



## Owasco Lake Watershed Management Council (OLWMC)

July 19, 2022- Director's Summary

### **Regulatory and Planning and Projects Updates**

Watershed Rules and Regulations Update (summarized from '7.19.22 Monthly Owasco WRR Update for OLWMC.pdf'):

- The Watershed Rules and Regulations (WRR) Workgroup is a state-local partnership consisting of representatives from five New York State agencies including the: Department of Health (DOH); Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC); Department of Agriculture & Markets (AgM); Department of State (DOS); and Department of Transportation (DOT), 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 DOH in December 2020. The Workgroup is charged with discussing all regulatory and non-regulatory water quality improvement options, available science, new studies as well as the appropriate blend of funding, incentives and enforcement. The first meeting outlined overall Workgroup goals, internal and external communication, deliverables, and next steps. A main objective of the Workgroup is to ensure the proposed regulations conform with existing state regulations, and to identify areas where existing programs can be extended to satisfy water quality goals. A consensus was made that efforts to keep outside stakeholders and the general public informed of Workgroup progress is critical and that existing lines of communication will be used to accomplish this. Workgroup members agreed to meet on a semi-monthly basis moving forward to review the proposed Watershed Rules & Regulations by provision. This Workgroup has met three times thus far and is making progress as described in more detail within the NYS DOH's project update report ([7.19.22 Monthly Owasco WRR Update for OLWMC.pdf](#)) delivered to the OLWMC Board of Directors, Ex Officio Partners, and engaged members of the public prior to the July 19, 2022 OLWMC public board meeting.

NYS Tributary Legislation Project Review:

- An OLWMC endorsed, NYS environmental conservation law ([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. That is, if

passed, the law will require the need for permit for certain stream access and project(s) scenarios. The bill passed both NYS houses and will need to be signed into law.

#### Nine Element Watershed Plan (9E) Update

- The OLWMC awaits guidance and project funding opportunities from NYS based on the completion and approval of Cayuga County's Nine Element Watershed Plan (9E) for Owasco Lake. The Cayuga County Planning Department is nearing the end of the 9E planning process, developed an appendix to report recent project and programming outcomes associated with 9E recommendations, and recently distributed an updated draft of the plan prior to the third and final public meeting. The public meeting will be held on July 25, 2022 at 6:00 PM.

#### NYS-awarded Drinking Water Source Protection Program (DWSP2) Update

- Consultants for the City of Auburn's NYS-awarded Drinking Water Source Protection Program (DWSP2) gave to Auburn City Council on July 14, 2022 their presentation regarding potential water quality contaminant sources and source water protection recommendations.

#### **HABs Identification and Reporting**

- Project Review: The NYS Department of Environmental Conservation's (NYSDEC's) NYHABs notification page is now available for the 2022 monitoring season.

#### **Recognition, Awareness, Education and Outreach Updates**

- The OLWMC's July 1, 2022 feature article with the Citizen newspaper spotlighted the OLWMC's collaboration and profit-sharing initiative with Wegmans Food Markets to promote LED flares as a safer and more environmentally friendly alternative to conventional incendiary flares. The project piggybacked on a Finger Lakes wide initiative concerned with preventing pollution from the use of incendiary flares at 'Ring of Fire' events. This year, the "Owasco Lake, NY Homeowners' Community" Facebook group organized the July 4, 2022 "Light Up Owasco Lake" event that encouraged property owners to illuminate the shoreline with LED flares. LED flares at the Auburn Wegmans store sold out.
  - The feature article poised for publication in late July, 2022 will feature measurable outcomes from the Lake Friendly Living Coalition's May educational series of events.
- Senator May's (NYS Senate District 53) Scheduler will schedule the Senator's attendance and participation at an upcoming OLWMC public board meeting.

#### **Lake Friendly Living**

##### Project Review:

- Lake Friendly Living (LFL) is a growing Finger Lakes regional initiative that encourages the adoption of recommended conservation and best management practices by residents; the initiative targets reducing nonpoint sources of lake pollution. Moreover, the goal of LFL awareness is 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 LFL Coalition of the Finger Lakes completed its May 2022 awareness webinar and live events series that focused on the intersection of water quality protection and climate resiliency. This year, the group facilitated onboarding Conesus, Honeoye, and Keuka Lake watershed organizations, as new members to help advance the common Finger Lakes Region messaging campaign. The Lake Friendly Living Coalition provided educational and hands on events during the May 2022 awareness series. 17 Lake Friendly Living community events were held across the Finger Lakes Region during the month of May. OLWMC staff coordinated webinar presentations on the NYS Climate Smart Communities program and the implementation of Emerson Park's new rain garden. Further, staff coordinated with the State University of New York College of Environmental Science and Forestry (SUNY-ESF) for the May 21 community shrub willow planting project at the OLWMC's nursery in the Town of Owasco. The nursery will act as a long-term source of shrub willow for the future installation of riparian buffers within the watershed. In total, 462 shrub willow canes were installed. This project is also poised to offer an opportunity for a student undergraduate internship and/or capstone project in 2023. At their May 12, 2022 meeting, Auburn City Council heard a mayoral proclamation endorsing LFL awareness month and the expansion of the messaging program throughout the watershed and the greater Finger Lakes Region. During the June 21, 2022 OLWMC public board meeting, Senator Mannion (NYS Senate District 50) delivered a NYS Legislative commemorative resolution endorsing the Finger Lakes wide effort.

- The OLWMC has completed the installation of LFL signage to Tributary Adoption and Identification Pilot Program (TAIPP) signposts throughout the watershed.

### **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 level monitoring. 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 datasets supports the continued use and funding of the more spatially robust watershed sensors.
- The Owasco Watershed Lake Association's (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 will provide invaluable lake loading information for continued calibration of the SWAT model. The OLWMC is supporting field sampling and sample delivery efforts for OWLA's monitoring program.
- The Owasco Lake watershed piloted Hyfi sensor platform recently won the Verizon Climate Resilience Prize for 2022.

- Staff will be installing an additional watercourse level sensor and assembly for a targeted stream monitoring location at Long Point Road.

### **Land Holding**

#### **Project Review:**

- The OLWMC is nearing the final transfer of an ~160-acre land preserve from The Nature Conservancy (TNC) that will advance the council's position as a land conservation steward within the watershed. As part of a successful transfer of ownership of the property, TNC will offer \$15,000 of upfront land stewardship dollars to help the OLWMC get started with funding needs (e.g., insurances) to own and maintain the land preserve.
- The OLWMC developed a land protection and management policy, adopted from TNC's plan, to ensure the OLWMC meets project responsibilities. The OLWMC's Land Protection and Management Policy for the new property references the OLWMC's proposed 'Land Stewardship' standard policy adopted from the 'Land Trust Alliance Standards and Practices.'
- A property liability insurance policy has been selected to cover the OLWMC's new exposure.

#### **Project Updates:**

- At the June 21, 2022 OLWMC meeting the OLWMC board Members approved adapted land stewardship and management policies to prepare for the Filmore Road land transfer from the TNC.
- The property transfer closing will be scheduled in the near term and following approval of the transfer by the OLWMC Board of Directors.

#### **Other Partner Projects**

- OLWMC staff are assisting with water quality monitoring efforts for an advanced septic system that was installed at the Y Camp at the southern end of Owasco lake. The project, spearheaded by TNC, in partnership with the Cayuga County Department of Health, will evaluate the effectiveness of an advanced phosphorus removal technology and will provide an educational opportunity for campers and staff.

### **Grant Projects and Programs Underway**

#### **Projects Review:**

- GLRI Conservation Kick Project

In partnership, the Cayuga County SWCD assisted a watershed farmland owner to finalize their application for the installation of a water and sediment control basin (WASCOB). The Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) Conservation Kick Program will fund the project, in part. The City of Auburn invested the required cost share for the grant award

administered through the OLWMC, demonstrating the City's commitment towards supporting conservation advancements for local agriculture. 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 partners finalized contract details. Seneca County Soil and Water Conservation District Engineer and Auburn Director of Municipal Utilities reviewed and approved the final WASCOB design.

- NRCS RCPP

On April 13, 2022 the OLWMC submitted a project proposal through the Natural Resources Conservation Service Regional Conservation Partnership Program (NRCS RCPP). The OLWMC retooled last year's NRCS RCPP proposal, according to review comments, and requested federal funding intended to help advance the Cayuga County SWCDs' conservation farm planning and BMP implementations within the Owasco Lake watershed. The proposed project will help build local capacity for certified farm planning within the watershed and provide support for targeted conservation projects, a prospect intended to increase efficiencies for local agriculture that will benefit both farmers and watershed conservation. The deadline for NYS NRCS staff to provide proposal feedback prior to NRCS federal level review and approval was May 27, 2022.

### **Relevant Available Grant Programs Review**

#### NYSDEC:

- Due online by 4:00PM on July 29, 2022, the following grant programs are available under the NYS Consolidated Funding Application (CFA) to support goals of NY's Great Lakes Action Agenda (GLAA), and leverage the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI):
  - NYSDEC Water Quality Improvement Projects (WQIP)
  - NYSDEC Non-Agricultural Nonpoint Source Planning and Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) Mapping Grant (NPG)
  - NYSDEC Climate Smart Communities Grants
  - NYS Department of State (DOS) Local Waterfront Revitalization Program (LWRP) Grants
  - NYS Environmental Facilities Corporation Green Innovation Grant Program (GIGP)
  - NYS Office of Parks Recreation and Historic Preservation - Preservation, and Heritage grants

#### Capital Grant:

- Community Resiliency, Economic Sustainability, and Technology Program (CREST)
  - Grant requests in the form of a formal letter to NYS Senate District 50 Office Chief of Staff, Deanna Schneider at [deanna@senatormannion.com](mailto:deanna@senatormannion.com) are due by Friday, July 29, 2022.

## **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; we continue to encourage the Board of Directors to reach out to representatives from these towns to elicit municipality interest.

**Summary Prepared by Adam Effler, July 15, 2022**