



Owasco Lake Watershed Management Council (OLWMC)

January 17, 2023- Director's Summary

Watershed Rules and Regulations

Project Review:

The Watershed Rules and Regulations (WRR) Workgroup is a state-local partnership consisting of representatives from five New York State agencies, as well as members of a technical local workgroup representing the Owasco Lake Watershed, including members from: Owasco Lake Watershed Management Council (OLWMC); Town of Owasco; City of Auburn; and Cayuga County. The Workgroup was formed in response to the submission of proposed revisions to the 1984 Watershed Rules and Regulations (Part 104.1- City of Auburn and Town of Owasco) to the New York State Department of Health (NYSDOH) in December 2020. NYSDOH project updates are posted on the OLWMC's website (<https://www.olwmc.org/projects>)

Project Update:

The following details were provided within NYSDOH's project update report (1.17.2023 Monthly Owasco WRR Update for OLWMC final) delivered to the OLWMC Board of Directors, Ex Officio Partners, and engaged members of the public prior to the December 20, 2022 OLWMC public board meeting:

General Update:

The State-Local workgroup has not met since the Nov 4, 2022 meeting to allow inter-departmental reviews and legal team consultations to occur at the state level. These reviews are informed by the very helpful input from the State-Local Technical Workgroup meetings that occurred in 2022. NYS DOH is planning to convene a discussion amongst State and local legal teams and then reconvene the Technical Workgroup upon completing these various reviews. A tentative timeline is provided below.

Revised Meeting Schedule:

<i>State Agency Legal Meetings</i>	<i>February/March 2023 (if necessary)</i>
<i>Follow up with State-Local Workgroup</i>	<i>March 2023</i>

NYS Tributary Legislation Project Review

Project Review:

An OLWMC endorsed, NYS environmental conservation bill ([A6652/S4162](#)) would protect up to 41,000 miles of New York streams. Class "C" waterways, which are regularly used by people for boating, fishing, and other activities. The new law would offer permit-based protections that are currently provided to waterways with higher classifications. The new law would require the need for permit for certain stream access and project(s) scenarios. On May 24, 2022 the bill passed the Senate and was returned to the Assembly. The bill passed both NYS houses. On December 2, 2022, bill A6652 was delivered to Governor Kathy Hochul and was subsequently vetoed.

Municipal Codes and Ordinances

Project Review:

The Village of Moravia adopted the Sediment and Erosion Control Plan, and associated Appendix E, prepared and proposed by the OLWMC for advancing municipal control requirements for new construction activities.

Nine Element (9E) Watershed Plan

Project Review:

Cayuga County received a New York State Department of State grant to implement a high priority recommendation from the 2016 Owasco Lake Watershed Management and Waterfront Revitalization Plan, which was to incorporate the EPA Nine Key Elements into the Plan. This project was led by the Cayuga County Department of Planning and Economic Development and the consultant on the project was Ecologic, LLC.

The Owasco Lake Watershed Nine Element Plan for Phosphorus Reduction was approved by the New York State Department of State and the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (https://www.dec.ny.gov/docs/water_pdf/owasco9e.pdf). This Clean Water Plan advances efforts to restore and protect the water quality of Owasco Lake and its watershed. This collaborative effort identified focused strategies to ensure the lake water supply, aquatic habitat, and recreational uses are protected.

The development of the plan focused on understanding and managing phosphorus and sediment inputs from the Owasco Lake watershed to provide for recommendations that will drive watershed protection and remediation projects. The OLWMC will provide a coordination role for future projects and programming according to the recommendations of the 9E Watershed Plan.

Project Update:

The OLWMC's 9E Plan Project Coordination Committee (via Resolution 03-2022 at its November 15, 2022 public board meeting) will prioritize, coordinate, and facilitate project and programming implementation based on the recommendations of the 9E Plan. Subsequently, request letters for Committee participation by the OLWMC's Ex Officio partners were delivered. The first Committee meeting, among those who agree to participate, is scheduled for January 24, 2023.

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) have convened 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. Project consultants provided recommendations to Auburn City Council on July 14, 2022. At recent meetings, the DWSP2 committee reviewed and edited the draft plan. The NYSDEC and NYS Department of Health (DOH) are also reviewing the plan and will provide comments. 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 and name the implementation team. During the last meeting, the committee discussed implementation steps and expressed support desired from consultants and NYSDEC/NYSDOH to help maintain momentum.
- The Town of Owasco’s application for the DWSP2 was received and reviewed by NYS agencies. A program award to the Town of Owasco from NYS would piggyback on the City of Auburn’s plan and extend resources to target continued and more detailed planning, facilitated by the NYS-funded consultants, to coordinate and propose specific projects. The proposed projects and programming would represent the broad recommendations of the overall watershed-based plan.

Harmful Algal Blooms (HABs) Identification and Reporting

Project Review:

- Regarding HABs, the NYSDEC (New York State Department of Environmental Conservation) encourages the community to “know it, report it, and avoid it.”
- Consistent with previous year, in 2022, The Owasco Watershed Lake Association (OWLA) led the volunteer HABs surveillance program for Owasco Lake.
- Generally, year over year, observations of HABs are increasing throughout the eastern Finger Lakes Region. Importantly, associated cyanotoxin levels in Owasco Lake’s raw water have been elevated this year from previous years.
- HABs season has ended for 2022, and the NYSDEC’s NYHABS notification page is no longer available for reference. The NYSDEC’s HABs Archive Page is available for reference. During 2022, 198 waterbodies statewide were listed with "Confirmed HABs" NYHABS. Over 1,600 HAB reports were collected by NYSDEC and its partners, and of these, over 1,000 met DEC criteria for a Confirmed HAB. The reports ranged from a single observation to widespread blooms that were persistent throughout the season. HABs may occur on waterbodies throughout the year, although fewer blooms occur as water and air temperatures decrease.

Recognition, Awareness, Education and Outreach Projects Update

Project Review:

- Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) awareness (and mitigation) project partners decide to provide for new visibility of the OLWMC's 'Clean, Drain, Dry' portable billboard currently positioned at the Emerson Park boat launch. In 2023, staff are planning to target improved visibility at the south end of the watershed by positioning the billboard on a Cayuga County owned pull-off along Route 38. The billboard was relocated from the Emerson Park Boat launch back to its winter location adjacent to the Cayuga County Parks and Trails building.
- The Town of Dryden Conservation Board is considering its recommendation to the Dryden Town Board for the Town to resolve to take the Lake Friendly Living (LFL) Pledge.

Project Update:

- The OLWMC's January staff feature article with the Citizen newspaper spotlights the efforts and accomplishments of the Owasco Watershed Lake Association (OWLA).
 - OLWMC staff have committed to monthly feature articles with the Citizen in 2023. Consistent with previous years, articles will target recognition of watershed residents making strides in watershed protection.
- According to the OLWMC's new role stewarding the Fillmore Nature Preserve, there are three Land Trust Alliance webinars available in the near term. The webinars are titled:
 - Due diligence (1/17)
 - Managing the transition from acquisition to stewardship (1/24)
 - Drafting and managing baseline documentation reports (2/16)

Registration is available here: <https://landtrustalliance.org/resources/learn/ways-to-learn/webinars?hierarchicalMenu%5Btype.lvl0%5D%5B0%5D=webinar>

- The OWLA will provide watershed education in the classroom at Auburn Junior high at the end of January.

Land Holdings

OLWMC Land Preserve Project Update:

- The OLWMC closed on the property transfer of the Fillmore Nature Preserve from The Nature Conservancy (TNC) on January 10, 2023.
- Property signage will be installed with the help of TNC. The associated field trip, scheduled for January 28th, will also accommodate TNC's insights and recommendations on effective property inspection protocols to meet the OLWMC's annual property inspection commitment.

Partner Projects Update:

- At year-end, The Finger Lakes Land Trust (FLLT) accepted the donation of a conservation easement on 160 acres of farmland from the Post family in the Owasco Lake watershed. The easement provides for the expansion of existing stream buffers. FLLT staff and volunteers will plant native trees and shrubs in these areas later this year.
- FLLT partnered with the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) to restore several acres of wetlands on a parcel they currently own that will be transferred to NYSDEC for inclusion in the state's Owasco Flats Wildlife Management Area.

Watershed Lake and Tributary Monitoring

Project Review:

- The NYS Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) will be paring down its funding of the Citizens Statewide Lake Assessment Program (CSLAP) in the Finger Lakes Region by nearly half. They will cover the costs of between four and eight samples this year and expect to cover four samples in future program years. Local lake stewards will be responsible for covering the costs and sampling for any additional samples.
- Lake and watershed monitoring partners prepared a comprehensive budget for review by the Cayuga County Planning Department that includes costs for 1) a new Owasco Lake monitoring role by the Finger Lakes Institute, Hobart William Smith Colleges, and 2) laboratory analysis for watershed tributary samples collected by OWLA.

Hyfi Watercourse Level Sensors

Project Review:

- OLWMC staff maintain 16 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. The sensors are used for guiding flood and asset management, as well as for level monitoring. Hyfi 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 datasets supports the continued use and funding of the more spatially robust watershed sensors.
- OWLA's 2022 sediment and nutrient sampling program, which has elements of both routine and storm event sampling, aligns with watercourse level sensor locations. The project can provide invaluable lake loading information for continued calibration of the SWAT model.
- The two-year pilot project grant period is complete.

Project Update:

- The NYSDEC does not endorse the future use of the level sensors and the development of rating curves to generate tributary flow estimates to be used for future SWAT model calibration. A funding request was made to maintain level sensors within the Owasco Flats, and the remaining sensors are likely to be decommissioned.

Programs, Funding, and Related Opportunities

1. The Sustain Our Great Lakes Program announced the 2023 Request for Proposals

Their solicitation (in their words) is italicized below:

The Sustain Our Great Lakes (SOGL) program is soliciting proposals to benefit fish, wildlife, habitat and water quality in the Great Lakes basin. The program will award up to \$18.7 million in grants in 2023 to improve and enhance: 1) stream, riparian and coastal habitats to benefit species; 2) water quality in the Great Lakes and its tributaries. Details about this funding opportunity are provided in the Request for Proposals. The submission deadline for pre-proposals is February 25, 2022. Additional application information is available at www.nfwf.org/greatlakes.

In 2023, grant funding will be awarded in six categories:

- *Habitat Restoration to Conserve Species and Improve Water Quality*
- *Green Stormwater Infrastructure in Great Lakes Communities*
- *Expand Green Stormwater Infrastructure in Great Lakes Communities*
- *Invasive Species Control to Protect and Enhance Restored Habitat*
- *Conservation Practices and Regenerative Agriculture on Working Lands*

To be eligible for funding, projects must occur within the Great Lakes basin. Eligible applicants include non-profit organizations, educational institutions, and state, tribal and local governments.

2023 Funding Opportunity Webinar – Guidance for Applicants

January 19, 2023, from 2:00-3:30PM Eastern Time

*This webinar will provide additional information on the 2023 funding opportunity including specific guidance related to funding categories offered, navigating the application process, and answering participant questions. Participants can **register here**:*

<https://attendeegotowebinar.com/register/3510914777961673558>

*A **recording** of the webinar will be available for viewing at www.nfwf.org/greatlakes following conclusion of the live program.*

2. NY Sea Grant AND DEC Announce \$460,000 in Grants Available to Support Projects that implement Great Lakes Action Agenda Priorities. Their solicitation (in their words) is italicized below:

Funding to Support Local Priorities to Restore and Protect Great Lakes Lands and Waters

2023 Applications for Funding Due March 1, 2023

New York Sea Grant, in partnership with the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC), today announced funding is now available for projects that apply an ecosystem-based management approach to address local watershed challenges. Projects will implement the goals of New York's Great Lakes Action Agenda and address actions specifically identified in locally supported plans pertaining to water quality, natural resources, or sustainable land uses. A total of \$460,000, with up to \$50,000 per project, in New York Great Lakes Basin Small Grants will be awarded.

“Enhancing the lakes’ ecosystem through ecosystem restoration bolsters the resiliency of this important natural resource and at the same time provide enhanced recreational and economic opportunities,” said DEC Commissioner Basil Seggos. “Partnering with New York Sea Grant through this essential grant program helps both sustain and build upon the substantial environmental progress we’ve made across New York’s Great Lakes region and protects these vital waters for future generations.”

“New York Sea Grant is excited to partner with the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) to provide communities with resources needed to implement locally identified and prioritized projects that increase resilience, improve the environment, and provide economic benefits,” said New York Sea Grant Associate Director and Cornell University Cooperative Extension Assistant Director Katherine Bunting-Howarth, PhD, JD, Ithaca, N.Y.

County and local government or public agencies, municipalities, and regional planning and environmental commissions, not-for-profit organizations, and educational institutions including, but not limited to, public and private K-12 schools, colleges, and universities, are eligible to apply.

Applications are due by 4:30 p.m. EST on March 1, 2023; instructions are online at <https://www.nyseagrant.org/glsmallgrants>. For more information, contact New York Sea Grant at 716-645-3611.

New York Sea Grant administers the New York Great Lakes Basin Small Grants Program in partnership with DEC’s Great Lakes Program. This small grants program is funded by the New York State Environmental Protection Fund. Among the many [environmental victories in the 2022-23 State Budget](#), Governor Hochul succeeded in enacting an increase in the EPF from \$300 million to \$400 million, the highest-ever level of funding in the program's history. The EPF supports climate change mitigation and adaptation efforts, improves agricultural resources to

promote sustainable agriculture, protects our water sources, advances conservation efforts, and provides recreational opportunities for New Yorkers.

For more information on New York's Great Lakes Action Agenda, go to <http://www.dec.ny.gov/lands/91881.html>. More information on New York Great Lakes Basin Small Grants projects is available at <https://www.nyseagrant.org/glsmallgrants> and other New York Great Lakes-related information is available at <http://www.nyseagrant.org/nygreatlakes>.

3. Distribution of NYS 2022 Environmental Bond Act funding is still being developed. Most likely, the details will be hashed out, refined, and ultimately implemented through the NYS budget. General project goals can be found here: https://cleanwaterandjobs.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/Bond-Act-funding-by-program_final.pdf

Municipal Funding Opportunities Review

- The NYSDEC Municipal Zero-emission Vehicle (ZEV) Rebate Program has awarded \$567,500 from the Environmental Protection Fund to municipalities for the purchase or lease of electric light- and medium-duty fleet vehicles. The Municipal ZEV Rebate Program continues to support municipal efforts to mitigate further climate change. Since it began in 2016, the ZEV Rebate Program has awarded over \$1.5 million (including this round) towards the purchase or lease of 114 plug-in hybrid vehicles and 182 all-electric vehicles.
- Governor Hochul recently announced the new Green Purchasing Communities Program that helps local governments to ensure that the products they are purchasing have a lower environmental impact. Local governments that participate will receive recognition for their commitment to purchasing green products and services through the Climate Smart Communities program. Learn more here: <https://ogs.ny.gov/green-purchasing-communities>

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.

Project Update: OLWMC Director, the Village of Groton, is considering appointing a new representative on the Board to support better involvement with our initiatives.

Summary Prepared by Adam Effler, January 13, 2023