



## Owasco Lake Watershed Management Council (OLWMC)

May 17, 2022, 10:00am – Director’s Summary

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

- The OLWMC’s May feature article with the Citizen newspaper led by Watershed Inspector, Jillian Aluisio, spotlighted waste water treatment facility damages and costs associated with flushing non-flushable products. The article recommended proper disposal of such items.
- The OLWMC’s aquatic invasive species (AIS) ‘Clean, Drain, Dry’ Portaboard® trailer was moved by Cayuga County Parks and Trails staff from the Parks and Trails office to the Emerson Park boat launch for the purpose of increased visibility.
- The Owasco Lake Watershed Inspection and Protection Division (OLWIPD) completed the distribution of 2021 OLWIPD/OLWMC annual report copies among watershed municipalities.

### **HABs Identification and Reporting**

Project Update: The NYS Department of Environmental Conservation’s (NYSDEC’s) NYHABs website remains unavailable until the 2022 monitoring season begins. The Finger Lakes Hub has scheduled a virtual training this year for Finger Lakes Shoreline HABs Surveillance volunteers on Tuesday, June 7, 2022. There are no major changes to the program this year. New volunteers are required to attend either the live training or watch the recorded version, and DEC staff recommend returning volunteers participate for review. Surveillance coordinators for each lake should plan to attend and discuss programming logistics.

### **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. 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 LFL Coalition of the Finger Lakes is underway with its May 2022 awareness webinar and live events series that focuses on the intersection of water quality protection and climate resiliency. This year, the group has facilitated onboarding Conesus, Honeoye, and Keuka Lake watershed organizations, as new

members to help advance the common Finger Lakes Region messaging campaign. Over the course of this field season, the OLWMC and OWLA will finalize the installation of LFL signage on Tributary Adoption and Identification Pilot Program (TAIPP) signposts throughout the watershed.

Project Update: The Lake Friendly Living Coalition is providing nearly 15 educational and hands on events during the May 2022 awareness series. The LFL May Series events calendar is published via the Cayuga County Chamber of Commerce, the Citizen Newspaper, and Life in the Finger Lakes magazine. Furthermore, LFL program promotion is underway as part of the NYSDEC Region 7 News via ‘DEC Delivers’ with nearly ~45,000 subscribers. OLWMC staff coordinated, among local leaders, 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 Environmental Science and Forestry for the upcoming May 21, 2022 community shrub willow-planting project at the OLWMC’s nursery in the Town of Owasco. All members of the public are encouraged to assist with the planting project. The nursery will act as a long-term source of willow canes for the future installation of riparian buffers within the watershed. This project is also poised to offer an opportunity for a student undergraduate internship and/or capstone project in 2023. All event registrations are available on the Coalition’s website ([www.flrwa.org/lake-friendly-living](http://www.flrwa.org/lake-friendly-living)). At their May 12 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.

### **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. 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. Many of the initial sensors’ casements have cracked during winter freezes, and Hyfi shipped replacement sensors engineered to be resistant to cracking. OLWIPD staff will be installing replacement sensors throughout the 2022 field season.

1. With project support from OLWMC staff, OWLA’s 2022 sediment and nutrient sampling program, which has elements of both routine and storm event sampling, will align with watercourse level sensor locations. A project will provide invaluable lake loading information for continued calibration of the SWAT model.
2. The Owasco Lake watershed piloted Hyfi sensor platform recently won the Verizon Climate Resilience Prize for 2022.

### **Hyfi Project Updates:**

1. On April 22, 2022, Hyfi sensors were replaced at two locations: Sucker Brook at Owasco Rd, and Inlet at Route 90 in Locke.

2. Staff will be installing an additional sensor and assembly for a newly targeted stream monitoring location adjacent to Long Point Road.

### **Watershed Partner Collaboration**

#### Projects Review:

- 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 process and has recently developed an appendix to report recent project and programming outcomes associated with 9E recommendations. There will be a third public meeting for the public to review project updates and recommendations.
- The Steering Committee for the updated community consensus watershed rules and regulations (WRR) awaits a meeting schedule from the New York State Department of Health (NYSDOH) to discuss next steps and will be convening soon. NYSDOH upper management are holding off scheduling a joint DOH and WRR Steering Committee meeting until after their April, 2022 NYS Chamber discussion on the topic.
- The OLWMC offers partnership and support for the City of Auburn's NYS-awarded Drinking Water Source Protection Program (DWSP2). The working group has identified high-risk areas and is finalizing source water protection recommendations.

#### Projects Updates:

- The OLWMC continues to work towards a transfer of ownership of a ~160-acre priority parcel in Sempronius from The Nature Conservancy (TNC) to the OLWMC that will advance the council's position as a land conservation steward within the watershed. We continue to evaluate insurance coverage scenarios in context with desired land uses and associated costs. 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 stewardship/maintenance plan, adopted from TNC's plan, to ensure the OLWMC meets project responsibilities.
- The OLWMC is collaborating with Wegmans Food Markets to promote LED flares as a safer and more environmentally friendly alternative to conventional incendiary flares. The OLWMC is underway and under contract with a profit-sharing initiative with Wegmans. Similar to last year, starting May 22, 2022, Wegmans will be selling a 2pk and 6pk LED Flares. Wegmans will be donating \$2.00 for each 2pk (\$16.99 retail) sold and \$6.00 for each 6pk (\$39.99 retail) sold to local Watersheds as outlined in the attached document.
- Our Keynote Presenter for next month's June 21, 2022 OLWMC public board meeting will be Kirsten Workman, Nutrient Management and Environmental Sustainability Specialist from Cornell ProDairy. She will present on advancements in, and recommendations for, cover cropping within the Owasco Lake watershed.

## **Grants Projects and Programs Underway**

### **Projects Review:**

- **GLRI Conservation Kick Project**

**Project Review:** 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 have reviewed the final WASCOB design for approval.

- **NRCS RCPP**

**Project Review:** 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.

## **Relevant Available Grant Programs**

### **TNC:**

- TNC is offering flood adaptation grant writing support. This is an invaluable opportunity, especially for those municipalities that experience flooding concerns, yet have limited capacity to write grant proposals for project(s) funding. The OLWMC submitted a program application in anticipation it will target an OLWMC directing municipality that has identified a suitable project and is interested to engage.

### **NYSDEC:**

- **Water Quality Improvement Projects (WQIP):** funds are available for the implementation of projects to improve water quality or aquatic habitat, or protect a drinking water source. Eligible project types include wastewater treatment improvement, non-agricultural nonpoint source abatement and control, land acquisition for source water protection, salt storage, aquatic connectivity restoration, and marine habitat restoration.
- **Non-Agricultural Nonpoint Source Planning and Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) Mapping Grant (NPG):** funds production of planning reports for nonpoint source water quality improvement projects and mapping of Municipal Separate Storm Sewer Systems.

- New York Sea Grant, in partnership with the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC), announced \$400,000 in grant funding is now available for Great Lakes ecosystem-based management projects in support of New York's Great Lakes Action Agenda. Awards of up to \$50,000 per project. Applications are due July 1, 2022. Proposed projects must address key water quality, natural resource, and resiliency priorities in New York's Great Lakes Action Agenda and should advance local priorities identified in existing community plans. Eligible projects may include planning, design, implementation, information management tool development, demonstration projects, and targeted educational outreach.

### **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 Report Prepared by Adam Effler, May 13, 2022**