



Owasco Lake Watershed Management Council

January 16, 2024, 10:00-11:30 AM

Meeting of the Directors

Owasco – Ed Wagner, **Cayuga County** – Aileen McNabb -Coleman, **City of Auburn** – Ginny Kent, **Niles** – Joan Jayne, **Locke** – Thane Benson, **Scipio** – Melinda Pitman, **Fleming** – Karen VanLiew, **Town of Moravia** – Terry Palmer, **Village of Moravia** – TBD (Chris Fulton Supervisor), **Village of Groton** – Theodore Skibinski, **Summerhill** – Charlie Ripley, **Sennett** – Tom Blair, **Dryden** – Anne Clark

Executive Director- Adam Effler

Presiding: Dr. Adam Effler: Welcomed Terry Palmer to represent the Town of Moravia and Chris Fulton to represent the Village of Moravia. Terry Baxter is unable to attend and will recognize him next month.

- A. Board of Directors – Roll call: **Owasco**-Ed Wagner, **City of Auburn**-Ginny Kent, **Cayuga County**-Aileen McNabb-Coleman **Niles**-Joan Jayne, **Fleming**-Karen VanLiew, **Town of Moravia**-Terry Palmer, **Village of Moravia**-Chris Fulton (online), **Dryden**-Anne Clark (online). **Summerhill**-Charlie Ripley. Ex Officio: John West, Lisa Cleckner, Tony Prestigiacomo, Olivia Green, Ann Robson, Joe Decker, Frank Clarke, Daniel Welch, Lisa Cleckner, Dereth Glance, Mike McCann (TNC), Ani Fish.
- B. Motion to approve the electronically distributed agenda with the change to move recognition of Terry Baxter to February 2024, made by Ginny Kent seconded by Aileen McNabb-Coleman. Vote unanimous. Motion carried.
- C. Motion to approve the Minutes from the December 19, 2023, Board Meeting as electronically distributed made by Karen VanLiew seconded by Ed Wagner vote unanimously approved.
- D. Public to be Heard.
- E. Director’s Summary – Adam Effler (distributed for review prior to meeting. Video and Audio of the presentation can be viewed at <https://www.olwmc.org/news> Watershed Rules and Regulations

Project Update:

The City of Auburn, Town of Owasco, and Owasco Watershed Lake Association (OWLA) filed an Article 78 with NYS, seeking to clarify whether the NYSDOH has the right to regulate nutrient management practices under updated Owasco Lake Watershed Rules and Regulations. Article 78 is a petition that challenges the actions of administrative agencies and other government bodies.

The NYSDOH has indicated that it does not have the authority from the legislature to create nutrient management regulations for the Owasco Lake watershed. Specifically, the NYSDOH indicated that when the Agricultural Environmental Management (AEM) program was established, nutrient management on farms became the sole responsibility of the NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets (NYSDAM). The Article 78 contends that the laws cited do not firmly establish that the NYSDAM's authority concerning nutrient management supersedes the NYSDOH's responsibility to promulgate regulations for the protection of public health.

The following details were provided within NYSDOH's project update report (1.16.24 Monthly Owasco WRR Update for OLWMC) delivered to the OLWMC Board of Directors, Ex Officio Partners, and engaged members of the public prior to the January 16, 2024 OLWMC public board meeting:

NYS Tributary Legislation Project Review

Project Review:

On November 17, 2023, the NYS Senate Bill (S1725A), which would have added Class C streams to the list of protected streams, was vetoed by Governor Hochul.

Recognition, Awareness, Education and Outreach Projects Update

The OLWMC's staff feature article published with the Citizen on January 9, 2024 spotlighted the Village of Moravia's efforts to improve watershed resiliency and limit phosphorus loading to Owasco Lake. Staff will continue spotlighting watershed protection efforts, including residents and programs making positive strides in watershed protection.

Nine Element Watershed Plan (9EP)

Project Update:

The 9E Coordination Committee is focused on capacity building for local organizations to provide the programming necessary for the watershed agricultural industry to advance best management practice (BMP) implementation at the rate recommended by the NYS approved 9EP. The Committee has finalized its proposal for NYS to fund the development of a focused Owasco Lake Watershed Agricultural Program that would leverage the existing tiered AEM program. The 9E Coordination Committee plans to continue holding monthly meetings in 2024 to drive implementation of the 9EP.

Watershed Lake and Tributary Monitoring

2023 Projects Review:

- Cayuga County's comprehensive monitoring budget for 2023 included, but was not limited to, costs for 1) a new Owasco Lake monitoring role by the Finger Lakes Institute, Hobart William Smith Colleges, 2) laboratory analysis for watershed tributary samples collected by the Owasco

- Watershed Lake Association (OWLA), 3) continued funding of the USGS gauge station along the Inlet, 4) continuation of the Citizen's Statewide Lake Assessment Program (CSLAP) and 5) the continuation of Hyfi level sensor use for monitoring water levels within the Owasco Flats constructed retention basins. The Cayuga County Planning Department and water quality monitoring project partners adhered to a Quality Assurance Project Plan (QAPP) that reflects monitoring logistics for the 2023 field season.
- OWLA completed the 2023 Owasco Lake tributaries monitoring program. Sampling locations aligned with those used for developing the 9EP's Soil and Water Assessment Tool (SWAT), and project data will be used for calibrating that model.
 - The Cayuga County Planning Department has completed, and had approved, its data usability report for the tributary monitoring data collected by OWLA for 2023. Those data are now available for use to calibrate the 9EP SWAT or otherwise.
 - Owasco Lake *in situ* water quality monitoring (buoy) data is available online here: <https://www.olwmc.org/news>

NYS-awarded Drinking Water Source Protection Program (DWSP2)

Project Review:

- Consultants for the City of Auburn's NYS-awarded Drinking Water Source Protection Program (DWSP2) worked with City of Auburn water resource managers and partners to identify potential sources of Owasco Lake water quality contamination and provide recommendations for resource protection. The DWSP2 committee reviewed and edited the draft plan. A refined draft of the City of Auburn's DWSP2 was delivered from the contracted consultant to the City of Auburn and circulated among the project committee. The local group awaits final plan approval from NYSDEC and NYSDOH to move forward on plan implementation and associated project(s) proposal(s) development. Barring any changes based on agency feedback, the plan can be finalized. At that point, Auburn City Council will be asked to endorse the plan.
- The Town of Owasco received consultant support through NYS to develop its DWSP2. The sixth Town of Owasco DWSP2 group meeting held on October 12, 2023 hosted a final review and discussion among local partners involved in development of the proposed plan. The consultants involved in the project have finalized and delivered the plan to NYS agencies for their review and approval.

Municipal Codes and Ordinances

Project Update:

Proposed erosion and sediment control ordinances concerning new construction activities were prepared for OLWMC directing municipalities for their independent board review and consideration for adoption.

Harmful Algal Blooms (HABs) Identification and Reporting Update

A summary of HABs reported during 2023 is available in the archive section of the Harmful Algal Blooms webpage. Historical HABs data through 2022 is provided on Open NY, which gives public access to digital data (Search the "Data NY" portal for "Harmful Algal Blooms"). One can view historical water quality monitoring data, including HABs information, at the DOW Monitoring Portal. Both Open NY and the

Monitoring Portal will be updated with 2023 HABs data over the coming months.

Land Holdings

Other Potential Acquisitions:

- The Nature Conservancy has expressed interest in having the OLWMC own and steward two additional properties poised for acquisition and preservation within the Owasco Lake watershed. These include:
 - 100-acre parcel in Groton, mixed farmland
 - 72-acre parcel in Venice, dense wetlandTNC will present these acquisitions to the OLWMC Board once they are complete.
- On October 4, 2023, OLWMC staff and Board Chair, Ed Wagner, visited the Groton parcel to evaluate the property and prompt discussions about the OLWMC taking ownership of the property at some point in the future.

Programs, Funding, and Related Opportunities

2024 Finger Lakes Conference Update

The Finger Lakes Institute at Hobart and William Smith Colleges (HWS) will be hosting the annual Finger Lakes Research Conference on Wednesday, January 31, 2024 at the HWS campus. This year's program, Science to Action, will focus on informed solutions within the Finger Lakes and surrounding watershed communities that address the most pressing environmental and human health issues in the region. The event runs from 8:30 AM – 4:00 PM and will include morning and afternoon guest speaker sessions, panel discussions, and poster presentations. Registration information can be found on the HWS website.

SOGL Project Review:

- A National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) Sustain Our Great Lakes (SOGL) funding proposal was developed in partnership with Cayuga County Soil and Water Conservation District (CCSWCD) and EA Consulting, targeting stream restoration along the Owasco Inlet. Proposed project partners also include the Cayuga County Planning Department, OWLA, and SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry. Based on a successful pre-proposal the OLWMC submitted a full project proposal for streambank restoration project sites between Booth Hill Road and Cat Path Road in the Town of Locke. Landowners who reside along the targeted Owasco Inlet reaches have expressed concern about severe streambank erosion in those areas.
 - Total Amount Requested: \$299,640.00
 - Matching Contributions Proposed: \$100,360.00
- The OLWMC was awarded \$457,839.92 from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) Sustain Our Great Lakes (SOGL) program for the *Owasco Lake Watershed Critical Streams Restoration Project* targeting stream restoration projects along the Owasco Inlet.
- The Board of Directors of NFWF, having reviewed the OLWMC's 2022 financial audit, approved of the \$457,839.92 grant award to the OLWMC through the SOGL program. Subsequently, the OLWMC has signed the grant agreement, filled and returned several

required administrative documents, and prompted the working group to schedule a project kickoff meeting. Project consultant, EA Engineering, will navigate the environmental permitting process and design, in preparation for project implementation during the 2024 and 2025 field seasons.

SOGL Project Update:

On January 9, 2024, the working group held a kickoff meeting for the Reducing Sediment in Owasco Lake (NY) project. This Owasco Inlet stream restoration project will progress through project permitting, design, and implementation.

Tributary Assessment and Identification Project (TAIP)

Project Review:

The Tributary Adoption and Identification Pilot Project (TAIPP) “pilot” project involved the installation of tributary signage in the northern portion of the watershed and effectively engaged the public for tributary protection and education. The OLWMC expanded this initiative with additional tributary signage installed within the Town of Moravia, Village of Moravia, and Town of Locke. The Cayuga County Planning Department designed the accompanying watershed map, in-kind. The grant funding requested covered the material costs of the project; the SW Metcalf Foundation granted the OLWMC \$4,100. TAIP signage was designed and produced, and project materials were purchased and delivered. The Cayuga County Highway Department, in-kind, spearheaded the installation of the tributary identification signage during the month of November, 2023.

Pertinent Federal and NYS Programs Updates:

- The following passage is from Governor Hochul’s 2024 State of the State address, page 100 (<https://www.governor.ny.gov/sites/default/files/2024-01/2024-SOTS-Book-Online.pdf>)

*New York’s lakes are highly valued for recreation and tourism and often serve as dependable sources of clean drinking water. However, HABs can negatively affect New York’s water bodies by compromising water quality and opportunities for recreation. **To address this issue and help protect our valuable ecosystems, Governor Hochul will dedicate resources to some of the most highly valued watersheds, including the eastern Finger Lakes watershed and Chautauqua Lake.***

*These lakes and their watersheds are critical resources to New York State, yet more recently, the eastern Finger Lakes have reported a greater frequency of HABs. In response, **Governor Hochul is directing key investments into the Eastern Finger Lakes Coalition of Soil and Water Conservation Districts to build professional capacity and accelerate agricultural and resiliency related projects – specifically providing necessary capital investments that will galvanize implementation of the plans and programs developed to address on-the-ground actions necessary to address the root causes of HABs and significantly reduce their prevalence.** The capital infusion will also include support for farmers to invest in more cover crops, improve culverts to reduce runoff, and other investments to improve soil health and reduce water quality impairments in the region.*

Governor Hochul is also focused on restoring recreational opportunities in Chautauqua Lake, which has also reported an increase in the frequency of HABs. She will direct DEC to work with State, federal, and nonprofit partners to implement comprehensive pollution reduction strategies, including advanced water quality monitoring, completion of a feasibility study to determine the extent and severity of internal phosphorus loading, and simultaneously begin work on projects that can reduce nutrients entering the lake such as streambed stabilization, vegetative buffers, and rain gardens.

- The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration’s (NOAA’s) 2024 Great Lakes Bay Watershed Education and Training (B-WET) federal funding opportunity is now open. This competitive funding opportunity supports projects that provide "Meaningful Watershed Educational Experiences" for youth and related professional development for teachers while advancing regional Great Lakes watershed education priorities. Applications are due by February 29, 2024.
- The NYSDEC released the Advanced Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (ANPR) to begin developing regulations to implement a new law that expands the number of wetlands regulated by NYSDEC to further protect water quality and wildlife habitat. The ANPR can be viewed in the New York State Register or on the DEC website. Comments can be submitted by Feb. 19, 2024 via email to WetlandRegulatoryComments@dec.ny.gov (subject: “ANPR Freshwater Wetlands Protection”) or sent to Bureau of Ecosystem Health, Freshwater Wetlands Unit, New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, 625 Broadway, Albany, NY 12233-4756.

Fillmore Nature Preserve Access and Education

- Designing of the proposed education kiosk signage is planned for the winter of 2024, in preparation for the construction of the kiosk, and development of a limited trail network, in the spring-summer of that year.

Municipality Buy-In

Project Review: The OLWMC continues to encourage participation and directorship 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, Skaneateles, and Lansing.

- F. **Open Forum for the Board of Directors/Municipalities:** Dr. Effler presented the following draft of the proposed **Owasco Lake Watershed Ag Program:**

Owasco Lake Watershed community leaders have identified a pressing need for direct NYS funding to develop the capacity for an Owasco Lake Watershed Agricultural Program (OLWAP). Our objective is to improve water quality in Owasco Lake through the implementation of agricultural best management practices designed to improve water quality throughout the Owasco Lake Watershed. OLWAP would build on the model that has been successful in both the [Skaneateles](#) and [New York City](#) watersheds. That is, a farmer-driven, watershed-specific, voluntary farm water quality practice adoption program. It is centered on the already existing infrastructure and planning process of the Ag Environmental Management (AEM) program that operates from our Soil & Water Conservation Districts (SWCD) and relies on farm specific planning to address resource concerns and identify improvements, provide technical assistance to implement Best Management Practices (BMPs) designed to accomplish those improvements and procure funding to assist with that implementation. It also relies heavily on outreach, education, and practice evaluations to ensure farmers can adopt practices that will benefit

water quality while also maintaining overall sustainability and economic viability of the farm. The OLWAP would advance farm planning initiatives and agricultural best management practice implementation at the pace recommended by the NYS-approved Nine Element Plan for Phosphorus Reduction (9EP). The program goal is to further community and partner efforts to improve the water quality of Owasco Lake and increase climate resiliency, by replicating features of the successful Skaneateles Lake Watershed Agricultural Program (SLWAP). Like SLWAP, the OLWAP will address improving water quality while providing direct support for and partnership with the watershed's farmers.

The plan is to request approximately \$10 million from NYS for this program. Discussion regarding a proposal partnering with Soil and Water Conservation districts and AEM to protect water quality of Owasco Lake was discussed. Motion to go forward with a proposal made by Ginny Kent and seconded by Aileen McNabb-Coleman. Unanimous vote. Motion carried.

G. Treasurer's Audit and Finance Report

- i. December 2023 Financials Approval – Joan Jayne reported that as of December 31, 2023 Total checking and savings \$326,727.97, Total current assets \$328,427,87 and Total Liabilities and Equity \$395,183.35. Motion to approve report made by Ed Wagner seconded by vote was approved unanimously.
- ii. Recently requested preparation for annual financial audit and proforma audit.
- iii. Invoices have been submitted to the towns and communities that contribute to the annual OWLMC budget.

H. Lake Level Report – John West Lake level-no major changes. Keeping track of the weather.

I. In-Lake Water Quality Monitoring Update– Lisa Cleckner, Director Finger Lakes Institute- unavailable

J. NYSDEC FL Hub Update- Tony Prestigiacomo, Supervisor, NYSDEC FL Hub-unavailable, no updates

K. Opportunities for Flood Prone Communities – Olivia Green and Michael McCann, The Nature Conservancy. Video and Audio of this important presentation can be viewed at the meeting audio file at <https://www.olwmc.org/news>

L. Owasco Watershed Lake Association Update – Ann Robson-2/724 will be public forum highlighting OWLA and their activities and mission. Registration online and virtual. Continuing with newspaper articles and classroom education, continuing planning for Bob Brower Symposium in March. Volunteers are surveying for woolly adelgid.

M. Cornell Cooperative Extension Update – Daniel Welch – winter crop meeting in a few days-climate change adaptation for farmers, shop meetings are ongoing throughout the winter, Manure expo coming to Cayuga Co July 17, 2024. Planning is underway for the expo. There will be information on nutrient management. Opportunities to involve the public will be included.

N. Watershed Inspection Monthly Report –Joseph Decker. This presentation may be viewed at <https://www.olwmc.org/news>

O. Communications: Reminder Dr. Lisa Cleckner will present on 2023 water quality monitoring. March 9 is the Bob Brower Symposium. Soil and water projects for next year will be presented in the March meeting.

P. Issues of Concern: None heard.

Q. The next Meeting will be Tuesday of February 20, 2024.

R. Motion to adjourn made by Aileen McNabb-Coleman seconded by Joan Jayne motion carried. The meeting adjourned at 11:27 AM.

Respectfully submitted,

Vivian Cunningham

