



Owasco Lake Watershed Management Council (OLWMC)

March 15, 2022, 10:00am – Director’s Summary

Owasco Lake Watershed Inspection and Protection Division (OLWIPD) Updates

- The OLWIPD of the OLWMC remains active in the field, keeping a keen eye on stabilization needs, as the spring season draws near and the potential for stormwater runoff increases.

Recognition, Awareness, Education and Outreach

- OLWIPD staff completed and updated the following educational documents for 2022:
 - New Homeowner Packet
 - Stormwater Brochure
 - Rain Garden Brochure
 - Green Infrastructure Brochure

These documents are intended to support broad educational objectives of the OLWMC and represent action items requested by the WQMA communications working group. We look forward to distributing these materials to the watershed community and municipal offices come spring. We will discuss printing options and encourage municipalities and partners to create links to these materials within their websites.

- The OLWMC’s staff March recognition article with the Citizen newspaper spotlighted the conservation agriculture, the involvement of local farmers in the advancement of conservation practices, and Spruce Haven Farm for their willingness to trial new technologies for conserving phosphorus on their farm.
- Staff are preparing the OLWIPD/OLWMC combined 2021 annual report, as well as a presentation to the City of Auburn. Consistent with previous years, the annual report will be in the form of an informational brochure to be shared for physical distribution by watershed municipal offices. The OLWMC staff report to the City of Auburn will be given at their March 24, 2022 City Council 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. 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 webinars covered topics such as ‘at home’ best practices, climate change, citizen science, the Hemlock Woolly Adelgid, native planting, and vineyard sustainable practices.

Project Updates:

1. The LFL Coalition of the Finger Lakes is underway with planning and preparation for its spring 2022 awareness webinar series that will focus on the intersection of water quality protection and climate smart programming. Information about the 2022 LFL webinar series will be forthcoming. This year, the group has facilitated onboarding Conesus and Keuka Lake watershed organizations, as new members to help advance the common Finger Lakes Region messaging campaign.
2. As a founding member of the Finger Lakes Coalition, the OLWMC is spearheading coordinating commemorative resolutions among the NYS Assembly and Senate to promote a combined legislative resolution for celebrating Lake Friendly Living Awareness in the Finger Lakes Region. Jordan Lesser, Assemblymember Anna Kelles’ Legislative Counsel, has prepared a commemorating resolution for approval among the NYS Assembly. Jessie Brill, Community Affairs Coordinator for Senator Mannion’s Office, will be working with the Senator to introduce resolution among the NYS Senate.
3. Over the course of this field season, the OLWMC and Owasco Watershed Lake Association (OWLA) will finalize the installation of LFL signage on existing Tributary Adoption and Identification Pilot Program (TAIPP) sign posts 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 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 data sets helps make the case for continued use and funding of the more spatially robust watershed watercourse level sensors.

Project Updates:

1. With project support from OLWMC staff, OWLA’s 2022 sediment and nutrient sampling program will align with sensor locations. A project is to provide invaluable constituent loading information for continued calibration of the SWAT model using level (and thereby estimated discharge) information, as well as suspended solids and nutrient concentration data.
2. Many of the sensors casements have cracked during winter freezes, and Hyfi has shipped replacement sensors that have been engineered to be resistant to cracking. OLWIPD staff will be installing those replacement sensors this spring.
3. OLWMC acted as a reference for Hyfi’s eligibility for the Verizon Climate Prize. Hyfi won the Prize at the ‘GreenBiz’ conference in Arizona.

Watershed Partner Collaboration- Projects Updates

- The OLWMC awaits guidance and project funding opportunities from NYS based on the completion and approval of Cayuga County's Nine Element (9E) Watershed Plan for Owasco Lake. CC Planning is nearing the end of the 9E Watershed Plan process. There will be a third public meeting for the public to review project updates.
- 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 developing recommendations. We look forward to relevant data outcomes and proposals that will support forthcoming grants and projects implementation. An update on the project was given to the Cayuga County Board of Health on March 8, 2022. The next group meeting for this planning project is scheduled for March 24, 2022.
- The Steering Committee for the updated community consensus watershed rules and regulations awaits a meeting schedule from the NYSDOH to discuss next steps.
- 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 await liability insurance details and premium estimates from our insurance provider. TNC will offer upfront land stewardship dollars to help the OLWMC get started with funding (e.g., insurances) needs to own and maintain land preserves. The OLWMC will develop a land stewardship/maintenance plan for land holdings to ensure project responsibilities are met.
- OLWMC staff are coordinating with the State University of New York Environmental Science and Forestry (SUNY ESF) for a 2022 spring collaborative willow planting project at the OLWMC's nursery in the Town of Owasco with the intent that the nursery will act as a long-term source of willow canes for the installation of future riparian buffers within the watershed. This project may also host an opportunity for a student undergraduate internship and/or capstone project in 2023.
- On March 9, 2022, an OLWMC status update was provided in the form of a presentation to, and discussion with, the Emerson Foundation. In recent years, the Emerson Foundation has been a strong partner with the OLWMC, and has helped fund several important projects.
- Keynote Presenters for Next Month's April OLWMC public board meeting will be Director Doug Kierst and Manager Jon Negley, of the Cayuga County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) and Tompkins County SWCD, respectively. They will offer a summary of 2021 conservation implementation within the Owasco Lake watershed as well as outlooks for 2022 and beyond.
- On March 16th at 1:30 PM, the CCSWCD will host an 'Our Owasco' Soil Health Seminar to engage local farmers on recommended soil health practices.
- The OWLA-coordinated, and OLWMC-sponsored, annual Bob Brower Scientific Symposium will be held remotely via Zoom Saturday, March 19th 2022. The symposium will spotlight the following presenters and topics:
 1. John Halfman, PhD – Status of Owasco Lake
 2. Dan Kelting, PhD – Salinization of Adirondack Waters by Road Salt: A Statewide Issue

3. Toneya McIntosh and Dr. John Pickering – Our Owasco: Using Behavioral Science to Protect Owasco Lake
4. Seth Jensen – Lake Water Level Management – Owasco Lake
5. Carri Marschner – Hemlock Management in the Owasco Lake Watershed: Short and Long Term Solutions

Grants Projects and Programs

- **GLRI Conservation Kick Project**

Project Review: In partnership, the CCSWCD assisted a watershed farm land owner to finalize their application for the installation of a water and sediment control basin (WASCOB). The project will be funded, in part, by the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) Conservation Kick Program. The City of Auburn invested the required cost share for the grant award to be 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 (*17,258 'water quality credits' will be generated by the practice installation. This reflects an estimated 17,721 pounds of nitrogen and 1,262.5 pounds of total phosphorus reductions over the course of the project period.*)

Project Update: Project partners finalized contract details. Seneca County Soil and Water Conservation District Engineer and Auburn Director of Municipal Utilities are reviewing the final WASCOB design for approval.

- **Partnership with Crystal Creek Organics**

Project Review: On February 4th, the OLWMC offered its endorsement of a small grant proposal composed by Crystal Creek Organics to continue testing efficiencies, nutrient removals, and byproducts from its manure phosphorus removal technology. Crystal Creek Organics' operation, positioned at Spruce Haven Farms within the Owasco Lake watershed, has processed nearly 500,000 gallons of manure over the last several years.

- **NRCS RCPP**

Project Review: The OLWMC will plan to submit a revised project proposal through the Natural Resources Conservation Service Regional Conservation Partnership Program (NRCS RCPP). We are retooling last year's NRCS RCPP proposal, according to review comments, to request federal funding intended to help build upon the CCSWCDs' exemplary work towards conservation farm planning and BMP implementation within the Owasco Lake watershed. The proposed project would help build local capacity for certified farm planning within the watershed, a prospect intended to increase efficiencies for local agriculture to benefit both farmers and watershed conservation.

- DEC Buffer in a Bag Program Update

The Buffer in a Bag program provides organizations and private landowners with free tree and shrub seedlings to help establish or improve a stream buffer on their property. The 2022 application period is open from February 10th until 3:00 p.m. on April 11th. For more information and to apply, visit: <https://www.dec.ny.gov/animals/77710.html#Bag>

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. Over the course of the last two months, all remaining municipalities were prompted with a request call, and directorship request letters, template resolutions, presentations, and relevant maps were subsequently delivered.

Project Update: The Town of Genoa tabled the topic discussion at their February 9th meeting. At that meeting they resolved to offer an annual financial commitment to our efforts, and will revisit a resolution offer directorship in the future. We remain hopeful that the Town of Skaneateles will resolve among their board to join us as a director, and we welcome their commitment to attendance at monthly OLWMC board meetings.

HABs

- The NYHABS link will be unavailable until the 2022 monitoring season begins in May 2022. We look forward to an update on HABs report training by the NYSDEC to ensure partners and volunteers properly identify and report HABs occurrences in 2022.

Prepared by Adam Effler, March 11, 2022