



Owasco Lake Watershed Management Council (OLWMC)

December 21, 2021, 10:00am – Director’s Summary

HABs

- The 2021 HABs reporting and notification season has ended. The NYHABS link will be unavailable until the 2022 monitoring season begins in May 2022.

Owasco Lake Watershed Inspection and Protection Division (OLWIPD)

- The OLWIPD of the watershed management council remains active in the field, keeping a keen eye on pre-winter and construction site stabilization needs.
- Recruitment for a second Watershed Inspector remains underway. The OLWMC had over 40 candidates apply for this position opening, and nearly ten candidates interviewed thus far. The most promising candidates have been welcomed for an office and watershed tour.
- Vehicle wraps were completed and installed for OLWIPD vehicles. The wraps are intended to increase visibility and authority recognition throughout the watershed.

Recognition, Awareness, Education and Outreach

- Thankyou letters were prepared for the Emerson, French, and Metcalf Foundations for their funding support for the purchase of the secondary watershed inspection vehicle earlier this year. An additional letter was also prepared and delivered to Wegmans Food Markets thanking them for organizational funding according to contract outcomes from the Finger Lakes collaborative LED flares promotion project, as well as their generosity with the provision of a gift card to cover lunch costs for volunteers that participated in the community rain garden installation project at Emerson Park.
- The OLWMC’s aquatic invasive species (AIS) awareness portable billboard trailer was relocated for the winter from the Emerson Park boat launch to the concrete pad adjacent to Cayuga County Parks and Trails building.
- OLWMC staff hosted a Wells College limnology class field trip the afternoon of December 2, 2021 whereby students reviewed staff roles for watershed surveillance and watershed protection projects. The group visited a Hyfi watercourse level sensor location on Dutch Hollow Brook, and discussed the value of the sensor technology for hydrologic, and therefore, pollution loading monitoring for Owasco Lake.
- The OLWMC’s staff December recognition article with the Citizen spotlighted watershed community reactions to a wet 2021 and recommended supporting initiatives towards enhanced storm resiliency. OLWMC staff have elected to continue composing recognition articles in 2022 and have established submission dates with the Citizen throughout the new year.

- Behavioral change tools training for progressing the adoption of watershed best practices was presented by Evidn on Nov 30 and December 14th, 2021. Many local leaders attended the session. The workshop spoke to the importance of advancing a sense of community inclusion towards mutual goals, as well as continued recognition of those making strides in conservation.
- OLWMC staff will begin 2021 annual report preparation at the beginning of the new year for distribution via municipal office counters and presentation to the City of Auburn City Council.

Lake Friendly Living

- OLWMC staff, municipal highway department staff, and volunteers from OWLA continue to make progress installing lake friendly signage throughout the watershed. The signage project drives consistent messaging towards watershed conservation and is associated with the OLWMC's online pledge campaign.
- The Lake Friendly Living Coalition (LFLC) of the Finger Lakes is collaborating on planning the LFL awareness week in the spring of 2022. The achieved goal of the LFL awareness week was to educate and engage Finger Lakes watershed residents, local governments, and businesses to adopt lake friendly practices to help protect and preserve the Finger Lakes for sustainable water quality, recreational use, and tourism. The webinars covered topics such as at home best practices, climate change, citizen science, the Hemlock Woolly Adelgid, native planting, and vineyard sustainable practices.
 - The Finger Lakes Regional Watershed Alliance (FLRWA) honored volunteer Maura Toole of the Seneca Lake Pure Waters Association with its 2021 Citizens Award. This award is given to an individual who contributes significantly to the alliance's cause of protecting the water quality of the Finger Lakes. Maura's leadership helped guide the first Lake Friendly Living Awareness Week, May 2-7, 2021.
 - In 2021, the OLWMC spearheaded a successful NYS Assembly resolution to recognize LFL Awareness week (May 2-8, 2021) throughout the Finger Lakes. Assemblymember Anna Kelles will be asked to carry this banner again for the LFLC in 2022.

Hyfi Watercourse Level Sensors

- Project Recap: OLWMC staff have installed 15 watercourse level sensors throughout the watershed, targeting locations that align with modeling sites for the Nine Key Element (9E) watershed plan's Soil and Water Assessment Tool (SWAT) model. With project support from OLWMC staff, the Owasco Watershed Lakes Association's (OWLA's) 2021 sediment and nutrient sampling program also aligned with sensor locations. Aproject goal is to provide invaluable constituent loading information for continued calibration of the SWAT model using level (and thereby estimated discharge) information and suspended solids and nutrient concentration information. OWLA completed the fall sampling program and associated project data was shared with the Cayuga County Planning Department for continued calibration of the SWAT model.

- Project Update: Hyfi has completed their development of correlation and regression analysis for the relationships between the watercourse level sensors and conventional USGS stream gauging. A highly significant relationship between long-term data sets helps make the case for continued use and funding of the more spatially robust watershed watercourse level sensors.
- Sensor Location Updates: The battery on the sensor on Owasco Inlet @ Spring St in Groton is low. Hyfi delivered a replacement sensor that is planned for replacement. The sensor on Dutch Hollow Brook @ East Lake Rd is detecting an obstacle that is interfering with the data. It was determined that the bridge deck may be intermittently reflecting the sensor signal rather than the water surface. Along with a replacement sensor, Hyfi delivered to the OLWIPD a horizontal channel extension to install the sensor farther away from the bridge and attempt to limit bridge deck interference.

Watershed Partner Project Updates

- CC Parks and Trails are planning to finalize installing the Emerson Park boat wash station that is poised to be up and running for the 2022 prime boating season. The funding for the boat wash station was provided through a successful grant application by the Cayuga County Planning Department.
- The Cayuga County Planning Department, with assistance by OLWMC and Cayuga County Soil and Water Conservation District (CCSWCD) staff, removed stop logs from the Owasco Flats wetland retention basins and stored them for the winter.
- According to the Round 27 Agricultural Nonpoint Source Abatement and Control Program, \$568,005 was awarded to the CCSWCD to work with five farms in the Owasco and Cayuga Lake Watersheds. These project will improve soil health by implementing 5,100 acres of cover crops and 133 acres of permanent pasture and reduce sediment and nutrient loading to nearby waterways, to help minimize the extent of harmful algal blooms in the Finger Lakes region.
- The OLWMC offers partnership and support for the City of Auburn's NYS-awarded Drinking Water Source Protection Program (DWSP2). The working group is identifying objectives and considering calculating 9 Element Watershed Plan project cost estimates to prepare for associated grant proposals. We look forward to relevant data outcomes that will support forthcoming grants and projects implementation.
- The OLWMC awaits guidance and project funding opportunities from NYS based on the completion and approval of Cayuga County's 9E Watershed Plan for Owasco Lake.
- The OLWMC awaits guidance and approval from NYS agencies pertaining to the proposed community consensus updated watershed rules and regulations.
- The primary January OLWMC board meeting presentation will be given by Dr. Halfman in the form of an Owasco Lake water quality monitoring report for 2021.

Grants and Programs

- In partnership, the CCSWCD assisted a watershed farm land owner to finalize their application for the installation of a water and sediment control basin (WASCOB). The project will be funded, in part, by the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) Conservation Kick Program. The City of Auburn invested the required cost share for the grant award to be administered through the OLWMC, demonstrating the city's

commitment towards supporting conservation advancements for local agriculture. 17,258 ‘water quality credits’ will be generated by the practice installation. This reflects 17,721 pounds of nitrogen and 1,262.5 pounds of total phosphorus reductions over the course of the project period. Based on the Great Lakes Commission’s upfront analysis, and relative to all other Conservation Kick projects planned across the Great Lakes Basin, the CCSWCD/OLWMC project will result in the greatest nutrient reduction outcomes. Project partners are finalizing the project contract and MOU for a 2022 conservation practice installation.

Buy-In

- 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 Venice, Sempronius, Groton, Genoa, Dryden, Skaneateles, and Lansing; we 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, December 17, 2021