



Owasco Lake Watershed Management Council (OLWMC)

April 20th, 2021, 10:00am – Director’s Summary

- Following a robust recruitment effort to fill its watershed inspector position, the OLWMC hired Ms. Ally Berry, a talented local intern who worked with the OLWMC during the summer of 2019.
- The OLWMC continues to follow up with New York State (NYS) officials on the traction and status of the community consensus Watershed Rules and Regulations update review process by the New York State Department of Health (NYSDOH) Bureau of Water Protection. The NYSDOH bureau received the proposed update and is coordinating a review among involved state agencies including the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC) and NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets. Reportedly, they are working as quickly as possible, during this time of COVID-19 response, to get the review underway and will update the Cayuga County Department of Health (CCDOH) on the time frame as they move forward.
- Paraphrased from the Citizen newspaper article published April 4<sup>th</sup>, “A large southern Cayuga County farm is facing at least eight environmental law violation citations and financial penalties after an estimated 100,000 gallons of liquid manure overflowed from a storage pit earlier this month. The NYSDEC issued a notice of violation on March 19 to Ashland Farm, a dairy based on Route 34B in the town of Venice, in connection with a reported spill on March 7. As part of the immediate response to the overflow to bring its manure storage levels down, Ashland has been working with neighboring farms that have capacity to take some of the waste into their lagoons, and it is also identifying crop fields where some of the material can be safely spread. Like Owasco Lake, Cayuga Lake is a critical community drinking water supply. The Town of Venice also has a footprint in the Owasco Lake Watershed.
- On April 7, 2021 the NYSDEC announced a proposed nutrient pollution reduction "budget" for Cayuga Lake to help protect drinking water quality and restore the water quality of the lake's southern end for recreation. The draft Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) for the lake provides a detailed analysis of phosphorus pollutant sources and recommends a 30 percent reduction of phosphorus loads from the Cayuga Lake watershed.
- According to approved New York State Department of Transportation (NYSDOT) permits for the installation of Hyfi tributary level sensors along NYS roads, additional sensors installations are planned along Rt. 38A, at Sucker and Dutch Hollow Brooks. To date, there are 10 sensors installed. These include inlet and outlet sensors in both Owasco Flats retention basins one and two, one on Sucker Brook, one on Dutch Hollow Brook, two on Veness Brook, and two in Groton. A link to the landing page for data and time series tributary level graphs can be accessed on the OLWMC website.

- All watershed municipalities that have resolved to take the Lake Friendly Living (LFL) pledge via a resolution, have agreed to attach program signage to existing municipal signage to help advance that watershed pledge program. We continue to collaborate with municipal highway departments' staff to target suitable installation locations. Signage installations are also occurring along watershed fire lanes. Watershed residents will see the new signage installed over the course of this field season. According to LFL program discussions with the Martin Point Homeowners Association, the association decided to reduce their rate of chemical applications in common areas by 50%. LFL is an awareness and pledge program that piggybacks on a regional LFL campaign expanding throughout the entire Finger Lakes Region. The LFL Coalition of the Finger Lakes has been very active finalizing its website landing page and the coordination of a webinar series to be held the first week of May. The objective of the series is to increase public awareness about the various watershed concerns and corrective actions taking place across the Finger Lakes region. The week will encourage residents of Finger Lakes watersheds, as well as local governments and businesses, to adopt practices to help protect and preserve the lakes. The week will include free resources and virtual education sessions with experts covering LFL efforts, citizen science, and sustainable vineyard management. Speakers include landscaping expert, Doug Tallamy, and Cornell Cooperative Extension water and ecology educator, Camille Marcotte. Lake Friendly Living Awareness Week is another example of how collaboration can increase impact beyond what any one organization can do alone. The Nature Conservancy is sponsoring the event and Kate Frazer, Associate Director of Marketing & Communications for the Nature Conservancy, will be a keynote presenter. Information about the LFL pledge program can be found on the OLWMC website, and details about the webinar series will be circulated throughout the month of April.
- In partnership with the City of Auburn, the OLWMC plan's to leverage the Great Lakes Commission's (GLC) Conservation Kick program that would offer a small pool of funding for producer lead watershed conservation projects. The Cayuga County Planning Department has been supportive with the provision of GIS raster data for the GLC priorities analysis, and the Cayuga County Soil and Water Conservation District (CCSWCD) has expressed interest in working with a selected producer to access these funds for projects implementation.
- The OLWIPD distributed physical copies of the 2020 annual report to watershed municipal offices for further distribution. The OLWMC and OLWIPD will offer their annual report presentation to the City of Auburn during their April 29th, 2021 City Council meeting.
- The Owasco Watershed Lake Association (OWLA)/OLWMC collaborative willow planting project was held Saturday April 17th and presented an opportunity for public engagement and to spotlight a producer's interest in voluntarily installing a riparian buffer on their property and along Veness Brook.
- The OLWMC's April 8<sup>th</sup> Citizen feature article spotlighted the progress on advancing light-emitting diode (LED) technology flares across the Finger Lakes Region. The LED flares are a safer alternative to toxic conventional incendiary flares.
  - Wegmans Food Markets will conduct a promotional program to benefit the Owasco Lake Watershed Management Council. Wegmans has decided to sell LED Flares for the first-time starting June 5, 2021. They are excited about offering LED flares to give customers a choice to help with the transition from traditional chemical flares to help protect the lake and enhance public safety. Wegmans will donate

\$2.00 for each 2pk LED Flare sold and \$6.00 for every 6pk LED Flare sold to Owasco Lake Watershed Management Council from June 5, 2021 through September 25, 2021 based on sales at the Auburn store.

- The Septic System Replacement Program to protect priority waterbodies announced a second round. Paraphrased from their announcement, “NYS announced \$15 million in funding available through the State Septic System Replacement Program to support homeowners. The grants are the second round from a total of \$75 million provided under the Water Infrastructure Improvement Act to improve water quality and protect public health through the targeted replacement of aging and sub-standard septic systems and removal of cesspools in communities statewide. The program is a collaboration between the Department of Environmental Conservation, Department of Health, Environmental Facilities Corporation, and participating counties to administer funding to qualifying homeowners. For more information on applying and for priority waterbodies that are eligible, visit: <https://www.efc.ny.gov/SepticReplacement>”
- The CCSWCD was recently awarded funding. According to the awards announcement:
  - \$746,378 was awarded to work with thirteen farms in the Finger Lakes Watershed. This project will:
    - Support efforts across Tompkins and Cayuga counties to implement nearly 14,000 acres of cover crops.
    - Improve soil health and yield on cultivated fields by retaining organic carbon with cover crops.
    - Reduce risk for erosion and runoff on cultivated fields.
  - \$768,398 was awarded to work with sixteen farms in the Finger Lakes Watershed. This project will:
    - Support efforts across Seneca and Cayuga counties to implement over 14,000 acres of cover crops.
    - Improve soil health and yield on cultivated fields by retaining organic carbon with cover crops.
    - Reduce risk for erosion and runoff on cultivated fields.
- OLWMC staff and partners continue to work with the Australian behavioral science consultant, Evidn, to learn how to best promote voluntary improvements in land use practices by watershed residents.
- The OLWMC continues to offer support and guidance to the Cayuga Lake Watershed Intermunicipal Organization (CLWIO) as they seek recommendations for formalizing their inter-municipal structure and progressing their objectives.
- The OLWMC prepared and submitted all required information for its financial audit for the 2020 calendar year and awaits audit results.
- 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, April 16, 2021**