



## Owasco Lake Watershed Management Council (OLWMC)

February 18, 2019, 10:00am – Director’s Summary

- Based on comments made at the January 21<sup>st</sup> OLWMC meeting regarding an inquiry about the potential growth of the Lincoln Dairy Concentrated Animal Feeding Operation (CAFO), Dan Osborn, an owner/operator at Lincoln Dairy, Don Oltz, and I scheduled a meeting for February 5<sup>th</sup> to learn more. This meeting provided for an opportunity for Lincoln Dairy to address sediment and nutrient management strategies, in part required through their CAFO permit, that are designed to target protecting water quality. Mr. Osborn shared that Lincoln Dairy is committed to advancing nutrient conservation efforts and now provides 100% leachate containment on the farm. Furthermore, new precision technologies and guidance systems integrated with the farm equipment allow for reduced tractor passes and efficiencies in the use of both commercial and manure fertilizers. These technological efficiencies support the mass-balance approach to farming, whereby the rate of fertilizer application is controlled based on soil health conditions. Mr. Osborn’s willingness to engage was exemplary. He helped us consider strategies for expanding our collaborative approach with the farming community and shared his willingness to remain involved. There was an additional response to the comments made at the January 21<sup>st</sup> meeting. OLWMC leaders received a letter from Partners for Healthy Watersheds (‘Partners’), postmarked February 5<sup>th</sup>, 2020 explaining the group’s advocacy for improved communication between farm operators and OLWMC leadership before farm operational information is shared with the greater public. OLWMC leadership responded, acknowledging the importance of maintaining trust with the farming community, and shared a willingness to offer greater sensitivity to farms to respond to an inquiry about farming operations before posing that inquiry in a public setting.

We hope the large community farms will continue to leverage their experience with innovative practices and technological efficiencies to work with and disseminate information/assistance to the small-farm community. ‘Partners’ is positioned well for this cause. The extent to which advancements in soil health practices can improve a farmer’s ‘bottom line’ while simultaneously protecting water quality is an important outreach tool, and no single group is positioned to provide leadership for that effort better than ‘Partners.’ Many people are unaware of the stringent guidelines CAFOs must follow. Further, Owasco Lake Watershed CAFO owners/operators are very actively involved proponents of land use advancement to protect water quality. I have grown aware of the scrutiny the farming community has been under for years regarding current and ongoing water quality challenges. There is a conservation movement growing locally, one that will continue to grow, based on celebrating and

promulgating the incredible achievements of the last couple of decades rather than alienating or vilifying the local agricultural community. Potential agriculture effects on water quality will now be explained/phrased in terms of what's *being done* to mitigate those effects, and the progress towards the advancement of Best Management Practices (BMPs) on watershed farms in recent years is beyond noteworthy; it's impressive. We all need to drink and we all need to eat; being pro water quality and pro-agriculture is not, and cannot be, mutually exclusive. 'Partners' was welcomed for an introduction and presentation with the OLWMC at an upcoming meeting. Growing the OLWMC's relationship with 'Partners' is an important step towards a collaborative approach where sharing ideas on pollutant controls and land use management practices can support the preservation of lake water quality.

- The Council 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.
- Resolutions have passed with the City of Auburn City Council and Cayuga County Water Quality Management Agency to offer letters of support for the OLWMC's petition with the NYSDEC to reclassify watershed tributaries to better protect them with a requirement for permit for adjacent construction activities. We are working closely with the NYSDEC to ensure this process is as effective as possible.
- Proposals for the Great Lakes Research Consortium (GLRC) and National Fish and Wildlife Five Star (Urban Waters Restoration Grant Program) grants were submitted January 24<sup>th</sup> and January 30<sup>th</sup>, respectively. Both proposals targeted funding support for the Owasco Lake Watershed Inspection and Protection Division (OLWIPD) to conduct water quality monitoring projects along Hidden Brook in the Town of Owasco. The proposed projects advocate for the use of the OLWIPD's new water quality monitoring sonde to collect data and evaluate relationships between water quality and physical features characterization using stream assessments and remote sensing technologies.
- Kaitlyn Shanahan and I presented at the Auburn Wednesday Morning Roundtable on February 12<sup>th</sup>, highlighting the mission and objectives of the OLWMC and the role of the OLWIPD, as well as current initiatives, and community engagement efforts. We co-presented with the Cayuga County Water and Sewer authority, that shared its intention to develop 'Master Plan' to replace and expand infrastructure to source water to consumers.
- The OLWIPD is developing its annual report to highlight 2019 inspection activities. This report will be completed and made publicly available near the end of February.
- In partnership with OWLA, the OLWMC is coordinating and outreach initiative to improve public understanding of watershed science, the impact of land use activities, and land use improvements to better protect water quality. The OLWMC and OWLA are working collaboratively to develop a proposal for the 'Be Watershed Aware' Campaign that may include an expanded partnership with Evidn, a behavioral science consulting firm contracted

with The Nature Conservancy (TNC). Collaboratively, the group hopes to leverage guidance in marketing, and behavior science to more broadly engage with the public on promoting improved land use/soil health practices watershed-wide, and the OLWMC has a unique opportunity to bring information to represented municipalities for targeted education programming. Further, plans for outreach and education 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. Subsequent proposals for project funding will likely accommodate the costs associated with an experienced and credentialed marketing firm to develop tools and help spearhead the project.

- Cayuga County' Soil and Water Conservation District will present to the OLWMC in March, 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 their buy-in.