



Owasco Lake Watershed Management Council (OLWMC)

May 16, 2023- Director's Summary

Staffing Update

Jillian Aluisio, Watershed Inspector for the Owasco Lake Watershed Inspection and Protection Division of the OLWMC, has resigned from her position. We are considering outlooks for organizational staffing in the near term.

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 project Workgroup looks forward to convening in June, 2023 to continue discussing the community consensus updated WRR. The following details were provided within NYSDOH's project update report (5.16.23 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 May 16, 2023 OLWMC public board meeting:

General Update:

NYS DOH and our partner agencies once again apologize for the last-minute cancellation of the May 2nd meeting and are working on rescheduling that meeting for a date in June.

Tentative Schedule:

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| Additional State Agency Legal Meetings | April 2023 |
| Legal meeting with City of Auburn | April 2023 |
| Follow up with State-Local workgroup | June, 2023 |
| Make final revisions to regulations | Sept 2023 |
| Begin State Amendment Process | Oct 2023 |

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.

S4162 was reintroduced in the 2023 legislative session under a new print number: S1725. There has been general opposition to the bill by NYS Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCDs) based on the potential for stream restoration project delays due to new permitting requirements for Class C streams.

The NYS Senate, at the insistence of Environment Chairman Pete Harckham, has included protections for Class C streams in their budget. Governor Hochul vetoed regulating class C streams in December, 2022 with a veto memo arguing the bill belonged in the budget with monetary resources for implementation. The version included in the Senate’s “one-house” budget modifies the bill to exempt Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCDs) from permitting requirements, if they have an MOU with the NYSDEC outlining appropriate stream protection measures. The ultimate goal of the stream protection bill is to protect stream corridors from disturbance, not to complicate the work of SWCDs. Furthermore, the reduction in permitting requirements for SWCDs would help alleviate some of the NYSDEC budgetary/staffing concerns that the Governor indicated as part of her opposition to the bill. Importantly, the bill now includes \$1 million in implementation funds to cover staff hires to implement.

Project Update:

On April, 25 S1725A passed the NYS Senate. The bill was then referred to the Assembly Environmental Conservation Committee. If the Assembly passes this bill, it will be sent to the Governor for signature (approval) or veto (rejection).

Recognition, Awareness, Education and Outreach Projects Updates

- The annual Owasco Lake Watershed Inspection and Protection Division Annual Report for 2022 was completed and distributed to municipal office within the watershed for further public distribution. OLWMC staff provided an associated 2022 update to Auburn City Council on May 11, 2023.
- OLWMC staff have provided for new visibility of the OLWMC's 'Clean, Drain, Dry' portable boat stewardship billboard, which is now positioned at a Cayuga County owned pull-off along Route 38. The billboard will be relocated at the Emerson Park Boat launch over the summer.
- Published feature articles with the Citizen newspaper continue to target recognition of watershed residents making strides in watershed protection. The OLWMC's feature article with the Citizen for May featured collaborative ditch remediation along Ensenore Road.
- The Owasco Lake watershed's 2023 Lake Friendly Living (LFL) event will be a raingarden expansion project held at Emerson Park on May 20, 2023 from 10AM-2PM. Volunteers are encouraged to participate. Wegmans Food Markets will sponsor the cost of lunch for volunteers at the event. LFL Coalition partners are assisting with the preparation of event flyers for the rain garden event as well as other action events that will be held across the Finger Lakes Region. A request was made for a NYS legislative resolution to commemorate the LFL Coalition again in 2023.

Nine Element Watershed Plan (9EP)

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 (9EP) 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 9EP.

The OLWMC's 9EP 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 9EP. Subsequently, request letters for

Committee participation by the OLWMC's Ex Officio partners were delivered and partner commitments were made.

Project Update:

During its recent April 27, 2023 meeting, as part of the group's 2023 work plan, the Owasco Lake 9E Watershed Plan Coordination Committee discussed next steps towards work scoping and fundraising for watershed streams inventorying and engineering planning in 2023 (Phase 1) to direct stream restoration projects between 2023-2024 (Phase 2). The Committee will continue to convene on a monthly basis with the next meeting scheduled for May 25, 2023.

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.
- Owasco Lake and watershed monitoring partners prepared a comprehensive monitoring budget that includes 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 for approval as part of their 2023 Finger Lakes Lake Ontario Watershed Protection Alliance (FOLLOWPA) budget.
- The Cayuga County Planning Department and Owasco Lake and watershed water quality monitoring partners finalized a Quality Assurance Project Plan (QAPP) for submittal to the NYSDEC that reflects monitoring logistics for the 2023 field season.

Project Update:

The Owasco Watershed Lake Association initiated its 2023 watershed tributaries monitoring program with the first sampling round scheduled for May 15, 2023. The monitoring program is designed to include both baseline monitoring and storm event-based sampling.

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. The DWSP2 committee reviewed and edited the draft plan. The NYS Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC) and NYSDOH 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.
- A refined draft of the City of Auburn’s DWSP2 was recently 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.

Project Update:

The Town of Owasco is receiving consultant support through the NYSDEC to expand upon the City of Auburn’s DWSP2 and drive next steps towards plan implementation. The first DWSP2 group meeting on behalf of the Town of Owasco was held May, 11 2023.

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:

- Regarding HABs, the NYSDEC 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.

Land Holdings

Fillmore Nature Preserve Project Review:

- 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.
- 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 Locke, mixed farmland
 - 72-acre parcel in Venice, dense wetland

Hyfi Watercourse Level Sensors Project Review:

- OLWMC staff currently 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.
- The NYSDEC does not support 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 will be decommissioned.

Programs, Funding, and Related Opportunities

SOGL

Project Review:

The OLWMC submitted a Sustain Our Great Lakes (SOGL) 2023 project pre-proposal that targets funding stream restoration and improvement projects along stream reaches of the Owasco Inlet in the southern municipalities of Moravia and Locke. Prior surveys and monitoring by Cayuga County have identified several locations of streambank erosion and flooding along the proposed reaches. This proposed project serves to address streambank erosion in two main tributaries that encompass 60 percent of the acreage of the lake's watershed and are responsible for approximately 40 percent of phosphorus loading into the lake. This proposed project is in conjunction with the Cayuga County Soil and Water Conservation District, with project monitoring that ties into tributary monitoring plans by the Owasco Watershed Lake Association.

- Total Amount Requested: \$299,640.00
- Matching Contributions Proposed: \$100,360.00

Project Update:

A Sustain Our Great Lakes 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.

TAIP

Project Review:

The Tributary Assessment and Identification Pilot Project (TAIPP) "pilot" project, which led to the installation of tributary signage in the northern portion of the watershed, provided a starting point to engage the public for tributary protection and education. OLWMC staff plan to expand this initiative, and propose that additional tributary signage be placed within the Town of Moravia, Village of Moravia, and Town of Locke. Consistent with existing signage, new signage will include 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. Municipal resolutions and engagement with the NYS Department of Transportation and Cayuga County Highway Department are underway. OLWMC staff are finalizing planning and approvals for the expansion of tributary identification signage in the southern portion of the Owasco Lake watershed.

Funding Opportunities (NYSDEC solicitations in their words)

Environmental Justice Community Impact Grant Available

The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) [Office of Environmental Justice](#) (OEJ) will make available \$5,995,764 in funding for Environmental Justice Community Impact Grants to community-based organizations for projects that address exposure of communities to multiple environmental harms and risks. Eligible applicants are not-for-profit (NFP) community-based organizations having 501(c)(3) status or a community-based organization may partner with a NFP that will serve as their fiscal sponsor. Applications are due by **July 26th, 2023 at 3:00pm ET**. For more information and to apply, visit: [Environmental Justice Community Impact Grant Program For Communities Exposed to Multiple Environmental Harms and Risks in New York State](#)

Tree Inventory and/or Community Forestry Grants Available

The DEC Division of Lands and Forests is pleased to announce available Environmental Protection Fund (EPF) funding for Urban and Community Forestry (UCF) grants. These 2-year grants are meant to help start, plan and advance strong, self-sustainable UCF programs which enhance the quality of life for all New Yorkers. Grant projects must implement tree inventory, community forest management plan, tree planting or tree maintenance projects for urban and community forests in New York State. Applications are due by **June 21st, 2023 at 2:00pm ET**. For more information and to apply, visit the grants gateway at: [Tree Inventory and/or Community Forest Management Grant Program](#).

Application Period Open for WIIA and IMG Grants

The NYS [Environmental Facilities Corporation](#) (EFC) has announced the availability of \$425 million in grants under the New York State Water Infrastructure Improvement (WIIA) and Intermunicipal Water Infrastructure Grant (IMG) Programs. This grant funding is made available, in part, through the Clean Water, Clean Air, and Green Jobs Environmental Bond Act of 2022. This funding is for municipalities with infrastructure projects that protect or improve public health and/or water quality.

Applications must be submitted using the online Application Form located on EFC's website at their [State Water Grants](#) or [Intermunicipal Grants](#) webpages by **5:00 p.m. Friday, July 28, 2023**. EFC will host a webinar to present the WIIA and IMG programs on **May 16, 2023, at 11:00 a.m.** View the [May 3rd Environmental Notice Bulletin](#) for more information.

Clean Water State Revolving Fund (CWSRF) for Water Pollution Control and Drinking Water State Revolving Fund (DWSRF)

The NYS [Environmental Facilities Corporation](#) (EFC), DEC, and the NYS Department of Health have announced the availability of funds in support of CWSRF and DWSRF eligible projects for Federal Fiscal Year 2024. The CWSRF and DWSRF programs are available to municipalities and certain non-municipal entities in New York State to finance water quality and drinking water related projects.

*New project listing forms and project updates will be accepted through **Friday, June 16, 2023**, from municipalities interested in competing for:*

- *FFY 2024 CWSRF Base funding*
- *FFY 2024 CWSRF BIL General Supplemental funding*
- *FFY 2024 CWSRF BIL Emerging Contaminants funding*
- *FFY 2024 DWSRF Base funding*
- *FFY 2023 DWSRF BIL General Supplemental funding*
- *FFY 2023 DWSRF BIL Emerging Contaminants funding*

*New project listing forms and project updates will be accepted through **Friday, August 25, 2023**, for municipalities interested in competing for:*

- *FFY 2023 DWSRF BIL Lead Service Line Replacement funding*

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.

Prepared by Adam Effler, May 11, 2023