



**MINUTES OF THE PARK ECOLOGY COMMITTEE MEETING
October 9, 2014**

The Park Ecology Committee convened at approximately 1:00 p.m.

Park Ecology Committee Members Present:

Arthur Lussi, Acting Chair, Daniel Wilt, Bradley Austin (DED) and Robert Stegemann (DEC).

Other Members and Designees Present:

Leilani Ulrich, Chairwoman, Karen Feldman, Richard Booth, Sherman Craig, William Thomas and Lynn Mahoney (DOS).

Local Government Review Board:

Fred Monroe, Executive Director.

Agency Staff Present:

Terry Martino, Executive Director, James Townsend, Ed Snizek, Supervisor Natural Resource Analysis.

Approval of September Minutes

A motion to approve the draft committee minutes was made by Designee Austin and was seconded by Designee Stegemann. All were in favor.

Supervisor, Natural Resources Report (E. Snizek)

Mr. Snizek briefly reviewed the monthly activity report for the RASS Division which was included in the monthly mailing packet to the Board. Mr. Snizek also reported on RASS Division initiatives which will be presented to the Board in November. RASS staff is working with APIPP, DEC and other partners to develop an invasive species rapid response plan for the Adirondack Region. The plan is being developed in response to the threat of *Hydrilla verticillata*, an aggressive invasive aquatic plant, which has infested several waterbodies downstate.

He also reported that RASS staff have been working with Legal and Regulatory Division staff to update DAP biological survey guidelines.

NYS DOT Adirondack Road Salt Pilot Program (M. Lashmet, DOT)

Michael Lashmet presented information on the two-year pilot program designed to reduce road salt use at four locations in the Park which include Rt. 8, Hamilton County, Rt. 3, Franklin County, Rt. 86, Essex County and Rt. 73, Essex County.

The information presented included an overview of the program, established goals for snow and ice removal, reduction of salt applications, and pre-storm and icing operations. He reviewed the various snow and ice removal materials that are utilized by the Department. He also discussed weather data which outlined the severity of the Adirondack winters in comparison to other geographic areas and noted that salt applications are driven by weather conditions.

Member Booth asked if data exists that reflects any type of increase or reduction in accident rates where salt applications have been reduced. Mr. Lashmet responded that on the State highway system it takes a few years to obtain the data. He said does not currently have this information. He added that other states have low salt use areas, but currently New York State does not have defined low salt use areas.

Member Booth then asked if there is consistency between equipment handlers and if application rates remain the same amongst operators. Mr. Lashmet replied that operators are highly trained and committed to safety. He further explained that the equipment is automated and supervisors monitor equipment and salt usage.

Member Feldman asked about road conditions and temperature and the role weather plays in selecting the material that is best suited for application. Mr. Lashmet answered that temperature and precipitation are key to which material is applied for snow and ice removal. Ms. Feldman then asked about the vegetation alongside the roadway turning brown and said she has been told in the past that this is due to the use of salt on the roads. Mr. Lashmet responded indeed it is likely due to the spray action that occurs during the salt application.

Member Craig noted that due to the existence of conifers alongside the road edge shadows develop which can lead to greater applications of salt in the shaded areas. Mr. Lashmet responded pavement temperatures dictate the material used and the sunnier locations do require less treatment because the pavement is warmer.

Agency Chair Ulrich asked what the top two concerns are from interest groups in terms of the use of salt and its impacts. He responded the primary concern is the impact to waterways and groundwater. He added that DOT minimizes salt use as much as possible.

Member Lussi noted that in his past experience living in the State of Colorado, it seemed that less salt was applied to the roadways there. Mr. Lashmet responded that in the past Colorado has used more abrasive sand material but due to environmental concerns, they have moved towards greater use of salt mixtures such as liquid magnesium chloride to lessen environmental impacts.

Agency Chair Ulrich asked if studies or comparisons from other countries such as Finland and Sweden have been consulted to glean information about best management practices that might be used in these areas. Mr. Lashmet responded that these countries do seem to be more technologically advanced and there are national groups such as AASHTO and the Subcommittee on Winter Road Maintenance who interact more internationally. Much of the sensor technology that is being utilized in our country has been obtained from European countries.

Local Government Review Board Executive Director asked if the Department shares information with the local municipalities. Mr. Lashmet responded that the municipalities that the Department contracts with to maintain certain highways have greater contact with the Department than those that do not. He said the Department is available to any municipality that seeks their assistance.

Old Business

None

New Business

None

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 2:00 p.m.