



Owasco Lake Watershed Management Council (OLWMC)

March 17, 2020, 10:00am – Director’s Summary

- The Owasco Lake Watershed Inspection and Protection Division (OLWIPD) completed its annual report to highlight 2019 inspection activities. The report was created in the form of a flyer and included a summary report of OLWMC accomplishments over the course of the year. This report is made publically available on the Divisions website, was distributed at the HABs symposium, and will be distributed for display at all watershed municipalities. It was also delivered via email with meeting documents for today’s meeting.
- The Owasco Watershed Lake Association (OWLA) organized a meeting held February 25th among a variety of watershed project partners to discuss aligning funding needs with project priorities that target practical benefits to the watershed and to the lake. Regarding the public outreach and education topic, the group identified the value of targeting fundraising for recruitment of an experienced marketing professional. Such a person would be responsible for helping to deliver the watershed community outreach campaign. The value of effective, consistent messaging through events and signage was also discussed. Plans for outreach and education through the ‘Be Owasco Lake Watershed Aware’ Campaign will be incorporated into the 9E plan to better accommodate a State funding pathway for implementing associated projects. The primary upcoming action item will be the coordination of a meeting of leaders involved with the development of the Watershed Revitalization, Nine Element, and HABs Action Plans. The intention of this meeting will be to consider public outreach priorities and brainstorm related mechanisms and strategies for outreach within the community. Additional priorities discussed at the meeting include: (1) support for expanding boat inspection and cleaning program, building knowledge of the watershed’s hydrology to support more detailed research on nutrient loading estimates to the lake (e.g., targeting long term funding for automated sensors for estimating flow), (2) advancing professional nutrient management planning and implementation throughout the watershed (i.e., target fundraising to offset costs of credentialed farm planning not covered by CCSWCD grant funds), (3) funding the procurement of an additional weed harvester, and (4) the continuation of funding watershed stabilization measures (e.g., ditch hydroseeding).

- On Monday, March 2nd, Toni Prestiagacomo and Scott Cook of the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC) Finger Lake Hub (the ‘Hub’) invited me to meet at Region 7 DEC in Syracuse to discuss Owasco Lake Watershed projects and funding as well as the Council’s request, via the January internal resolution, for a monthly report on NYS led projects and funding initiatives for the Owasco Lake Watershed. Mr. Cook provided me with the web link to Water Quality Improvement Project grant awardees and informed me the Hub will make a request with the NYSDEC Albany office for more information on ongoing opportunities and grant awardees. I recommend all watershed project partners, and municipality representatives interested in mailings on project funding opportunities, register with the NYSDEC grants list serve.

- The annual Bob Brower Symposium was held March 7th with presentations from a variety of researchers and conservation groups:
 - Water quality data collected by Dr. Halfman and his team suggest the lake condition has improved over the last couple of years.
 - NYSDEC offered a synopsis of funding initiatives, the HABs surveillance program, and piloted mitigation technologies.
 - New research indicated the existence of organic micro-pollutants throughout the Finger Lakes with apparent relative increases in Pesticides existing in those water bodies that have agriculture as the primary watershed land use practice.
 - Doug Keirst of the CCSWCD presented on a variety of Cayuga County District’s soil and nutrient conservation projects implemented throughout the Owasco Lake Watershed in 2019.
 - Karl Czymmek represented Partners for Healthy Watersheds and stressed the achievements of the agricultural community, the improvements in best management practices in agriculture, and the agricultural communities sustained commitment to being a part of the lake water quality conversation. The OLWMC continues an approach that centers on valuing and understanding the community, and welcomes Partners decision to share the local advancements in best management practices (BMPs).

- On March 10th, Representative from the Finger Lakes Institute (FLI), Cayuga County, OWLA, and OLWMC met to discuss transducer/level sensor pilots to provide better flow estimates from watershed tributaries not currently (or well) monitored for flow. We are working with Mr. Brandon Wong on the implementation of a fully funded one-year pilot project, using automated tributaries level measurements to estimate flows that should help accommodate nutrient loading estimates from sub-watersheds. We are targeting Dutch Hollow or Sucker Brook, acknowledging the need for better flow information from those tributaries and other priority sites that accommodate the SWAT model used for the development of the 9 Element Plan. The group identified priority areas for improved coverage and discussed next steps to implement the well-funded pilot project this year. To calibrate the devices, our team will need to measure flows at targeted locations directly and compare those flows to water elevation data to develop site-specific rating curves that will allow the sensors to estimate flow independently. The advantage of the sensors is they offer a wide spatial scale for identifying relative differences in tributaries flows. Nonpoint source phosphorus loading to the lake is driven primarily by

hydrologic conditions, especially during large rain events, and those locations with greater flows and potential for loading are noteworthy targets for water retention and infiltration practices.

- On March 5th, Kaitlyn Shanahan presented the mission and objectives of the OLWMC and OLWIPD with the group Leadership Cayuga. Reportedly, the group was engaged and wanted to know how it could help advance watershed protection efforts. We will continue to follow up with Leadership Cayuga with opportunities. Residential Guidelines to Protect Water Quality in Cayuga County were recently developed by the Cayuga County Water Quality Management Agency's Nutrient and Sediment Working Group, and were shared with Leadership Cayuga. These generally applicable guidelines are applicable to all watershed residents, that is, everyone.
- Watershed Rules and Regulations Steering Committee meetings were held March 3rd and March 12th. The group involved the legal team from the City of Auburn, and collectively made progress on final revisions to the regulatory document. The next phase will be City of Auburn and Town of Owasco final review before the document will be delivered to NYS departments for review.
- 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. We recognize the current limitations of planning assistance due to a limited capacity for private and public professional planning assistance. I think a communal farm planning strategy is attractive, offering the benefits of both collaboration and efficiency. I understand the Bradford County Conservation District (BCCD) has had some success with communal planning efforts. I am approaching 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.
- We will be targeting the Great Lakes Research Initiative's Great Lake Sediment and Nutrient Reduction Program for grant funding a nonpoint source phosphorus pollution control project within the watershed.
- I provided a letter of support for Dr. John Halfman's proposed research for new funding through the Emerson Foundation to continue to build a long-term data set on the baseline water quality and meteorological data for Owasco Lake by re-deploying the FLI monitoring buoy, deploying water quality sondes, weather stations and cameras that can provide continuous data (every 30 minutes) on temperature, wind speed, wind direction, blue-green algae concentrations and other water quality conditions at four nearshore areas of Owasco Lake. The data will detail what meteorological and limnological conditions are consistent temporally with, and may promote, the occurrences of blue green algae blooms. Dr. Halfman also proposes to paired continuous nearshore and offshore data collection efforts with additional surveys of, and controlled experiments with, aquatic plants, zebra/quagga mussels and the nearshore sediments to assess if the cycling of nutrients in the nearshore areas are related to blue-green algae blooms. Outside of the scope of the Emerson grant proposal, laboratory analyses for Dr,

Halfman's more routine lake monitoring work will be conducted in Finger Lakes Institute laboratory that is working towards Environmental Laboratory Approval Program (ELAP) certification end of this spring that supports the need to accommodate NYS recognition of the lab data that will be generated.

- I am approaching Senator Seward and Assemblyman Finch to advocate for an offer of support for the bill 56112—A to go in front of the NYS Senate. As a reminder, the passing of this bill would effectively offer the same protections to our common Class C streams without the need for an approval of our petition to reclassify those streams watershed-wide. (the draft bill was distributed with this month's meeting documents for review). Nevertheless, we continue to gather letters of support for the petition and will plan to continue with its submission.

Attach bill.

- The OLWMC continues to work with The Nature Conservancy (TNC) to negotiate ownership of lands targeted for acquisition. Based on OLWMC Member's approved resolution 01-2020, the OLWMC plans to hold real property to protect land and watershed features that support the protection of water quality.
- Cayuga County' Soil and Water Conservation District will present to the OLWMC in April, on 2019 project outcomes and project outlooks for 2020.
- 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 Sempronius, Groton, Venice, Genoa, and Sennett, and I continue to encourage the Board of Directors to reach out to representatives from these towns to elicit municipality buy-in.