



## Owasco Lake Watershed Management Council (OLWMC)

November 16, 2021, 10:00am – Director’s Summary

### **Staff Office Location**

- OLWMC staff have finalized their move to a unified commercial office space located at 6073 West Lake Road (Fleming), Auburn, NY 13021.
  - According to the original Three Party Agreement between the City of Auburn, Town of Owasco, and Cayuga County pertaining to the development of the OLWMC, Cayuga County committed to providing office space to inspection program staff. We’ve requested that Cayuga County consider the provision of OLWMC staff office space as part of their 2022 budget year.

### **Owasco Lake Watershed Inspection and Protection Division (OLWIPD)**

- Recruitment of a new secondary Watershed Inspector is underway.
- The OLWIPD has been responding to, and offering watershed community guidance for, recent flood damage throughout the watershed. The Division has been assisting with problem-solving and offering recommendations for remediation measures. Furthermore, the OLWIPD has outlined pre-winter construction site stabilization recommendations associated with observations in the field. These recommendations will be made public within the OLWMC’s November feature article with the Citizen newspaper. Municipal officials are encouraged to continue to draw upon support from the OLWIPD, as part of Planning Board construction site planning activities.
- OLWIPD staff will be participating in a sediment and erosion control workshop offered by the Cayuga County Soil and Water Conservation District (CCSWCD) in 2022.

### **HABs**

- The 2021 HABs reporting and notification season has ended. The NYHABS link will be unavailable until the 2022 monitoring season begins in May 2022.

### **Projects, Planning, and Programming**

- An Emerson Park volunteer rain garden installation was proposed to meet the following goals.
  - Establish Lake Friendly Rain garden project near the Owasco Lake shoreline using native plants to promote reducing fertilizers and pesticides
  - Start with a small project to demonstrate an attractive alternative to higher maintenance lawns
  - Develop community visibility and volunteer involvement

- Demonstrate community organizational collaboration towards natural resource protection

The October 23<sup>rd</sup> planting event attracted community involvement and volunteerism for beautifying Emerson Park and demonstrated a recommended practice for capturing runoff and settling sediments. Raingardens are considered ‘green infrastructure’ practices. Green infrastructure is a recommended strategy within multiple watershed and lake management plans. 100 selected native and wet-tolerant plants were planted in a 500 ft<sup>2</sup> area. The OLWMC thanks its project partners, including the Owasco Watershed Lake Association (OWLA), Cayuga County Parks and Trails, Wegmans Food Markets, and the community volunteers that committed their time and assistance.

- Hyfi watercourse level sensors well-tracked tributary levels during recent storm activity and remain a recommended data source for flood monitoring, asset management, and advancing the flow component of watershed modeling to support various planning process and decision-making. The OLWMC and its partners would need to consider the provision funding to maintain the sensors and associated data beyond 2022.
  - The OLWMC has 14 sensors installed 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. With project support from OLWMC staff, OWLA’s 2021 sediment and nutrient sampling program aligned with sensor locations. The ultimate project goal is to provide invaluable loading information for continued calibration of the SWAT model from both level, and thereby discharge, information and suspended solids and nutrient concentration information. OWLA completed the fall sampling program and associated project data will be shared with the Cayuga County Planning Department for continued calibration of the SWAT model.
- The OLWMC offers partnership and support for the City of Auburn’s NYS-awarded Drinking Water Source Protection Program (DWSP2). The working group is identifying objectives and considering calculating 9 Element Watershed Plan project cost estimates to prepare for associated grant proposals. We look forward to relevant data outcomes that will support forthcoming grants and projects implementation.
- This fall, OLWMC staff are planning to assist the Tompkins County Soil and Water Conservation District with sediment sock installations along exposed ditches in Tompkins County. Sediment socks are considered temporary measures for reducing erosion and stabilizing sediments.
- We await guidance and project funding opportunities from Cayuga County and NYS according to a completed and approved 9E Watershed Plan.
- OLWMC staff and volunteers from OWLA continue to make progress installing lake friendly signage throughout the watershed. The signage project drives consistent messaging towards watershed conservation, is associated with the OLWMC’s pledge campaign, and is consistent with common messaging for past and future projects.
- On November 5, 2021, OLWMC staff toured The Nature Conservancy’s recent 161-acre land acquisition in the town of Sempronius within the Owasco Lake watershed. Stewardship of the property will help protect public water supplies and safeguard riparian buffers and wetlands. TNC is considering transferring this property for ownership and watershed stewardship by the OLWMC. The property is currently being monitored by TNC and is closed to the public.

## **Grants and Programs**

- In partnership, the CCSWCD is assisting a watershed farmer in finalizing their application for the installation of a conservation practice according to the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) Conservation Kick Program. OLWMC staff have helped guide progress for this project, and the City of Auburn has invested the required cost share for the grant award. Project funding will meet the implementation costs of installing a water and sediment control basin (WASCOB) on a selected farmer's property.
- The OLWMC will resubmit a project proposal through the Natural Resource Conservation Service's (NRCS's) Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) to drive federal funding towards our efforts to advance watershed farm planning for improved soil health and resource conservation. Representatives from the American Water Works Association (AWWA) will offer proposal preparation support.

## **Watershed Rules and Regulations Update Project**

- New York State (NYS) has not provided a specific timeline for the ad hoc agencies to convene and complete their review. The official response from the NYS Department of Health (DOH), prepared in response to repeated inquiries about process/timing, did indicate that the agencies would consider the content and recommendations from the ongoing 9E Watershed Plan and City of Auburn DWSP2, upon the completion of those planning exercises. In recent months, a variety of local and greater NYS resolutions and advocacy letters have been delivered to the DOH and other state officials.

## **Buy-In**

- 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, Genoa, Dryden, Skaneateles, and Lansing; 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, November 12, 2021**