



## Owasco Lake Watershed Management Council

December 19, 2023, 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, **Moravia** – Terry Baxter, **Village of Moravia** – TBD, **Village of Groton** – Theodore Skibinski, **Summerhill** – Charlie Ripley, **Sennett** – Tom Blair, **Dryden** – Anne Clark

**Executive Director**- Adam Effler

Presiding: Dr. Adam Effler: Thanked Terry Baxter for his service on the Board and support of the mission of OLWMC.

- A. Board of Directors Roll Call– Owasco-Ed Wagner, City of Auburn-Ginny Kent, Niles-Joan Jayne, Fleming-Karen VanLiew, Moravia- Terry Baxter, Dryden-Anne Clark (online), Scipio-Melinda Pitman (online). Ex-Officio-John West, Tony Prestigiacomo, Ann Robson, Frank Clarke (online), Daniel Welch, Abigail Hai, Joseph Decker, Michelle Wunderlich, Ani Fish, Aimee Clinkhammer,
- B. Approval of the Agenda. Motion made by Ginny Kent to approve the agenda, seconded by Joan Jayne. Unanimous vote. Motion carried.
- C. Approval of Minutes from the November 21, 2023, Board Meeting as distributed via email. Motion to approve made by Joan Jayne, seconded by Ginny Kent. Unanimous vote. Motion carried.
- D. Public to be Heard: none heard.
- E. Director’s Summary – Adam Effler (distributed for review prior to meeting): Audio visual of Dr. Effler’s summary may be accessed online at <https://www.olwmc.org/news>

### Watershed Rules and Regulations

#### Project Update:

The following details were provided within NYSDOH’s project update report (12.19.23 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 December 19, 2023 OLWMC public board meeting:

#### *General Update:*

*This past month, DOH focused on putting the regulations into express terms and continued to develop documentation required to be published in the State Register.*

### **NYS Tributary Legislation Project Review**

#### **Project Update:**

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 Updates**

- The OLWMC and Owasco Watershed Lake Association (OWLA) provided watershed protection outreach at the CCC Craft Fair on December 3, 2023.
- OLWMC staff have agreed to continue to publish monthly feature articles with the Citizen in 2024. Staff will continue spotlighting watershed protection efforts, including residents and programs making strides in watershed protection.
- The December, 2023 OLWMC staff feature article provides an introduction to our new Watershed Inspector, Joe Decker, and his positive outlook on the progress of watershed management.

### **Nine Element Watershed Plan (9EP)**

As part of the group's 2023 work plan, the Committee discussed next steps and a phased approach towards preparing project proposals and fundraising for watershed streams inventorying and engineering planning in 2024 to direct stream restoration projects between 2024-2025, for funding tributary monitoring between 2024-2025, and for developing an Owasco Lake Watershed Agriculture Program similar to what was created for the Skaneateles Lake watershed.

The following grant proposals were submitted in response to NYS grant program solicitations in the summer of 2023, and target the highest phosphorus contributing landscape/acre within the Owasco Lake Watershed, as documented in the 9EP:

1. The City of Auburn submitted a NYS non-point non-agricultural planning grant proposal to assess stream corridors including for Sucker and Veness Brooks, as well as other small tributaries within the prioritized Owasco Lake HUC 12 subwatershed at the northern end of the lake.
2. The Cayuga County Soil and Water Conservation District submitted two proposals in response to the first round of the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation Finger Lakes Watershed Grants Program. Their proposals targeted advancing stream corridor assessments of Dutch Hollow and Sucker Brooks.
3. In further response to the Watershed Grants Program solicitation, the OLWMC submitted a funding request to place 2024-2025 watershed tributary sampling, analysis, and results display under management of Community Science Institute

(CSI) located in Ithaca.

Project Update:

- The December 12, 2023 9E Coordination Committee meeting focused on reviewing and revising an Owasco Lake Watershed Agricultural Program proposal that will be delivered to the NYS Budget Committee for consideration for funding within the 2024 NYS budget.
- The 9E Coordination Committee plans to continue holding monthly meetings in 2024 to drive implementation of the 9EP.

**Watershed Lake and Tributary Monitoring**

Project Review:

- Cayuga County’s comprehensive monitoring budget for 2023 included 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 submitted elements of the program budget to the NYSDEC as part of their 2023 Finger Lakes Lake Ontario Watershed Protection Alliance (FLOWPA) budget.
- 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.
- Owasco Lake *in situ* water quality monitoring (buoy) data is available online here: <https://www.olwmc.org/news>

Project Update:

- 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.

**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 will finalize and deliver the plan to NYS agencies for their review and approval.

### **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.

### **Harmful Algal Blooms (HABs) Identification and Reporting**

#### **Project Review:**

- Generally, year over year, observations of HABs are increasing throughout the eastern Finger Lakes Region.
- Regarding HABs, the NYSDEC encourages the community to “know it, report it, and avoid it.”
- Consistent with previous years, in 2023, the Owasco Watershed Lake Association (OWLA) led the volunteer HABs surveillance program for Owasco Lake.

### **Land Holdings**

#### **Fillmore Nature Preserve Project Review:**

- The OLWMC closed on the property transfer of the Fillmore Nature Preserve from The Nature Conservancy (TNC) on January 10, 2023. Fillmore Nature Preserve property boundary signage was installed by OLWMC staff with the help of TNC on March 8, 2023. The associated field trip accommodated the first annual property inspection to meet the OLWMC’s annual property inspection commitment.
- On May 22, 2023, student conservation work at the Fillmore Nature Preserve was one of the activities included as part of Moravia High School 'Moravia Gives Back Day.' Students collected litter along the roadway adjacent to the preserve, pulled invasive species, and identified species to inform a conservation database. Moravia High School students were the first to assess biodiversity at the preserve.
- The Town of Owasco is providing trail maintenance support at the Fillmore Nature Preserve.
- An OLWMC grant proposal was developed, submitted, and funded to create a public

access lot and educational kiosk at the nature preserve.

#### Other Potential Acquisitions:

- TNC 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**

##### 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. Members of the project team convened October 10, 2023 to acknowledge the award and review the proposed project. Once the project team gains engagement from the NFWF liaison and understands next steps and contracting, it will convene for a project kickoff meeting.

##### SOGL Project Update:

- 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, in preparation for project implementation during the 2024 and 2025 field seasons.

## 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 will expand this initiative with additional tributary signage installed within the Town of Moravia, Village of Moravia, and Town of Locke. The purpose of this collaborative project is to increase public awareness of watershed watercourses and provide easily accessible contact information for members of the public to engage with the Owasco Lake Watershed Inspection and Protection Division to communicate watershed concerns. Consistent with existing signage, new signage includes the name of the sub watershed/tributary flowing at a specific road crossing, as well as “quick response” (QR) scan codes that will link smartphone users to the Owasco Lake Watershed Inspection and Protection Division’s project webpage. Emergency contact information will also be included for the public to report observed water quality issues at the location. The Cayuga County Planning Department designed the accompanying watershed map, in-kind. Furthermore, the Cayuga County Highway Department committed to the installation of the signage, in-kind. The grant funding requested covered the material costs of the project; the SW Metcalf Foundation granted the OLWMC \$4,100 for the expansion of Tributary Adoption and Identification Project (TAIP) signage in the southern portion of the Owasco Lake watershed. TAIP signage was designed and produced, and project materials were purchased and delivered. The Cayuga County Highway Department spearheaded the installation of the tributary identification signage during the month of November, 2023.

### NYS Finger Lakes Watersheds Grant Program -Round 1 Project Review:

- The OLWMC acted as the lead applicant for the submission of a grant proposal targeting NYS funding for watershed tributary monitoring in 2024 that would accommodate the presentation of collected data in a public facing database. The collaborative proposal sought to fund continued monitoring of 9EP Soil and Water Assessment Tool (SWAT) sites, which would support continued model calibration, and additional sites that align with upstream stream restoration planning proposals underway by the Cayuga County Soil and Water Conservation District. The OLWMC’s collaborative NYS Finger Lakes Watershed Grant Proposal was successfully submitted, meeting the July 21, 2023 program deadline.
- According to NYSDEC award announcements, in response to its request for funding 2024- 2025 watershed tributary monitoring, the OLWMC was not funded through the NYS Finger Lakes Watersheds Grant Program.

### Fillmore Nature Preserve Access and Education Project Review:

- On September 14, 2023, the OLWMC submitted its proposal to the Emerson Foundation for the creation of a public access lot and educational kiosk at the OLWMC’s new Fillmore Nature

Preserve. The gravel lot will allow members of the public to access the land preserve for respectful use of its trails for hiking. The kiosk will provide educational information about the land preserve concerning its purpose. The Town of Owasco has agreed to provide labor in-kind for creating the public access lot. The Cayuga County Planning Department has agreed to provide support through the development of parcel maps to be included within the kiosk. The Owasco Watershed Lake Association (OWLA) will support the effort with \$500 of plant material for a rain garden they will install at the site. Information about the value of native plants, and the ecosystem services they provide, will also be included within the kiosk. The Towns of Moravia and Summerhill have committed to hauling the public access lot gravel in-kind. The OLWMC also applied for program support for the creation and posting of trails within the Fillmore Nature Preserve; a Cornell University program called Design Connect accepted a request for project support with trails expansion. They will offer two project managers who will be primary partners along with a team of 5-10 students. The project manager and teams will be chosen in late November for spring 2024 implementation.

- \$9,117 was approved by the Fred L. Emerson Foundation for the OLWMC, specifically towards implementing the *Fillmore Nature Preserve- Conservation Education Kiosk, Access Lot, and Trail Network* project, as detailed in the OLWMC's project proposal dated September 14, 2023.

#### Project Update:

- The Town of Owasco, in-kind, created onsite access from Fillmore Road to the Fillmore Nature Preserve. This represented the first step in the creation of the planned public access lot. The Towns of Moravia and Summerhill will haul gravel to finish the lot in the spring of 2024.
- 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. Board of Directors/Municipality Representatives Feedback

- i. Posting Residential Guidelines to Protect Water Quality in Cayuga County-Dr. Effler brought the guidelines prepared by Cayuga County water quality agency to the attention of the committee. He recommended towns post them on their websites. These are very useful documents to include for distribution among town residents.
- ii. Dr. Effler reviewed the 2024 OLWMC Objectives and discussed minor changes. Motion to approve made by Ed Wagner, seconded by Ginny Kent. Unanimous vote. Motion carried,
- iii. Motion to Endorse March 9, 2024 Bob Brower Scientific Symposium. Motion to Endorse the Symposium was made by Ginny Kent seconded by Ed Wagner. Unanimous vote, motion carried.

#### G. Treasurer's Audit and Finance Report

- i. November 2023 Financials Approval – Joan Jayne reported that as of November 30, 2023 current assets \$ 346,162.06, total checking and savings were \$346,862.06 and total liabilities and assets were \$415,283.63. Motion made to approve by Terry Baxter seconded by Karen VanLiew. Unanimous vote. Motion carried.

- H. Lake Level Report – John West- last week began reducing the lake level however the heavy rains caused increased flow with peaking at 711. ft elevation and working to reduce to goal of 710 ft for this time of year.
- I. In-Lake Water Quality Monitoring Update– Lisa Cleckner, Director Finger Lakes Institute-unavailable,
- J. Finger Lakes Water Quality Trends Presentation- Tony Prestigiacom, Supervisor, NYSDEC FL Hub, to view this excellent presentation please visit the video of the meeting at <https://www.olwmc.org/news>
- K. The Nature Conservancy Update – Olivia Green unavailable
- L. Owasco Watershed Lake Association Update – Ann Robson-reported OWLA submitted an application for CSLAP testing for 2024, working on Spring Bob Bower symposium, website updates in progress, successful recent fundraiser, continuing monthly articles and public forums, and putting sampling data into graphic form.
- M. Cornell Cooperative Extension Update –Frank Clarke- January 18-19-Winter Crops symposium, some upcoming Shop meetings in the next few months.
- N. Watershed Inspection Monthly Report – Abigail Hai and Joseph Decker. Watershed inspection report may be accessed online at <https://www.olwmc.org/news>
- O. Communications: Dr Effler announced the Septic System Replacement Program continues and the clean energy program for communities through NYS continues. Olivia Green will present at the January 2024 meeting, Dr. Lisa Cleckner will present in February 2024 on water quality.
- P. Issues of Concern: None heard.
- Q. Next meeting is Tuesday of January 16, 2024.
- R. Adjourn: Motion to adjourn made by Terry Baxter. Seconded by Karen VanLiew, unanimous vote. Motion carried. Meeting adjourned at 11: 40 AM.

Respectfully submitted,  
Vivian Cunningham



## Proposed 2024 OLWMC Goals

1. Increase participation of municipalities that have yet to join the Council.
  - a. Formal directorship request letters will be delivered to the remaining watershed municipalities and their responses (if any) will be documented. OLWMC staff will make a concerted effort to visit municipal offices to directly communicate organizational objectives and elicit interest and buy-in.
2. Community Outreach
  - a. Increase awareness of the Lake Friendly Living Pledge Program, boundaries, and tributaries of the watershed through signage
  - b. Advocate for NYS approval of community consensus Updated Watershed Rules and Regulations
    - i. Mobilize an outreach campaign for eventual rollout of Updated Watershed Rules and Regulations
      1. Plan distribution methods for supportive materials for guidance on watershed programs and lines of supportive funding
  - c. Continue to advance engagement with watershed farmers' advisory group through the Our Owasco project
    - i. Plan meetings and educational events
  - d. Coordinate watershed science programming and education in schools
3. Continue to look for funding opportunities.
  - a. Advance funding support for project initiatives through collaboration for funding and partnership among agencies
  - b. Use adaptive strategies for project priorities list based on watershed planning and funding availability
  - c. Seek watershed support as a line item on the NYS Environmental Protection Fund (EPF)
4. Provide new and relevant programmatic opportunities to watershed municipal leaders
  - a. Offer support and guidance to assist municipalities with advancing resource protection and climate smart initiatives
5. Work with the Towns' and Villages' elected officials, highway superintendents, and county soil and water conservation districts (SWCDs) to improve ditching practices
  - a. Support communication between highway departments and SWCDs
6. Support the coordination and implementation of the NYS Nine Element (9E) Watershed Plan
  - a. Facilitate needs and communication for the 9E Project Coordination Committee that will:
    - i. Interpret 9E Plan information to target watershed project implementation based on recommended projects/practices and prioritized 'hot spots'
    - ii. Present relevant information for managers, municipalities, and implementers to support priority projects
    - iii. Utilize NYS approved (9E) Plan to advocate for external project funding through grants
7. Participate in the on-going NYSDEC harmful algal bloom monitoring and surveillance program, the purpose of which is to identify priority areas for health and safety and ultimately develop mitigation strategies for HABS
  - a. OLWMC/NYSDEC/OWLA (Owasco Watershed Lake Association) collaboration is essential
8. Develop Owasco Lake Watershed Inspection and Protection Division (OLWIPD) program requirements according to the rollout of Updated Owasco Lake Watershed Rules and Regulations
  - a. Advance programmatic needs and SOPs for updated watershed rules and regulations, including for the proposed variance process
9. Support oversight, growth, and guidance for the OLWIPD
  - a. Foster outreach and guidance for stakeholders through the OLWIPD
10. Continue supporting monitoring the lake and watershed to assess water quality
  - a. Ensure transferrable and accessible datasets between multiple groups, including scientists, planners, and managers
  - b. Work with the DEC Finger Lakes Hub and other partners to reduce watershed-sourced nutrient loading to Owasco Lake
11. Preserve natural ecosystem functions that protect watershed water quality through stewarding land preserves