



Owasco Lake Watershed Management Council (OLWMC)

December 15th, 2020, 10:00am – Director’s Summary

1. HABs reporting

Harmful Algal Blooms (HABs) reporting provided by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC) for 2020 ended in the last week of October, 2020. According to NYHABs, the NYSDEC’s HAB reporting system, the system’s web link will be unavailable until the 2021 monitoring season begins in May.

2. Regulations

- Watershed Rules and Regulations

On October 29th, based on the final review of the updated Watershed Rules and Regulations via a joint meeting by City of Auburn and Town of Owasco, after a robust 3-year public process, the regulatory document carried without further review and will be delivered to NYS agencies for their review and consideration for approval and adoption.

- New Municipal-level Regulations Revisited

In September, 2020 OLWMC Directors were provided prepared sediment and erosion control ordinance regulation documents intended to advance stability controls for construction and development activities within their municipality. The intent of these regulations is to protect downstream water quality by reducing land disturbances during construction through the requirement for the implementation of preventive measures. Directors were requested to bring these documents to their municipalities to initiate the discussion and public process for the adoption of new ordinances for their respective municipalities. Feedback from municipal level discussions for adopting new sediment and erosion control ordinances is welcomed.

- New York State Tributary Regulations

Governor Cuomo vetoed the NY Assembly Bill: A08349/NY Senate Bill: S05612. This bill proposed widespread Class C watershed streams be held to the same environmental permitting requirements and protections as streams with higher classifications. The OLWMC and several Ex Officio Partners have been strong advocates of the process through engagement with local and regional government representatives. Proponents of the

bill may have enough support to override the veto with two-thirds votes in each chamber, given that it passed the Assembly 113-31 (78%) and the Senate 43-17 (71%). If this new law passes, the OLWMC and Cornell Cooperative Extension (CCE) will work collaboratively to disseminate the information to Owasco Lake Watershed residents.

3. Watershed Inspection and Protection Division

- NYSDEC Partnership

The Watershed Inspection and Protection Division (OLWIPD) remains active in the field identifying both land and water perturbations that are in need of restoration measures, as well as recent land use improvements and restoration projects to be recognized. The OLWIPD is helping to develop an agenda and meeting schedule for forthcoming partner meetings that garner advisement from the NYSDEC and Watershed Inspection Committee (WIC) advisors. Future meetings will be held more routinely (i.e., twice yearly) than previously to maintain accountability and timeliness for the completion of regulatory and project action items, as well as the mutual commitment to watershed protection efforts. Broadly, the NYSDEC Region 7 is responsible for regulatory enforcement of permitted facilities within the Owasco Lake Watershed, and the OLWIPD acts as a local enforcement arm according to local watershed rules and regulations.

- Education and Outreach

- The OLWIPD is working on developing watershed information packets for new landowners. These new homeowner packets will include a new resident guidance packet with a 5-page summary of the existing watershed rules and regulations, a brochure to promote better understanding of stormwater, and a magnet with pertinent watershed contact numbers.
- A resident of Martin Point's Home Owner Association (HOA) has offered their concerns over lawn chemical usage at Martin Point and potential associated effects on Owasco Lake. The OLWIPD is coordinating a meeting with the HOA president and Martin Point's certified applicator to review their residential lawn chemical application protocol. Outcomes from this meeting will be presented to the HOA board this winter, and the board may consider modifying protocols for reducing or eliminating unnecessary chemical applications that might pose a threat to water quality of adjacent Owasco Lake.

- Recognition efforts and behavioral science training

- OLWMC staff continue to work with the Australian behavioral science consultant Evidn to learn how to best promote voluntary improvements in land use practices by watershed residents. We will be extending our monthly recognition feature articles with the Citizen to spotlight and recognize watershed residents making strides in conservation practices and watershed protection in 2021.
- The OLWIPD's November recognition article, submitted November 13th, 2020 with the Citizen, spotlighted the efforts of ditch stabilization in partnership between Tompkins County Soil and Water Conservation District and the

OLWIPD. The OLWIPD's December article, submitted December 11th, spotlights the advancement of the wetland restoration and enhancement project undertaken by the Town of Owasco behind its Department of Public Works.

- Signage

- 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.
- The (OLWMC) is working closely with the Owasco Watershed Lake Association (OWLA) to rollout a variety of Lake Friendly Living (LFL) signage in the near term. The organizations are cost-sharing 'lake friendly living signs' and 'no dumping-drains to lake' storm drain medallions. Medallions were installed in the Villages of Moravia and Groton and the Hamlet of Locke. The purpose of the signage is to increase awareness of conservation practices to better protect the lake, and in reference to the LFL signs specifically, to encourage watershed residents to take the LFL pledge on the OLWMC's webpage. Lake Friendly Living is rapidly growing as a Finger Lakes Regional initiative.
- In support of our collaborative LFL initiative, project partners have finalized permissions for attaching LFL signage to many of the existing tributary identification signage within the watershed as well as entering municipality signs for the Town of Moravia. We continue to work towards gaining permissions and/or required permits for the advancement of tributary identification and LFL signage throughout the watershed.

OLWMC Lake Friendly Living Pledge

The OLWMC Lake Friendly Living Pledge is fully fledged and operational on the OLWMC website- We ask watershed residents make a difference throughout the watershed by taking the pledge to advance a variety of land and water stewardship practices. This pledge opportunity aligns with a standard style 'Lake Friendly Living' logo and consistent messaging used throughout the Finger Lakes Region. Those who take the pledge, and are interested in helping promote this messaging through signage, are being delivered 'lake friendly living' lawn signage. We requested the City of Auburn and watershed towns and villages resolve to endorse and take the pledge on behalf of their municipalities. Template resolutions were provided to all OLWMC represented municipalities to support that effort. Resolutions from municipalities to endorse the LFL pledge from the City of Auburn, the Towns of Moravia, Niles, Sennett, and Owasco, and the Village of Moravia, as well as the Cayuga County Water Quality Management Agency, all demonstrate public support for the program. These municipalities will work towards achieving the actions requested in the pledge within the municipality limits, in solidarity with those making such efforts throughout the Owasco Lake Watershed. We expect many more supporting resolutions from remaining watershed municipalities.

The pledge:

I know my choices can affect water quality for Owasco Lake. I pledge to incorporate 'Lake Friendly Living' practices to reduce my impacts on Owasco Lake. I will adopt these practices that help reduce pollutants and minimize runoff into Owasco Lake:

(1) I pledge to refrain from using excessive lawn fertilizers and chemicals to help prevent Harmful Algal Blooms (HABs).

(2) I will only use limited phosphorus-free fertilizers (as governed by NYS law), applied properly.

(3) I will maintain my septic system.

(4) I will reduce hazardous wastes and dispose of them properly.

(5) I will dispose of prescription drugs properly; I will not flush them.

(6) I will maintain my vehicles, water-crafts, and other recreational vehicles to reduce fluid leaks as well as the spread of aquatic invasive species.

(7) I will use water wisely.

(8) I will not dispose of leaf litter or lawn clippings in waterways or ditches.

(9) I will strive to work towards practicing recommended Best Management Practices (BMPs) for land use activities within the Owasco Lake Watershed.

4. Tributary Level Sensors Installation Project

The OLWMC and its partners are installing tributary level sensors throughout the watershed. These sensors will be useful for monitoring storm surges and future model calibrations for lake loading estimates. They present a relatively inexpensive, and temporally and spatially robust, alternative to USGS gauge stations. The partnering group, Hyfi, is finalizing securing permits for remaining installation locations. For the case of New York State Department of Transportation (NYSDOT) sites, the NYSDOT has indicated the need for a separate permit app for each site and required the OLWMC increase insurance coverage to meet the needs of the DOT permits. Progress on the installation of watershed tributary level sensors in partnership with Hyfi, included onsite training at locations in the Owasco Flats; on November 12, 2020, the initial sensors were installed. Subsequently, a formal subcontract was signed for the OLWMC to conduct the remaining installations. Thereby, the OLWIPD will be responsible for installing the remaining sensors. A great many level sensor installations are expected throughout the Owasco Lake Watershed.

5. Lakeshore Pickup Day

The OLWMC sponsored OLWIPD/OWLA annual fall shoreline trash pickup day was held Saturday, November 7th. Due to proper safety and social distancing requirements, the participation was limited to OLWMC staff and OWLA volunteers this year. The event took place on the north

end of the lake at Emerson Park (and immediate vicinity), and also on the south end around the Owasco Flats. OWLA provided garbage bags, and Baker Hughes supplied gloves. Some townships agreed to take the garbage collected free of charge. The OLWIPD continued with the shoreline litter pickup effort following the scheduled event, and continued to take advantage of seasonally lower lake levels.

6. Funding Programs, OLWMC Budget, and Finances

- Budgetary funding to the OLWMC for 2021 includes new contributions from the Towns of Sennett (\$2500) and Moravia (\$1000), and the Town of Owasco (\$2000, Total Now = \$27,000).
- The OLWMC's payroll protection program loan forgiveness application was approved through the Federal Small Business administration for the remittance of the entirety of that loan. Consequently, the approximately \$42,000 will be included as part of the OLWMC's reserve fund balance.
- The OLWMC's yearly audit was completed for the 2019 calendar year, and the audit report will be added to the company webpage and the NYS Comptroller's Local Authority Paris reporting system, as well as to NYS and Federal grant portal registrations.
- The OLWMC submitted a proposal for a Regional Conservation Partners Program (RCPP) grant to obtain Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) funding through United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) 2018 Farm Bill. This proposal, in partnership with the Cayuga County Soil and Water Conservation District (CCSWCD) and OWLA, requests federal dollars to advance watershed farm planning. The overarching goal is to better fund the CCSWCD's well-established AEM framework for credentialed conservation farm planning. The project is poised to advance the capacity of project partners to implement critical conservation practices in the watershed, reduce the burden on local producers associated with new regulatory requirements, and help protect Owasco Lake. Senator Schumer's office is preparing a letter of endorsement for this project to share directly with their contacts at NRCS. We are asking Congressman Katko's office to do the same.

7. Hemlock Trees and the Hemlock Woolly Adelgid

Members of OWLA, Cornell Cooperative Extension (CCE) and other partners are working collaboratively with the OLWMC to coordinate Hemlock Woolly Adelgid (HWA) inventorying to be better positioned for insect mitigation funding to help protect Hemlock trees within the Owasco Lake Watershed. Inventorying of the HWA is led by OWLA and started with a focus on ravine areas in the southwest Owasco Lake Watershed. The first onsite survey was held Friday the 13th of November. OWLA and the OLWMC will partner on submitting an insect mitigation funding proposal under the appropriate program funding.

8. Spring willow planting

The OLWMC and OWLA are planning a community willow planting projects along watershed riparian corridors for spring 2021. Both groups will continue to develop the logistics for coordinating these efforts over the next several months. We are attempting to align project planning for riparian buffer installations along Veness Brook with a similar planting effort within The Nature Conservancy's (TNC's) acquired property along the Owasco Inlet. Based on early project planning efforts, TNC decided to develop a conservation and restoration plan for the entire property to be better prepared for partner-led restoration opportunities there.

9. Land Acquisition

The OLWMC will evaluate lands targeted for acquisition by 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).

10. Support for other Watershed Management organizations

We have been communicating with the leadership of the Canandaigua Lake Watershed Management Council, assisting them with identifying requirements for incorporation of the organization as a 501c3 nonprofit. The Cayuga County Planning Department has been working closely with partners from the Cayuga Lake Inter-Municipal Council to help build capacity for that organization.

11. Buy-In

- The OLWMC resolved to add the Town of Sennett as a new Director on the OLWMC at its October meeting. Sennett's representing Director is Tom Gray, the Supervisor of Sennett.
- The Town of Scipio has tabled the discussion of electing a new OLWMC municipal representative (Director for the OLWMC board) at their October Town Board meeting.
- The Town of Summerhill has a new representative for their directorship on the OLWMC, Mr. Charles Ripley.
- 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 Venice, Sempronius, Groton, and Genoa; we continue to encourage the Board of Directors to reach out to representatives from these towns to elicit municipality buy-in.

Summary Prepared by Adam Effler, 12/10/2020