



Owasco Lake Watershed Management Council (OLWMC)

January 18, 2022, 10:00am – Director’s Summary

Owasco Lake Watershed Inspection and Protection Division (OLWIPD) and Staff Administration

- The OLWIPD of the watershed management council remains active in the field, keeping a keen eye on winter construction site stabilization needs.
- The most promising candidate recently accepted our job offer for the vacant Watershed Inspector position within the OLWIPD. Jillian Aluisio will begin her work with us, starting January 31st. We’re preparing all of her administrative needs for her onboarding. She will be reporting directly to Lead Watershed Inspector, Ally Berry.
- Enrollment for the OLWMC staff health insurance plan will take place in February, 2022.
- Staff had several in-lake or in-stream dead deer removals over the course of the last month.

Recognition, Awareness, Education and Outreach

- The OLWMC’s staff January recognition article with the Citizen spotlighted watershed stewardship by a local hunter.
- OLWMC staff will begin their 2021 annual report preparation for distribution at municipal offices and the report will also be given in the form of a presentation to the City of Auburn City Council.

Lake Friendly Living

- The Lake Friendly Living Coalition (LFLC) of the Finger Lakes is collaborating on planning the LFL awareness week for the spring of 2022. The achieved goal of the LFL awareness week in 2021 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. Information on the 2022 webinar series will be forthcoming.
 - The January 13, 2022 LFLC meeting covered welcoming and introduction of new participants, preparation for the 2022 May LFL Awareness week presentations, new alignment with climate resiliency and funding (e.g., NYSERDA Climate Smart Programming), the coordination of a NYS Assembly LFL Endorsement

Resolution for 2022, and brainstorming unified project proposals for marketing behavioral change.

Hyfi Watercourse Level Sensors

- **Project Review:**
 - OLWMC staff have installed, and maintain, 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. The sensors are used for guiding flood and asset management, as well as for flow monitoring. With project support from OLWMC staff, the Owasco Watershed Lakes Association's (OWLA's) 2021 sediment and nutrient sampling program aligned with sensor locations. A project 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.
 - 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.
- **Project Updates:**
 - This last month, staff had a sensor swap at Spring Street on the Owasco Inlet in the Town of Groton due to a low battery there. Staff will also need to swap a sensor and elongate the support structure at Dutch Hollow Brook- the Hyfi team believes that the existing sensor there is inadequately capturing signal reflectance from the bridge deck.

Watershed Partner Collaboration- Project Updates

- The Cayuga County Department of Health was informed by the NYSDOH that the *ad hoc* committee (i.e., DEC, Dept. of State, DOH, Dept. Ag and Markets) has convened for reviewing the community consensus updated Owasco Lake Watershed Rules and regulations, and each department has reviewed and provided comments. The committee is planning to convene again this month to prepare their formal response. We were made aware that the formal response may be released as soon as the end of this month.
- 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 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 next group meeting for this planning project is scheduled for January 26, 2022.

- The OLWMC continues to work towards a transfer of ownership of a ~160-acre priority parcel in Sempronius from The Nature Conservancy to the OLWMC that will advance the council as a land conservation steward within the watershed.
- OLWMC staff are coordinating with SUNY ESF on a collaborative willow planting project at the OLWMC's nursery in the Town of Owasco with the intent that the nursery can act as a long-term source of willow canes for the installation of future riparian buffers within the watershed. This project may also host an opportunity for a student undergraduate internship and/or capstone project.
- The OWLA-coordinated and OLWMC-sponsored annual Bob Brower Scientific Symposium will be held Saturday, March 19th.

Grants and Programs

- Following a nearly month-long process to change the corporate office address through the NYS Comptroller's Office, the OLWMC subsequently gained the address change through the NYS Grants Gateway platform and, therefore, remains well-positioned administratively to apply for NYS grants.
- **GLRI Conservation Kick Project**
 - **Project Review:** In partnership, the Cayuga County Soil and Water Conservation District (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 an estimated 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 Update:** Project partners have finalized the project contract and MOU for a 2022 conservation practice installation.
- The OLWMC will plan to submit a project proposal through the Natural Resources Conservation Service Regional Conservation Partnership Program (NRCS RCPP). The request for proposals is expected in January 2022. The OLWMC and project partners from the American Water Works Association will retool the OLWMC's 2021 proposal, according to reviewer feedback. The proposed project would draw upon federal NRCS dollars for building local capacity for certified farm planning within the Owasco Lake Watershed, a prospect intended to increase efficiencies for local agriculture to benefit both farmers and watershed conservation.

Buy-In

- The OLWMC continues to look forward to 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, Dryden, Skaneateles, and Lansing; we continue to

encourage the Board of Directors to reach out to representatives from these towns to elicit municipality interest.

- On December 21, 2021, OLWMC staff visited the Groton Town office to introduce themselves and elicit interest for directorship on the OLWMC. A formal directorship request letter will be delivered to The Town of Groton, as well as other remaining watershed municipalities that have yet to join.

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.

Prepared by Adam Effler, January 14, 2022