



Owasco Lake Watershed Management Council (OLWMC)

August 20, 2019, 10:00am – Director’s Summary

As a reminder the Advanced HABs Monitoring Buoy data for Seneca, Skaneateles & Owasco Lakes can be found on, and downloaded from, the US Geological Service website. (<https://ny.water.usgs.gov/maps/habs/>). The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC) Finger Lakes Hub and the Owasco Watershed Lake Association (OWLA) are coordinating HAB surveillance for Owasco Lake in 2019. Further, an online fillable form that tracks the exact location of the HABs can be found at: on.ny.gov/nyhabs. NYHABS use is in full swing to evaluate and share public reports, trained user reports, and beach closures. There are new updates to this program - the NYSDEC requests volunteers to attach at least one photo when a HAB is being reported (whether it is sampled or not) to support a rapid HABs evaluation. If a volunteer collects a sample and for any reason is not able to include the Sample ID in their form, or there is an error regarding the ID, please let the NYSDEC know ASAP so they can match the field reports to the sample results. Lastly, volunteers are encouraged to double check that the location of the reported HAB is accurate before submitting the form.

The NYSDEC launched ‘Know Your NY Watershed’ to increase public awareness about water resources. Know Your NY Water is a map-based website that users can search by location to learn more about the water they use every day. The website allows users to find the nearest large public drinking water system and view its Annual Drinking Water Quality Report and contact information.

Watershed Inspector, Andrew Snell, has completed his training and testing requirements and is now a certified drone operator and licensed pilot. We are pursuing program insurance needs and program procedures finalization before the OLWIPD can be adequately positioned to use the drone technology for watershed surveillance. The advancement of program development for the OLWIPD is ongoing. The division’s Deputy Inspector position listing has been removed and members of the watershed inspection committee are reviewing candidate credentials. Preliminary telephone interviews were conducted last week, and we will pursue in-person candidate interviews in the near term.

OWLA and NYSDEC representatives met July 19th for NYSDEC guidance on 2019 OWLA monitoring efforts for tributaries along the eastern shore of the lake. We were informed the information will be used by the DEC for Priority Waterbody Factsheets (PWFs) that can be used

for external data sources for future project proposals and reports. OWLA plans to present a summary of their 2019 tributary monitoring results as an upcoming council meeting.

We continue to await feedback from Nucor and NYSDEC representatives regarding an update on their beneficial use determination (BUD) for slag, regulated by the NYSDEC, and whether there is a possibility for approval for a pilot project using slag for phosphorus (P) remediation. In the meantime, Eileen O'Connor of the Cayuga County Department of Health (CCDOH) and I have been working with engineering consultants on pursuing an innovative technology for P-removal from septic leachate and 'edge of field' tile drains. The technology uses iron nanoparticle adsorption for P removal within a removable and reusable media. In theory, the P removed from the media may be re-used as a viable fertilizer product. Recent predictions suggest the likelihood of a phosphate shortage in the near future (<https://phys.org/news/2019-07-phosphate-shortage-dwindling-resource-required.html>). Capturing P within the Owasco Lake Watershed may not only support the reduction of this algal growth limiting nutrient for the benefit of the lake, but may support job growth based on the eventual resale of a nutrient that's monetary value is likely to grow as its conventional supply (i.e., phosphate from mining) diminishes. The CCDOH is directing a pilot project seeking 2-3 watershed volunteers to offer access for installation of the P-removal technology within their septic systems. These pilot project costs and associated cleanup and implementation will be covered by funding provided through the CCDOH. OWLA has offered a financial incentive to volunteers with commitment of \$100 to individuals willing to support this initiative through the use of their septic systems. Please reach out to the CCDOH if you are interested and willing to volunteer for this effort.

Based on financial audit results and tax documents approval by the board of directors, we can complete our required submissions to the NYS Grants Gateway portal. When this administrative process is complete we will be eligible for state grant funding opportunities for nonprofits that will support specific projects within the watershed.

Representatives from Cayuga County Soil and Water Conservation District (CCSWCD), Cayuga County Highway Department, and the OLWMC met at Oakhill County Road in the Village of Moravia July 18th to discuss moving forward with a project to improve road conditions to help mitigate flooding there. The county highway department is collaborating with the district to implement flood mitigation projects on Oakhill Road. The CCSWCD plans to have an engineered design prepared for this project to access the scope of work. Further the CCSWCD has offered to give a comprehensive presentation on their 2019 watershed implementation and restoration activities and initiatives at an upcoming council meeting.

Cornell's ProDairy program is offering follow up support with application assistance for small dairy farmers eligible and interested in funding through the Dairy Acceleration Program (DAP). Initial outreach for funding support for small dairies was a collaborative outreach effort between the OLWMC and Cornell Cooperative Extension.

The Town of Owasco completed the Clean Fleets High Impact Action under (NYSERDA) clean energy program by installing an electric vehicle charging station. This was an important step by the Town to take the initiative towards progress in reducing greenhouse gas emissions and

supporting the future of transportation. Owasco Lake modeling efforts have identified current trends in global climate likely play a role in the duration of lake stratification and likely the occurrence of harmful algal blooms (HABs). I encourage the board of directors to consider advocating with their respective municipalities to review the NYSERDA website and determine program rebate eligibility in support of our long term goals.

We are petitioning for state-level tributary watershed-wide regulatory protections, leveraging Article 15 of the Clean Water Act to require permits for streamside construction activities for tributaries with certain classifications. Currently, many of our tributaries fall below the classification level that requires a state permit for construction, and many of these watercourses are being clear cut. I have mentioned before the importance of protecting and restoring nutrient 'sinks' within the watershed in the form of vegetation, rather than within the lake in the form of algae. The Cayuga County Department of Health wrote a draft letter of support for our petition for tributary reclassification. We continue to await guidance from NYSDEC Region 7 on feedback from NYSDEC Commissioner Seggos regarding the potential for expediting what is typically an extensive and lengthy reclassification process.

I have been working with the Environmental Taskforce through the Regional Economic Development Council. The taskforce is completing a progress report to deliver to Albany intended to identify shortfalls in state support to the governor. I am developing a report section on improved tools for studying and combatting HABs through better access to funding, a more streamlined process for protecting tributaries through the stream classification process, and the provision of enhanced incentives and support for nutrient management planning for the agricultural community.