

# **Environmental Emergency Services, Inc. Chemung, Schuyler & Steuben Counties, NY**

## **2010 Annual Report**



Dedicated In memory of Richard "Dix" McDonald,  
founding member of  
Environmental Emergency Services, Inc.

## ENVIRONMENTAL EMERGENCY SERVICES, INC.

## 2010 ANNUAL REPORT

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### **Mission Statement Environmental Emergency Services (EES)**

To advise and inform the populace of Chemung, Schuyler and Steuben Counties in an effort to reduce the adverse effects of severe flooding, drought and hazardous material incidents which contribute to environmental emergencies.

#### **EES Responsibilities**

1. Provide local emergency response agencies with early warning information.
  2. Maintain communication and coordination among agencies, through its Board of Directors, who share concern for environmental issues.
  3. During emergencies maintain communication with local, state and federal partners.
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### **Mission Statement Flood Warning Service (FWS)**

To collect pertinent rainfall, climate and river data and to use this information to assist Emergency Management Offices (EMO) in determining areas of concern for potential high water or drought problems in Chemung, Schuyler and Steuben Counties.

#### **FWS Responsibilities**

1. Provide the EMO in each county with accurate and updated severe weather information during flooding emergencies, whenever possible.
  2. Develop fail-safe communication links with the EMO in each county, with the National Weather Service, US Army Corps of Engineers and with the Region 8 NYS Department of Environmental Conservation.
  3. Organize, train and maintain a volunteer corps of rain gauge readers and a volunteer operational staff for the Gustina Emergency Operation Center.
  4. Maintain and service those sensors for rainfall, climate and river levels, which are under Flood Warning Service control.
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### **Mission Statement Chemical Hazard Information Team (CHIT)**

To provide chemical and safety information and guidance to local emergency responders in the event of hazardous material incidents.

#### **CHIT Responsibilities**

1. Maintain a cadre of local specialists in related disciplines to assist emergency responders.
2. Provide funding and training opportunities for CHIT members and local emergency responders.
3. Supply specialized materials such as: software, equipment and a reference library.

April 1, 2010

## To Our Friends and Associates

Every once in a while an event comes along that merits a change in perspective, a change in policy, or a change in the way of our normal progression. It is just such an event that will cause me to change the writing of this annual report. I normally stay with events that occur during the year that I am writing about, however, just a few days into 2011 something occurred that will affect our organization and permanently change our perspective.

It is with this in mind that we dedicate the 2010 Annual Report to the memory of Richard “Dix” McDonald, who passed away on January 19th, 2011. Dix was one of the founding fathers of our organization. He helped shape what it is we do today and the evolution of our group from a fledgling self-help local organization into the incorporation known in flood detection and warning circles nation-wide. Dix used the experiences and knowledge gained from the pain and practice of what we know as the Agnes Flood of 1972. Dix was the Asst. Superintendent of the Corning School District in 1972. As such he had to deal with the operations, recovery and rehabilitation of a school system, as well as the revitalization of a community. As you know, a school system is a microcosm of a community and as such is completely intertwined with the fabric of a local community. The recovery and rebuilding of the Corning School System & Community never left Dix’s mind. Dix kept those lessons near the surface and used it to help shape and support the fledgling Chemung River Basin Flood Warning Support Corporation, which eventually grew into Environmental Emergency Services, Inc.

Dix was an active member of the Board of Directors and served on the Public Information and Education Committee. Always the educator, he was very passionate about educating the public about the flooding hazards that exist in our area. He felt that we need to constantly educate the public about how to prepare for the next flood, not if it was going to flood. Very early in the formation of our group, Dix developed a flood education manual expressly for the media. This was a tool that could help the reporters responsible for bringing news to the public, understand the risks in our communities and present credible information. Dix was also a very good organizer helping to keep the organization’s by-laws and membership meeting in line. He genuinely was a father figure to our group.

For me, Dix was the guy who sat on my left at board meetings for the last 20+ years. He always had good insight into what we were discussing and was able to provide vision to all our discussions. Dix was also my time keeper. He would give me that comment when a discussion was running too long or going off the track. I grew to depend on this trait and respected his timing. More importantly, I considered Dix my friend, a friend to be counted on in the good times and tough times. I could always give him a call or catch his ear and get excellent direction. Dix was and will always be one of our founding fathers. As time moves on we are slowly losing the group that founded our organization. Along with them goes the experience, the insight, the sense of urgency that they built this flood warning system upon. This group was excellent at passing on what they felt so passionately about. It is up to us in the organization and in our communities to heed their warning, take to heart their passion, and follow their guidance. Flooding in our area will always remain a threat, that is a given. But men like Dix showed us how we as a community can be prepared for the next flood event and more importantly how to regroup and become a better community together.

Michael Sprague, President

## **A Message From The Vice President**

As we endure the fading weeks of a snowy winter and close in on a most welcome spring season (one without ice jams), it is a good time to reflect on the past year. With respect to EES, it is gratifying to note that the organization continues to enjoy strong funding support from the Counties of Chemung, Schuyler, and Steuben, as well as over twenty of the communities the organization serves. Especially in a time when budgets are lean, and every dollar must and should count, the organization continues to strive to justify that support and earn the confidence that is placed in its' ability to fulfill the mission it was created for: to advise and inform the populace of Chemung, Schuyler and Steuben Counties in an effort to reduce the adverse effects of severe flooding, drought and hazardous material incidents which contribute to environmental emergencies.

To that end, please take the time to peruse the following pages and note the accomplishments of the organization and the efforts of the partnering agencies, industry, and many dedicated volunteers. But also realize that there are many "behind the scene", routinely accomplished deeds that do not make the highlights but provide the real backbone to all the organization accomplishes. Sensors (rain gages, river gages, climate stations) that provide us information to make potentially critical decisions do not run without continuous oversight and ongoing maintenance; monthly training sessions for the Flood Warning Service, as well as frequent training with the City of Elmira hazardous material team (and others), do not simply occur without a lot of preparation and organizational effort; weekly data gathering from our various sources, checking of system outputs to ensure accuracy, distribution of information to affiliated agencies, and radio checks are not items that occur without prior planning and continued input and effort from volunteers, committee chairpersons, and key personnel. I could add to the list, but it is safe to say that as this organization has matured and grown into what it is today, the routine and often left unsaid efforts to keep all of its assets managed and running (and replaced and upgraded as necessary) have also grown. To all those involved in the daily efforts to manage, maintain, and continually advance the organization's ability to meet its' goals, thank you, and job well done!

In remembrance of:

One of the founding fathers of the EES organization recently passed away, leaving many fond memories and well taught lessons. Mr. Dix McDonald has been with the organization from its start, serving as Director of Public Information/Education and Committee Chairman, and continuing throughout thirty plus years as an active member on our Board of Director's. It was oft at our meetings, when the rest of us were debating the how's and why's of more difficult choices, or maybe what we thought easier ones, such as wording of resolutions, bylaws, etc., that Dix would speak up in his simple and direct way to remind us of the reasons we were sitting there, what the organization was created for, why the small things mattered, and what a proper course of action might be (and always was). His influence on the organization and its members has been tremendous, and his presence will surely be missed. However, his guiding principles will continue to be taken to heart and remain a part of all EES does. We are deeply thankful for that.

Scott Rodabaugh

## 2010 Flood Warning Service Report

Well it was another fairly uneventful storm season, yet this past year was much busier than uneventful years in the past. The Flood Warning Services was busy as we played a key role in the development and successful completion of the Southern Tier Regional Exercise. We also took some of our volunteers to a National Weather Service Flood Conference back in early June. All of these events have kept the flood warning service busy this past year.

Hurricane Dave, as we have come to call this exercise, was a great test of our operation and staffing. This exercise has given us many things to think about and a means to look at retooling our operations for continued growth and expansion. The flood warning service has changed over these past twenty some years, as has our technology. Many of the systems that we began operations with are dinosaurs in the realm of new technology. In order to continue to meet the demands of our customers, the flood warning service is looking at a more dynamic process to collect, store and dispense the data that we receive. This not only consists of Environmental Emergency Services data, but also the never ending flow of data that comes from the Internet and our various partner agencies. On top of the continue flow of data we must do all of this with a limited staff of volunteers.

Years ago it was not unlikely to have someone walk into the Gustina EOC and put them to work without much prior training, however today that is not the case. The technology and pure sum of data that we are looking at, limits this from occurring today. Not only data collection, but the interpretation of that data is important. Staff working the GEOC must have prior hands on training which will allow them to tabulate, calculate, and distribute the data to our customers in the most appropriate manner. Several of the After Action points outlined from the Regional Exercise discuss Flood Warning Service Operations. This is something that we will work on over this upcoming year and into the future as we work to keep the Flood Warning Service a viable resource to the three county area.

Back in June, Mike Sprague, Mike Smith, Bill Kennedy, Janet Thigpen, Dave Colvin, Pete Wilson and I traveled to beautiful Wilkes-Barre Pennsylvania for the National Weather Service Northeast Flood Summit and users Conference. This conference was a wonderful opportunity to expose our staff to what is new and exciting within the area of flood forecasting and scientific flood research. There were many workshops and breakout sessions for us to attend and our own Mike Sprague spoke about our organization and the successes that we have had. We were able to bring back information from this conference to share with the members that did not attend so I think that the whole operation benefited from this event. I thank the volunteers for taking time out of their schedules to attend this conference. I think they came home with a lot of useful information.

With all of this considered, this past year was also a maintenance year for the Flood Warning Service. Tom Shugars our gauge maintenance specialist took much of this year to provide some much needed maintenance on our gauges. Several of our gauges received upgrades and some were straightened from years of weathering the elements. Upgraded sensors were placed into service and overall our system was given a technology facelift. I want to thank Tom Shugars for all his work in these endeavors. Bob Gardner has continued to work with the "Troops" over the

past year in getting them up to speed with FWS Operations. We have a pretty consistent group of volunteers and I am thankful for their continued support and involvement.

In closing, we could not do what we do without you, the supporters of Environmental Emergency Services Inc. and the Board of Directors. The Flood Warning Services is the kingpin of the organization. It is the most expensive to maintain and operate, but yet we continue to do that cost effectively with the use of volunteers and proven technology that has worked well for us for close to thirty years. It is my hope that the Flood Warning Service will continue to enhance our abilities as we move into the future.

Sincerely,  
Timothy D. Marshall

CHEMUNG COUNTY  
EMERGENCY PLANNER &  
SAFETY COORDINATOR

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P.O. Box 588 • Elmira, NY 14902-0588  
KRISTIN A. CARD  
(607) 737-2095 • FAX: (607) 737-2098  
kcard@co.chemung.ny.us

It is with deep sadness that we pay special tribute to Dix McDonald, a valued member of the Public Information and Education Committee. Dix was one of the founding members of Environmental Emergency Services, and his dedication and the effort he put forth helping it grow into the three County organization it is today, will not only be missed, but will certainly create a void on the PIE Committee. Our deepest sympathy is extended to his family and friends.

In 2010, The Public Information and Education (PIE) Committee continued some on-going projects and began some new ones.

EES and PIE have many requests annually to make presentations to senior citizen groups, school aged groups, and community organizations, regarding who we are and what we do. We now have another piece of equipment to add excitement and interest to these presentations! At the end of 2009 we purchased a flood simulator. It is a portable, tabletop model that can be taken to any location. Cars, homes, trees, and even putty to make dams and levees can be placed in the natural setting of the simulator. Water can then be released into the model, at a variety of speeds, allowing the spectators to see how water can flow through the model safely, or cause flooding.

Janet Thigpen, a PIE Committee and EES Board member, spearheaded the model's purchase, and in 2010 she has now trained about a dozen people in the proper use and demonstration of the model. The PIE members then brainstormed a "rules of use" form that must be followed to ensure the model will continue to be maintained and remain a benefit to our communities for many years to come. The model has been used numerous times, mostly with school aged groups, and so far has been a huge success! The kids have loved placing homes and other items in the model, competing to see who has built safely, and who has put their home in harm's way.

PIE assisted many communities and agencies in 2010 with education and media campaigns. Our Flooding and Water Recreation brochures, created in 2008 and 2009 respectively, have continued to be distributed by many communities. PIE also helped the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation with a press release following an incident in which a Southport levee was damaged by ATV/Motorcycle use. PIE also responded to several media requests over the year on issues related to flooding and the environment.

The 2008 Flooding brochure mentioned above is used by communities participating in the National Flood Insurance Programs (NFIP) "Community Rating System" (CRS). This program allows communities to undertake certain activities that will earn the residents of the community a lower NFIP rate. In September 2010, this Chairwoman attended a four day CRS

course at the New York State Fire Academy to learn the many ways communities can earn CRS points. The course was an eye opening experience! Earning CRS points is a challenging and time consuming process, and yet of the 17 municipalities in Chemung County that participate in the NFIP program, nine of them also participate in the CRS program to reduce the rates for their residents. No other county in New York State has that many municipalities participating in CRS.

PIE was also approached by the Retired Seniors Volunteer Program (RSVP) and the American Red Cross in Steuben County to assist with a joint project that would help area businesses reduce possible property and commerce damage from natural and man-made disasters. PIE will continue to help investigate and brainstorm the possibilities of creating such a program.

If your group or organization would like to know more about EES, learn about flooding issues with our new simulator, or would like information on chemical hazards, please contact us! PIE also continues to help the Flood Warning Service and CHIT recruit new volunteers for their teams. Look for our new CHIT brochure in 2011! If you or your group has an interest in being involved, please ask for information on volunteer opportunities. You can devote as little or as much time as you want, and you'll be helping your community to be a safer and environmentally friendlier place!

Respectfully Submitted,  
Kristin A. Card-Griffin  
PIE Chairwoman

## 2010 FINANCIAL SUMMARY

### Funding:

Cash on Hand January 1, 2010	\$ 45,718
Chemung, Steuben & Schuyler Counties	19,800
Local Government	13,400
Interest Income	<u>35</u>
Sub-Total	\$ 78,953
Corning, Inc. (Canisteo Gage/Maintenance)	<u>1,000</u>
TOTAL	\$ 79,953

### Expenditures:

Operating Expenses	
Communications	4,010
Accounting Services, Tax Reporting	1,010
Bank Charges, Printing and Miscellaneous	1,160
Technical Services	6,806
Flood Warning Service Equipment Maintenance & Repair	9,932
Equipment	7,632
Equipment Rental	9,156
Flood Warning Service Education and Meetings	2,717
CHIT Training and Reference Materials	0
Public Information & Education (PIE)	<u>432</u>
TOTAL	\$ 42,855

<b>CASH ON HAND JANUARY 1, 2011</b>	<b>\$ 37,098</b>
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## 2010 FINANCIAL SUMMARY (continued)

**FORECAST 2011****Estimated Funding:**

Cash on Hand January 1, 2011	\$37,098
Chemung, Steuben & Schuyler Counties	19,800
Local Government	13,400
Interest Income	<u>50</u>
Sub-Total	\$70,348
Corning Inc. (Canisteo Gage & Maintenance)	<u>1,000</u>
TOTAL Funds	\$71,348

**Estimated Expenditures:**

Operating Costs for Flood Warning Service	37,000
Equipment Reserve Fund	15,000
Equipment Rental	10,000
Training Fund	
Flood Warning Service	5,000
CHIT Training and Reference Materials	2,000
Public Information & Education (PIE)	<u>2,000</u>
TOTAL	\$71,000

**FORECASTED SURPLUS:** **\$ 348**

Joy Brewer  
Treasurer

## **2010 CONTRIBUTORS**

The Board of Directors is grateful to the following local governments for their financial contributions to operating expenses of EES:

Chemung County

Steuben County

Schuyler County

Ashland (T)

Baldwin (T)

Bath (T)

Bath (V)

Big Flats (T)

Corning (T)

Erwin (T)

Elmira (T)

Elmira (C)

Horseheads (T)

Lindley (T)

Savona (V)

South Corning (V)

Southport (T)

West Union (T)

## **2010 DIRECTORS AND MEMBERS OF THE CORPORATION**

### **DIRECTORS**

President: Michael Sprague, Steuben County Emergency Management  
 Vice President: Scott Rodabaugh, NYS Department of Environmental Conservation  
 Treasurer: Joy Brewer, NYS Department of Environmental Conservation  
 Secretary: Penny Arnold, Chemung County Emergency Management  
 PIE Chair: Kristin Card-Griffin, Chemung County Emergency Management  
 FWS Coordinator: Tim Marshall, Steuben County Emergency Management  
 CHIT Coordinator: Howard Phillips  
 Patrick Bermingham, Elmira City Fire Department  
 Bob Gardner  
 Brian Gardner, Schuyler County Emergency Management  
 Reeve Howland, REM, Motor Components, LCC  
 Wayne Huggler, Corning Incorporated  
 Chad M. Kehoe, NYS Department of Environmental Conservation  
 Bill Kennedy, Schuyler County Emergency Management  
 Merrill Lynn  
 Rita McCarthy, Town of Erwin  
 Dix McDonald  
 Stephen Monroe, Corning Fire Department  
 Jeff Parker, Steuben County Soil and Water Conservation District  
 Daniel Smith, Hornell City Fire Department  
 Mike Smith, Chemung County Emergency Management  
 Janet Thigpen, Southern Tier Central Regional Planning & Development Board  
 Brian Tyndell

### **MEMBERS**

Vern Anderson  
 Allan Buddle  
 John Chiaramonte  
 Scott Foti, NYS Department of Environmental Conservation  
 David Jessick, Elmira City Fire Department  
 Jim Lynch, NYS Department of Environmental Conservation  
 Philips Lighting Company  
 Robert (Bob) Ohl, Corning Incorporated  
 Kenneth Rohrer  
 Mike Schaffner, NOAA National Weather Service  
 Leon Skinner, Army Corps of Engineers  
 Ramona Sprague, Town of Erwin  
 Dave Swan, Jr., Corning Fire Department  
 Lynn O. Szabo, U.S. Geological Survey