



## Owasco Lake Watershed Management Council (OLWMC)

June 16, 2020, 10:00am – Director’s Summary

- The Owasco Lake Watershed Inspection and Protection Division (OLWIPD) remains operational and active for watershed surveillance activities under the advisement of the Watershed Inspection Committee (WIC). Further, Watershed Inspectors, Drew Snell and Kaitlyn Shanahan are making progress on several additional recognition and outreach initiatives:
  1. They are composing a recognition article, spotlighting a local crop farmer who demonstrates watershed stewardship and positive strides in BMPs, and who has been an active participant in the watershed rules and regulations revision process. The finished article will appear in the June WQMA newsletter as well as a new editorial column offered to the OLWMC through Auburnpub.
  2. They are designing and producing ‘Lake Friendly Lawn’ signage to be distributed to those watershed residents who ‘Take the Pledge’ on the OLWMC website to stop the use of lawn fertilizers.
  3. They are working on the procurement and installation of ‘No Dumping’ Storm Drain Medallions in collaboration with participating watershed municipalities
- The watershed rules and regulations steering committee and working group, under advisement of the City of Auburn legal team have collectively finalized revisions of the regulatory document. The current phase is City of Auburn and Town of Owasco final review before the document can be finalized and delivered to NYS agencies for their review.
  1. The watershed community is going through a potential paradigm shift with new requirements for farm planning under revisions to watershed regulations that have the potential for approval in the near term. The development of Certified Nutrient Management Plans may be limited by the number of local professionals credentialed to offer services. A communal farm planning strategy is attractive, offering the benefits of both collaboration and efficiency. The Bradford County Conservation District (BCCD), PA has been successful with communal farm nutrient planning efforts. I continue to approach this District to discuss both successes and challenges associated with communal planning forums, guidance on the needs of program development, as well as to request a representative from the BCCD team to present with us.

- I was informed the OLWMC will receive a response from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation in August regarding a potential award for the Five Star and Urban Waters Restoration Program project proposal submitted earlier this year for monitoring the connective corridor of Hidden Brook in the Town of Owasco.
- We submitted five grant proposals over the course of the last month. Two were small and targeted funding signage and educational tools through the Emerson Foundation and Finger Lakes Institute, respectively. One grant proposal, developed in close collaboration with the Owasco Watershed Lake Association (OWLA), in partnership with the Cayuga County Department of Health (CCDOH) and with endorsements from local government leaders, targets the New York State Pollution Prevention Institute (NYSP2I) Community Grant program to kick-start the ‘Be Owasco Lake Watershed Aware Campaign.’ The proposal is titled “Be Watershed Aware – A Public Outreach Project to Residents of the Owasco Lake Watershed.” Our overarching goal is behavioral change in residents and businesses toward habits and life actions that result in greater sustainability of Owasco Lake as a long term freshwater resource for the region. We will satisfy this goal by accomplishing three objectives:
  1. *Objective 1: Create consistent, concise messaging that is easily understood, readily remembered, and widely applicable and that is presented by personable, confident, well-spoken experts.*
  2. *Objective 2: Take the message to the people. Make our events convenient to attend, fun, and a pleasant family outing. Something that will be talked about as a summer highlight with friends and neighbors.*
  3. *Objective 3: Measure our progress. Comprehensively compile meaningful metrics that are best possible indicators of our public outreach and education success.*

The voluntary pledge to cease the use of excess lawn fertilizers that is available on the OLWMC website, will also be promulgated at outreach events, and those who take the pledge will be offered and delivered ‘lake friendly’ lawn signage (please see above). The other two recent project proposals were submitted through the Great Lake Restoration Initiative Soil and nutrient Reduction Program (GLRI SNRP); the first targeting funding to continue piloting advanced technology for the removal of phosphorus (P) from manure, and the second in collaboration with the Cayuga County Planning Department and others, to target P removal through integration of P adsorptive media into Best Management Practices (BMPs) planned for installation at the Owasco Flats. A handful of the limited vendors working with technologies used for manure P-removal responded to the request for information (RFI) associated with that project, and if anyone is interested in information provided about those technologies, please let me know.

- Members of OWLA, the Skaneateles Lake Association, and the OLWMC are collaborating on yet another GLRI request for proposal through the US Forest Service. We are working towards a multiple watershed approach with a proposal submission targeting Hemlock Woolly Adelgid mitigation under the ‘Forest Insect and Disease Mitigation’ category. The program proposal deadline is June 26<sup>th</sup> and the proposal is planned for submission and administration through the OLWMC.

- In partnership with Cayuga County Planning, City of Auburn, OWLA, and under advisement of Dr. Halfman of HWS, we have inventoried watershed tributary locations for the installation of level sensors. The externally funded pilot project will use level sensors to offer greater spatial information to monitor stream dynamics under a wide range of conditions, indicating locations that tend to surge following storm events that might be a target for restoration efforts. Furthermore, locations chosen for this project align with those selected as part of the SWAT model development for the Nine Element Watershed Plan; the group hopes that estimated flows and loads that will be calculated from the tributary level information, will help calibrate and fine tune the model in years to come.
  
- I recently inquired with Senator Pam Helming on the passing of Assembly bill A08349/S05612 with the NYS Senate that would effectively advance permitting protections for tributaries state-wide. She informed me this bill has been passed in the Assembly this year and has gone through committee and is on the Senate calendar. We are watching the progress of this bill closely, and if the bill does not (or did not) pass, we will plan to continue with the locally endorsed submission of our watershed tributary reclassification petition to attempt to gain the permitting protections we seek.
  
- On June 10<sup>th</sup>, New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC) Finger Lakes Hub scientists offered two detailed presentations with training for volunteers involved in the Harmful Algal Blooms (HABS) surveillance program.
  1. NYSDEC sampling and analysis of cyanobacteria in 2020 will be limited to Citizens Statewide Lake Assessment Program (CSLAP) samples or as directed by public health officials (in collaboration with DOHs). Previously HABS were considered ‘suspicious’ until confirmed sample and laboratory analysis. NYSDEC’s data from last year’s program show volunteers were highly accurate in identifying HABS with visual confirmation alone. Unlike previous years, NYHABS reporting now allows for the classification of blooms as confirmed based on pictures alone and without the collection of samples.
    - Two forms are made available for reporting through NYHABS online:
      - A trained user report form ([on.ny.gov/habproform](http://on.ny.gov/habproform)) that when used to identify HABS will indicate HABS as confirmed on the associated map.
      - A general public report form that allows for the upload of photos for the subsequent review of DEC staff for the potential confirmation of a bloom.
  2. For Owasco Lake, OWLA is coordinating volunteers for reporting HABS within designated zones.
  3. Tony Prestiagacomo, our local DEC Hub representative agreed to prepare and deliver an additional presentation to be offered at an upcoming OLWMC public meeting that will detail advancements of the NYHABS.gov online notification system for harmful algae blooms. His presentation will act as an additional training for our partners, and members of the community to use their cellular devices to indicate the dates, locations, and statuses of HABS.

- The OLWMC continues to work closely with The Nature Conservancy (TNC) to evaluate lands targeted for acquisition (according to OLWMC Member's approved resolution 01-2020, the OLWMC resolved to hold real property to protect land and watershed features that support the protection of water quality). Further, the Council is offering support to TNC for a feasibility study for replacing septic systems in Indian Cove on the east shore Owasco Lake. TNC is planning a poll, administered throughout the Finger Lakes, to gain a better understanding of the public perception of water quality within the Finger Lakes region.
- Cayuga County' Soil and Water Conservation District is planning to present to the OLWMC on 2019 project outcomes and project outlooks for 2020 at the next physical Council meeting, perhaps as early as July 21st.
- The OLWMC continues to look forward to buy-in from the remaining towns within the watershed that have yet to join to help direct project initiatives. They include the Towns of Sennett, Venice, Sempronius, Groton, and Genoa; I continue to encourage the Board of Directors to reach out to representatives from these towns to elicit municipality buy-in.

Summary prepared by Adam Effler, June 2020