



Owasco Lake Watershed Management Council (OLWMC)

August 18, 2020, 10:00am – Director’s Summary

- The Owasco Lake Watershed Management Council (OLWMC) is working closely with the Owasco Watershed Lake Association (OWLA) to rollout a variety of projects in the near term. The watershed organizations are collaborating on the following:
 1. Production and delivery of educational signage and messaging related to the OLWMC’s online ‘lake friendly living’ pledge that requests watershed residents’ commitments to land and water stewardship practices. The OLWMC’s August Auburn pub article will feature the online pledge opportunity. The ‘lake friendly living’ slogan is growing rapidly throughout the Finger Lakes Region. One of OWLA’s initiatives this year is to distribute “lake friendly living” themed literature to the public in watershed as soon as possible.
 2. Production and placement of “no dumping, drains to lake” storm grate medallions to increase awareness. The Owasco Lake Watershed Inspection and Protection Division (OLWIPD) has been inventorying storm drains throughout the watershed to prioritize those to receive medallions and communicating with municipal/highway officials for approvals for installations; most of the storm drain medallions will be installed in the southern portion of the watershed, in the Villages of Groton and Moravia
 3. Residential tree planting activities are being planned for Fall 2020 and/or Spring 2021.
- The current phase on the Watershed Rules and Regulations revision project is a final review by City of Auburn and Town of Owasco before the document can be finalized and delivered to NYS agencies for their review and consideration for approval. The City and Town plan to hold the joint public meeting as soon as it can be arranged.
 - New requirements for farm planning according to the proposed WRR will require resources and capacity for planning support for farmers. The development of Certified Nutrient Management Plans (CNMPs) may be limited by the number of local professionals credentialed to offer services. A communal farm planning strategy is attractive, offering the benefits of both collaboration and efficiency. Over the course of the last couple of months, I have coordinated with the Agriculture Team Leader of the County Conservation District (BCCD, Bradford PA), Nathan Dewing, who has been instrumental in implementing a communal strategy for farm planning within his

community. We look forward to learned more about the successes and challenges associated with communal planning forums, and guidance on the needs of program development, at our September 15, 2020 OLWMC public board meeting.

- The Owasco Lake Watershed Inspection Committee (WIC) that oversees the OLWIPD met with our regional New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC) partners on Monday, July 27th to discuss regulatory jurisdiction and enforcement activities. Future meetings will be held more routinely (i.e., twice yearly) to maintain accountability and timeliness for the completion of action items, as well as the mutual commitment to watershed protection efforts. The NYSDEC Region 7 is responsible for regulatory enforcement of permitted facilities within the Owasco Lake Watershed, and the OWIPD acts as a local enforcement arm according to local watershed rules and regulations.
- Members of OWLA, Cornell Cooperative Extension (CCE) and other partners are working collaboratively with the OLWMC to coordinate Hemlock Woolly Adelgid (HWA) mitigation to help protect Hemlock trees within the Owasco Lake Watershed. We recognize the first step to advance this initiative through biocontrol (e.g., beetles, top down approach) or insecticide (bottom up approach) will require Hemlock tree and HWA inventories. Our group was field-trained August 12th by CCE's Selma Rosenthal of the 'Hemlock Hunters' and has been enrolled with the Cornell University Hemlock Initiative and its Hemlock Hunters organization. The Owasco Hemlock Hunters Team will take on the important task of surveying, as completely as time, energy, land owner permission, and weather permit, the health of Hemlocks in the ravines of the Owasco Lake Watershed. Inventorying of the HWA is led by OWLA and will start with a focus on ravine areas in the southwest Owasco Lake Watershed.
 - Cornell Cooperative Extension's new 4H STEM Education Coordinator, Kim Oswald, met with OLWMC and OWLA leadership and expressed her willingness to assist with forthcoming watershed education and outreach programming opportunities.
- Harmful Algal Blooms (HABs) were reported for a second time this year at Camp-Y Owasco, on August 6th. The beach was subsequently temporarily closed by the Cayuga County Department of Health. There have been few HABs observations for Owasco Lake to date in 2020, relative to other eastern Finger Lakes.
- An externally funded pilot project will use tributary level sensors to offer greater spatial information to monitor stream dynamics under a wide range of conditions, indicating locations that tend to surge following storm events that might be targets for restoration efforts. Furthermore, locations chosen for this project align with those selected as part of the Soil and Water Assessment Tool (SWAT) model development for the Nine Element Watershed Plan; flows and loads estimated from tributary levels measurements and concurrent nutrient sample collections can be used to calibrate and fine-tune the SWAT model in years to come. In June, we were informed the Cayuga County Highway Department supports the project and will help with level sensor installations throughout the Owasco Lake Watershed. Information on the project will be posted at each installation location. The team has agreed upon (1) pole mount installations within the county easement at five locations with metal culverts and (2) informational stickers identifying each unit as a water level sensor and sharing a web

address + QR code for more information. The lead implementation group, Hyfi, is finalizing securing permits and deployment schedules. They have permission to deploy sensors with Cayuga County Highway Department at five sites and the Town of Groton at 1 site. Cayuga County Planning is double checking to make sure we do not require a permit to install at six Owasco Flats locations. Hyfi, while continuing to pursue permission for installation at three sites in Sempronius, Town of Owasco, and Tompkins County, has reached out to NYSDOT Region 3's permit specialist. NYSDOT 3 has offered us a list of questions and concerns to address as well as an initial permit application. Hyfi is currently reviewing their requirements and drafting responses to their inquiries; NYSDOT has indicated that we will fill out a separate permit app for each of the 10 sites. The level sensors are in the final stages of testing, and the deployment team is eager to begin installations. We are looking forward to beginning deployment in New York by early to mid-September.

- NY Assembly Bill: A08349 passed in the NYS Assembly earlier this year, has gone through committee, and the bill passed the NYS Senate (NY Senate Bill: S05612) on July 21st. It has now been returned to the Assembly. Once it passes the Assembly, the Governor will have to sign it for it to become law. We are watching the progress of this bill closely and have been strong advocates of the process through engagement with local and regional government representatives. With this bill signed into law, the OLWMC will have achieved the tributary permitting protections originally sought through petitioning for watershed tributary reclassification, but instead gained through regulatory protections advanced at the state level. Once signed into law, widespread Class C watershed streams will require the same protections (through project permitting) as streams with higher classifications.
- Over the course of this year, the OLWMC was awarded/approved for:
 - \$1500 grant from the Emerson Foundation for the purchase of a physical water quality model, an educational tool to be used for outreach at forthcoming watershed events (e.g., Conservation Field Days) and within a classroom setting.
 - \$4950 for the purchase of a Portaboard© trailer associated with a proposal for Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) education submitted through the Finger Lake Partnership for Regional Invasive Species Management (PRISM) and intended to help reduce the continued spread of AIS within Owasco Lake. The Portaboard© will offer portable AIS signage that will offer flexibility for its usage at events and lake access locations. There exists signage at Emerson Park, but lake-wide boat launches and access locations coverage is lacking. Improved coverage with signage at all lake access locations prioritizes public awareness and education on prevention measures for reducing the spread of invasive species that have been shown to adversely affect the lake and drive harmful algal blooms (HABs).
 - ~\$47,000 in the form of a Payroll/Paycheck Protection Program Loan. We are currently working through administration activities involved with loan forgiveness as part of this program
- In early August, we were informed we will not be awarded funding for either of two project proposals submitted through the Great Lakes Sediment and Nutrient Reduction Program (GLSNRP) earlier this year. Further we were not awarded funding for a OLWMC/OWLA

collaborative and well-endorsed community outreach project proposal submitted through the New York State Pollution Prevention Institute's (NYSP2I's) Community Grant program. Overall, NYSP2I did not fund many pollution prevention projects for water quality protection.

- We were informed the OLWMC will receive a response from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation in August regarding a potential award for the Five Star and Urban Waters Restoration Program project proposal submitted earlier this year for monitoring the connective corridor of Hidden Brook in the Town of Owasco.
- The OLWMC will evaluate lands targeted for acquisition by with The Nature Conservancy (TNC) for land holding opportunities (according to OLWMC Member's approved resolution 01-2020, the OLWMC resolved to hold real property to protect land and watershed features that support the protection of water quality). Their recent 'Parmley' acquisition in the Flats was seeded this year by CCSWCD. They're close to closing on two additional properties; one property is 200 acres across Clover Leaf Road from Fillmore Glen State Park in Locke, and the other is 182 acres near Summerhill State Forest in Sempronius. They're aiming to close on both properties in the next month or so, and are waiting to hear from DEC that the grant funds are still available before we pursue any additional properties. The OLWMC, TNC, and the City of Auburn are discussing developing common source water protection signage for lands acquired by both TNC and the City. Additionally, the OLWMC is offering support to TNC for a feasibility study for replacing septic systems in Indian Cove on the east shore Owasco Lake. Lastly, TNC is administering a poll throughout the Finger Lakes to gain a better understanding of the public perception of water quality within the Finger Lakes region.
- Cayuga County' Soil and Water Conservation District is planning to present to the OLWMC on 2019 project outcomes and project outlooks for 2020 at a physical Council meeting setting, perhaps as early as October 20th.
- 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 Sennett, Venice, Sempronius, Groton, and Genoa; I continue to encourage the Board of Directors to reach out to representatives from these towns to elicit municipality buy-in.

Composed by Adam Effler, August 2020