not appropriate for the location. Janet wrote a six page letter documenting the comments, concerns, and questions. At a subsequent meeting, FEMA did admit that the project had been frozen when FEMA decided to roll it into their new Risk MAP program, so the normal quality checks were not done properly. Although new studies will be done for some streams, in other areas these draft maps will be used. Work is in progress to work with the new contractor to eliminate the mapping errors that were not resolved by the previous contractor.

At FEMA's meeting, someone asked if they had funding to support local efforts to collect data and work with them on the mapping project. FEMA's answer was "no." Janet has been providing this help with the 604(b) project funding and has written more flood assistance time into the application for the next round. Those funds are for Water Quality Planning and flood assistance is not a top priority for that program for the DEC in Albany.

Tom Santulli stated that Mark Watts has proposed that the counties chip in funding to support STC's role as the point of contact for data collection and project communication. Board members agreed to discuss this further and work out the details.

Tom Santulli congratulated Janet on a job well done and said that this is a very important project.

5. **Intergovernmental Reviews (IGRs)** – STC Staff presented the following intergovernmental reviews to the Board. Marcia Weber introduced new staff Meghan Jacquet, Planner, who will be working on Marcellus Shale and water issues and who reported on one of the IGRs.

New York State

11-04 Section 106 of the Clean Water Act

Project Applicant: New England Interstate Water Pollution Control Commission (NEIWPPC)

Description: this project is designed to support and enhance state wetland program and state/federal cooperation. This is an extension of the budget period of the FY 10-11 Clean Water Act Section 106 Program Support work plan from September 30, 2011 to September 30, 2013.

Federal Agency: US EPA

Cost: Federal: \$5,904,724.00 Total: \$5,904,724.00

Steuben County

11-05 Acquire Snow removal Equipment

Project Applicant: Town of Erwin IDA – Corning - Painted Post Airport

Description: acquire snow removal equipment.

Federal Agency: FAA

Cost: Federal: \$152,000 State: \$4,000 Local: \$4,000 Total: \$160,000

There being no questions or comments, the intergovernmental reviews were approved on a motion by Mark Alger, seconded by Scott Van Etten, and carried.

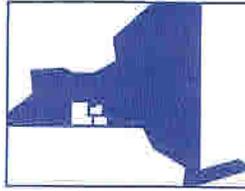
OTHER BUSINESS

1. **STC Committees** – M. Weber reported that she had heard from board members which committee they would like to be on. The STC Committee Roster will be updated with changes and be brought to the next board meeting.
2. **Next meeting** – the next STC Board of Directors meeting will be on March 17, 2011.
3. **Old Business** – there was no old business.
4. **New Business** – there was no new business.
5. **Other** – Ted Bennett thanked all those who attended services and sent cards on the passing of his wife Helen.

ADJOURNMENT – there being no further business the meeting adjourned at 5:35 PM.

Respectfully submitted,
Susan Cratsley
Senior Typist

Southern Tier Central Regional Planning & Development Board



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Marcia D. Weber
Executive Director

February 17, 2011

Senator Kirsten Gillibrand
478 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Subject: National Streamflow Information Program (NSIP)

Dear Senator Gillibrand:

Flood warnings are the best defense against loss of life during floods. However, reliable warnings are only possible if forecasters have access to accurate real-time information about river and stream flows. We are thus asking you to support full funding for the National Streamflow Information Program (NSIP) of the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS). This program is intended to provide full federal funding for a core network of the high priority stream gauges that are essential for federal obligations, such as developing flood forecasts (by the NOAA National Weather Service) and operation of flood control reservoirs (by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers). However, this program has never been fully funded, necessitating use of less reliable funding sources to pay for critical gauges that are needed to protect life and property.

We are making this request now because six stream gauges in our region are threatened with discontinuation due to elimination of funding for the Susquehanna Flood Forecast and Warning System (SFFWS). The \$2.4 million requested for this congressionally directed project included funding for 66 stream and river gauges throughout the watershed (in New York, Pennsylvania, and Maryland). It would also have funded 73 rain gauges (needed to calibrate radar data), inundation mapping (which supports emergency response by indicating where flooding is likely), and public information. The system has also promoted an unprecedented level on cooperation between member agencies.

Four of the six threatened river gauges in our region are located at National Weather Service (NWS) River Forecast Points. Without these gauges, reliable flood forecasts could not be issued for the major population centers in our region. These forecasts form the basis for evacuation decisions and provide the warning time needed to operate flood control structures and implement other property protection measures. The value of this ability to protect lives and property far exceeds the cost of the gauge system. In addition to preventing local losses, it reduces the region's reliance on federal disaster aid. These four critical gauges that are currently scheduled for discontinuation are all on the list of high priority gauges that would be funded if the NSIP program is fully implemented.

The NWS and USGS have been asked to piece together funding to maintain these critical stream gauges and other services that have previously been funded by the SFFWS. However, the best long-term solution to the funding shortfalls that repeatedly threaten different gauges across the country is to establish a single, reliable funding mechanism for the highest priority gauges in the national system.

Reliable river gauge information is extremely important to flood-prone areas such as the Southern Tier of New York. This is why our region supplements the federal gauge network with a local gauge system (owned and operated by a nonprofit public-private partnership). However, this local system cannot meet the quality and reliability standards necessary to support National Weather Service river forecasts. It is thus essential that USGS have the resources needed to continue to operate critical gauges in the federal system.

In 1972, our region lost 23 lives and sustained almost a billion dollars in damages from a devastating flood. Since then we have worked hard to improve the region's resilience to flooding. The information provided by river gauges forms the foundation for the improved flood warning capability and other mitigation efforts. We thus request full funding for the USGS NSIP program to enable our region, and the rest of the nation, to protect lives and property from flood damage. If you would like additional information, please contact Janet Thigpen (STC Flood Mitigation Specialist) at 607-737-5271 or jthigpen@co.chemung.ny.us.

Sincerely,



Thomas J. Santulli
Chair

Cc: Mike Simpson, Chair, House Appropriation Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies
Jim Moran, Ranking Member, House Appropriation Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies
Maurice Hinchey, Member, House Appropriation Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies
President Barack Obama
Jacob J. Lew, Director, Office of Management & Budget
Ken Salazar, Secretary of Interior, U.S. Department of Interior
Dr. Jane Lubchenco, NOAA Administrator
Dr. John L. Hayes, Director, NOAA National Weather Service
Ward Freeman, Director, USGS New York Water Science Center
James B. Campbell, Director, USGS Pennsylvania Water Science Center
David Russ, USGS Regional Executive, Northeast Area
Governor Andrew M. Cuomo
Paul Swartz, Executive Director, Susquehanna River Basin Commission