



Owasco Lake Watershed Management Council (OLWMC)

December 17, 2024- Director's Summary

Watershed Rules and Regulations

Project Review:

The Watershed Rules and Regulations (WRR) Workgroup was a state-local partnership consisting of representatives from five New York State agencies, 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 New York State Department of Health (NYSDOH) in December 2020. NYSDOH project updates are posted on the OLWMC's website (<https://www.olwmc.org/projects>).

The NYSDOH has indicated that it does not have the authority from the legislature to create nutrient management regulations for the Owasco Lake watershed. Specifically, the NYSDOH indicated that when the Agricultural Environmental Management (AEM) program was established, nutrient management on farms became the sole responsibility of the NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets (NYSDAM).

The City of Auburn, Town of Owasco, and Owasco Watershed Lake Association (OWLA) filed an Article 78 petition with NYS, seeking to clarify whether the NYSDOH has the right to regulate nutrient management practices under updated Owasco Lake Watershed Rules and Regulations. Article 78 is a petition that challenges the actions of administrative agencies and other government bodies. The lawsuit contends that the laws cited do not firmly establish that the NYSDAM's authority concerning nutrient management supersedes the NYSDOH's responsibility to promulgate regulations for the protection of public health.

On July 22, 2024, the New York State Department of Health, Bureau of Water Supply Protection notified the City of Auburn and Town of Owasco that the Department does not intend to move forward with amendments to 10 NYCRR Part 104.1 City of Auburn and Town of Owasco Watershed Rules and Regulations. According to their letter, "following internal evaluation of the existing regulations, the Department determined that amendments are not necessary to ensure potable water quality for the foreseeable future."

Project Update:

The City of Auburn, the Town of Owasco, and OWLA filed a new lawsuit on November 22, 2024 to help ensure that NYS Department of Health fulfills its duties for protecting NYS watersheds.

The new Article 78 lawsuit responds to the NYS Department of Health's recent decision that new rules and regulations are not necessary to protect Owasco Lake drinking water, wherein New York State failed to provide data or information to support its decision to terminate the rulemaking process. The new Article 78 petition filed in the Cayuga County Supreme Court challenges the Department's decision to deny the City of Auburn and Town of Owasco's request to regulate the Owasco Lake watershed for the expressed purpose of protecting Owasco Lake's water quality. Under NYS Public Health Law, the NYS Department of Health is responsible to support the advancement of watershed rules and regulations for the protection of water supplies. The first court date has been scheduled for January 2, 2025 at 9:45 am before Judge Budelmann at the Cayuga County Courthouse.

Staff, Recognition, Awareness, Education and Outreach Project Updates

- The OLWMC's staff feature article published with the Citizen on December 13, 2024 featured road salt use and associated best practices for protecting water quality. Jesse Lloyd's article was selected as a 'top story and editor's pick.'
- The staff contribution to the Cayuga County Water Quality Management Agency newsletter was coauthored with the Cayuga County Planning Department and featured the Fillmore Nature Preserve's grand opening held on November 7, 2024.
- The OLWMC and OWLA collaborated to give a watershed protection educational booth at the Cayuga Community College Craft Fair, held from December 7-8, 2024.
- Union Springs Middle School students wrote essays about invasive species and their impacts following the OLWMC's and Cayuga County Planning Department's collaboration to educate students during the Cayuga County Soil and Water Conservation Districts 'Conservation Field Days' earlier this year.
- Staff have been engaging with a Cornell University Master of Professional Science student who plans to focus their capstone on applying communication strategies to advance water quality protection among community organizations. The student plans to develop a communication strategy to increase engagement between stakeholders and water quality managers. The student plans to consider land use activities, current inter-agency coordination, and externalities to map out a benchmark.
- Staff will be presenting at the March 8, 2025 Bob Brower scientific symposium, featuring topics including 9E implementation and OLWIPD roles and public services.

Nine Element Watershed Plan (9EP)

Project Review:

- Cayuga County received a New York State Department of State grant to implement a high priority recommendation from the 2016 Owasco Lake Watershed Management and Waterfront Revitalization Plan, which was to incorporate the EPA Nine Key Elements. This project was led by the Cayuga County Department of Planning and Economic Development and the consultant on the project was Ecologic, LLC. The Owasco Lake Watershed Nine Element Plan for Phosphorus Reduction (9EP) was approved by the New York State Department of State and the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (https://www.dec.ny.gov/docs/water_pdf/owasco9e.pdf). This Clean Water Plan advances efforts to restore and protect the water quality of Owasco Lake and its watershed. This

collaborative effort identified focused strategies to help ensure the lake water supply, aquatic habitat, and recreational uses are protected. The development of the plan focused on understanding and managing phosphorus and sediment inputs from the Owasco Lake watershed to provide for recommendations to drive watershed protection and remediation projects. The OLWMC is providing a coordination role for future projects and programming, according to the recommendations of the 9EP.

- The OLWMC’s 9E Project Coordination Committee (via Resolution 03-2022 at its November 15, 2022 public board meeting) prioritizes, coordinates, and facilitates project and programming implementation based on the recommendations of the 9EP. Partnering agencies and organizations convene on a semi-monthly basis to advance 9EP goals. As part of the group’s 2023 work plan, the Committee discussed next steps and a phased approach towards preparing project proposals and fundraising for watershed streams inventorying and engineering planning in 2024 to direct stream restoration projects between 2024-2025, for funding tributary monitoring between 2024-2025, and for developing an Owasco Lake Watershed Agriculture Program (OLWAP) similar to what was created for the Skaneateles Lake watershed.
- The following grant proposal was submitted and funded in response to NYS grant program solicitations in the summer of 2023, and targets the highest phosphorus contributing landscape/acre within the Owasco Lake Watershed, as documented in the 9EP:
 1. The City of Auburn submitted a NYS non-point non-agricultural planning grant proposal to assess stream corridors including for Sucker and Veness Brooks, as well as other small tributaries within the prioritized Owasco Lake HUC 12 subwatershed at the northern end of the lake.
 - a. The City of Auburn’s NYS non-point non-agricultural planning grant proposal was awarded \$75,000.
 - b. The Finger Lakes Land Trust (FLLT), a member of the 9E Coordination Committee, will help leverage synergies between their recently NYS-awarded \$1,240,000 for Land Acquisition to Protect Owasco Lake, which targets protections of the Sucker Brook wetland, and the City of Auburn’s NYS-awarded \$75,000 for stream corridor assessments in the Owasco Lake HUC12 subwatershed, which includes Sucker Brook. Restored streambanks and wetland corridors are ranking criteria for FLLT while targeting land acquisitions to create protected preserves and easements.
 - c. The City of Auburn is developing its grant contract with NYS.
 - d. The 9E committee is considering replicating this project for priority subwatersheds, understanding that stream corridor assessments will provide a pathway for funding related stream restoration projects.
- The 9E Coordination Committee is supporting capacity building for local organizations to provide the programming necessary for the watershed agricultural industry to advance best management practice (BMP) implementation at the rate recommended by the NYS approved 9EP. The Committee composed and submitted a proposal for NYS to fund the development of a focused OLWAP that would leverage the existing tiered Agricultural Environmental

Management (AEM) program. Committee members met with NYS Officials on January 25, 2024 to discuss official sponsorship of the proposed program under the NYS 2024 budget.

- \$500,000 was included within the Senate one house budget for the 9E Coordination Committee's proposed OLWAP.
 - Ultimately, the OLWAP was not funded within the 2024 NYS budget.
- The Committee updated the 9E Plan's implementation checklist to track the status of associated programming and projects implementation.

Project Update:

- The 9E Coordination Committee will be developing a 2024 report to feature the 9EP projects and programs that have been advanced over the course of the last year.
- The committee continues to advance ongoing grant projects and programming and has scheduled its next meeting for January 22, 2024.

Watershed Lake and Tributary Monitoring

2024 Projects Review

The Cayuga County Planning Department developed 2024 lake and watershed monitoring and implementation priorities in the context of annual Finger Lakes Lake Ontario Watershed Protection Alliance (FOLLOWPA) funding. Their overall 2024 workplan, approved by the NYSDEC, includes monitoring the tributaries in the Owasco Lake Watershed to collect data that can be used for updating the 9EP SWAT for Owasco Lake. Cornell University ran SWAT scenarios for a 20% reduction in phosphorus loading to the lake to simulate the effects of expanded nutrient management Planning Tier 3 or equivalent, restricted applications of fertilizer and manure in areas that abut streams, and the implementation of cover crops. A MEANSS approach was used to estimate relocating septic systems within 100 feet of surface waters.

Two of the tributary sampling sites are also being used to collect baseline data for the OLWMC's "Owasco Lake Watershed Critical Streams Restoration Project" funded by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation – Sustain Our Great Lakes (SOGL) program.

The following additional details were provided by the Department in the spring of 2024, concerning their support for 2024 monitoring initiatives:

□ *FOLLOWPA funds in 2024 will be used for the installation and implementation of BMPs by SWCD, the O&M for the USGS Owasco Inlet Gage, CSLAP for OWLA, Duck Lake Association and Lake Como Association, OWLA Tributary Sampling Program, Owasco Watershed Data Portal, public outreach and education on invasive species and water quality, aquatic vegetation harvesting, O&M of the boat cleaning station at Emerson Park, support for the septic system inspection program and updating and utilizing the SWAT model.*

- *The Quality Assurance Project Plan for the OWLA Tributary Monitoring Program*

funded by the FLOWPA and Cayuga County has been approved by the NYSDEC. Training for the samplers occurred on April 10th.

- *FLOWPA funds will also be used for Nick Colas to update and utilize the SWAT Model. The final report from last year's work is available on the 9E Plan website.*
- *Cayuga County will fund the buoy in Owasco Lake. FLOWPA funds were used last year to create a data portal that contains the buoy data and historical data from John Halfman. FLOWPA funds will be used this year to add more data to that portal.*
- *The County is funding the CSI Tributary Monitoring Program and the CSI HABs Monitoring Program, and contracts are in process.*

The Department has made the Owasco Lake Watershed SWAT Model Report available on their website. Here's a summary of report features:

- *A recommended practice in the Owasco Lake Watershed 9E Plan was to update watershed SWAT Model with new data and information including hydrologic data files. Cayuga County utilized Finger Lake-Lake Ontario Watershed Protection Alliance (FLOWPA) funds to enhance and update the Soil and Water Assessment Tool (SWAT) nutrient loading model that provides a quantitative framework for the Owasco Lake Watershed planning process and guides the prioritization of projects for implementation. The model was used to analyze three scenarios. These three scenarios were grassed waterways, grade stabilization structures and streambank stabilization. This work was performed in accordance with an approved NYSDEC QAPP.*
- *Doctorate Assistant Professors from SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry (SUNY ESF) provided processing and analyses in-kind for both tributary and lake data collected from recent years.*
 - *Associated topics of discussion have included the want to fund and install tributary flow monitoring sensors that track flow to generate nutrient proxy loading, as well as small weather stations to better constrain how localized storms drive nutrient inputs. The proposal would include the delivery of real-time data to the internet, as part of a long-term strategy for early warning capabilities for HAB-likely conditions. There is a National Science Foundation grant solicitation that should be opening soon, which may represent a potential collaboration.*
- *There have been growing concerns and community outreach regarding lake foam that collects on and near the shoreline this time of year. In partnership, the City of Auburn Municipal Utilities Department created a purchase order under professional services for a single lab analysis by Global Aquatic Research (GAR) to sample lake foam this year; GAR planned to perform specialized laboratory analysis of a single foam sample on Owasco Lake for emerging lake contaminants Per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS). GAR researchers planned to collect a foam sample on Sunday, November 10, 2024. They started at the north end and found foam but not enough to get an adequate sample. They need 6-8 liters of foam volumetrically, which collapses into 600-800 milliliters of a water sample. The field team embarked on a second sampling trip on November 13, 2024 and again were unable to collect a sample.*

- OLWMC staff are working with GAR to include Owasco Lake within their upcoming Water Resources Institute grant submission. The pre-proposal was due Nov. 22, and if they are awarded funding, they will be sampling next year. Owasco, Seneca, Keuka, and Skaneateles are all included within the project proposal. There is one sampling trip to each lake proposed during 2025, and GAR would quantify PFAS concentrations and a few water quality parameters in foam, the surface microlayer, and lake water. The overarching purpose is to understand how PFAS partitions between these phases, which impacts both monitoring and routes of exposure. This will also establish a baseline that partners can build on in future work. A secondary project feature proposed would be to implement in Owasco Lake the foam reporting tool that was developed with the Canandaigua Lake Watershed Association ([Canandaigua Lake Foam Survey](#)). This will involve coordinating with and training citizen scientists to use the tool. After sampling and data collection is complete, a stakeholders meeting would be scheduled in Fall/Winter 2025-2026, and representatives from all four lakes (as well as Canandaigua Lake) would be included. The team would use this meeting to consider the impact of the project on management strategies, public outreach, and next steps. The OLWMC provided a letter of support for the collaborative grant proposal.

Owasco Lake Tributary Monitoring Project Update:

- The Cayuga County Planning Department drafted a data usability assessment report (DUAR) and final 2024 tributary monitoring project report for review among partners and submittal for further review and approval by the NYSDEC.
- SUNY ESF professors and students are interested in characterizing the relationship between freshwater sponges and various water quality parameters in New York, including in the Finger Lakes Region. Their proposed project includes the determination of where the sponges currently exist, and the development of an outreach component to train community members on sponge identification for help with their search. OLWMC staff and OWLA volunteers are considering providing support for the research project on Owasco Lake.

NYS-awarded Drinking Water Source Protection Program (DWSP2)

Project Review:

- Consultants for the City of Auburn's NYS-awarded Drinking Water Source Protection Program (DWSP2) worked with City of Auburn water resource managers and partners to identify potential sources of Owasco Lake water quality contamination and provide recommendations for resource protection. The DWSP2 committee reviewed and edited the draft plan. A refined draft of the City of Auburn's DWSP2 was delivered from the contracted consultant to the City of Auburn and circulated among the project committee. The City of Auburn approved of the plan. The local group awaits final plan approval from NYSDEC and NYSDOH to move forward on plan implementation and associated project(s) proposal(s) development. The Town of Owasco received consultant support through NYS to develop its DWSP2. The sixth Town of Owasco DWSP2 group meeting held on October 12, 2023 hosted

a final review and discussion among local partners involved in development of the proposed plan. The consultants involved in the project have finalized and delivered the plan to NYS agencies for their review and approval. The local group awaits final plan approval from NYSDEC and NYSDOH to move forward on plan implementation and associated project(s) proposal(s) development.

- Based on NYS’s decision to terminate amendments to 10 NYCRR Part 104.1 City of Auburn and Town of Owasco Watershed Rules and Regulations, the amendments being a recommendation included within the draft City of Auburn DWSP2, that feature was removed from the plan, allowing the plan to move forward to completion. The project Community Advisory Group met with project consultants on August 14, 2024 to review final details of the draft plan.
- The project Community Advisory Group is finalizing changes to the DWSP2 for transmittal to, and approval by, NYS. Among other recent changes, the group is including the Owasco Lake Watershed Agricultural Program concept within the proposed plan for the prospect of NYS funding the farmer-driven program in coming years.

Municipal Codes and Ordinances

Project Review:

- Proposed erosion and sediment control ordinances concerning new construction activities were prepared for OLWMC directing municipalities for their independent board review and consideration for adoption.
 - The Village of Moravia adopted the Sediment and Erosion Control Plan, and associated Appendix E, prepared and proposed by the OLWMC for advancing municipal control requirements for new construction activities.
 - The Town of Fleming reviewed the proposed ordinances and concluded that they already have adequate protections in place concerning new construction activities as part of an existing overlay district.

Harmful Algal Blooms (HABs) Identification and Programming:

Review:

This year, HABs have been observed statewide, with many reports generated within the Finger Lakes Region. Climate change, nutrient pollution, and invasive species are considered important drivers for HABs development. Regional advocates, watershed organizations, and municipalities call for stricter regulations and enforcement of nutrient pollution entering the Finger Lakes. Governor Kathy Hochul recently committed an investment of 42 million dollars to the newly formed Eastern Finger Lakes Coalition of Districts to enhance Finger Lakes water quality. The funds are intended to help farmers manage stormwater runoff and associated pollution.

Update:

The 2024 HABs reporting and notification season has ended. The New York Harmful Algal Bloom System (NYHABS) link will be unavailable until the 2025 season begins in May.

Land Holdings

Fillmore Nature Preserve Project Review:

- Fillmore Nature Preserve is a 161-acre property that is critical for protecting water quality in Owasco Lake, which provides drinking water to more than 70% of Cayuga County. A study by The Nature Conservancy ranked the property within the top 10 parcels in the Owasco Lake watershed with the greatest impact on water quality. The land includes diverse forests and approximately 40 acres of freshwater wetlands. It is located near the birthplace of President Millard Fillmore and Fillmore Glen State Park.
- The OLWMC closed on the property transfer from The Nature Conservancy (TNC) on January 10, 2023, and established the Fillmore Nature Preserve. Fillmore Nature Preserve property boundary signage was installed by OLWMC staff with the help of TNC on March 8, 2023. The associated field trip accommodated the first annual property inspection to meet the OLWMC's annual property inspection commitment.
- On May 22, 2023, student conservation work at the Fillmore Nature Preserve was one of the activities included as part of Moravia High School 'Moravia Gives Back Day.' Students collected litter along the roadway adjacent to the preserve, pulled invasive species, and identified species to inform a conservation database. Moravia High School students were the first to assess biodiversity at the preserve.
- \$9,117 was approved by the Fred L. Emerson Foundation for the OLWMC, specifically towards implementing the *Fillmore Nature Preserve- Conservation Education Kiosk, Access Lot, and Trail Network* project, as detailed in the OLWMC's project proposal dated September 14, 2023. The grant proposal was funded to create a public access lot and educational kiosk at the nature preserve.
 - The gravel lot provides public access to the land preserve for respectful use of its trails for hiking. The Towns of Moravia and Summerhill hauled gravel to build the public access lot. The Town of Owasco provided labor in-kind for creating the public access lot. The Owasco Watershed Lake Association (OWLA) committed \$500 of compost and wildflower seed for the creation of a perennial pollinator wildflower garden adjacent to the lot; the event acted as an OLWMC/OWLA collaborative Lake Friendly Living public event that was held May 25, 2024. The kiosk will provide educational information about the land preserve concerning its purpose.
- The OLWMC applied for, and received, program support for the creation and posting of trails within the Fillmore Nature Preserve; a Cornell University program called Design Connect accepted a request for mapping and identifying trails. They offered two project managers who acted as primary project managers along with a team of 5-10 students.
 - Cornell's Design Connect program team held a field trip at the Fillmore Nature Preserve on February 28, 2024 and again on March 16, 2024 to assess the conditions and locations of the existing trail network and gather information for mapping and marking trails. Their team conducted draft mock-ups of color schemes and themes of potential trail signage, and designed panels for the educational kiosk.
 - Cornell's Design Connect worked with the OLWMC on trail map and educational kiosk panel revisions.
- The OLWMC responded to an offer for project support by the Partners for Regional Invasive Species Management (PRISM) and proposed for a plant inventory, including for both

terrestrial invasive and sensitive native species, at the Fillmore Nature Preserve. The proposal included a request for plant pictures and blurbs for inclusion on the educational kiosk that will be constructed there.

- The Finger Lakes Partners for Regional Invasive Species Management (PRISM) Crew Assistance Program (CAP) accepted the OLWMC proposal to work on a Fillmore Nature Preserve project this summer. From July 8-10, 2024 PRISM conducted the proposed 'species of interest' inventory at the Fillmore Nature Preserve, focusing on the identification of invasives species that exist there.
- With the help of CC Planning for the submission of an additional application through PRISM, the OLWMC applied for a 'boot brush station' to be installed with the educational kiosk to support visitor education and efforts to reduce the spread of invasive species.
- PRISM 'boot brush station' signage was designed for inclusion adjacent to the educational kiosk.
- As recorded in the meeting minutes from its August 8, 2024 board meeting, the Town of Owasco formally committed to a mutual aid agreement for assisting with property maintenance, when available, at the preserve.
 - During the weeks of August 5, 2024 and August 12, 2024, Town and OLWMC staff collaborated on clearing trees from the trail networks there.
- On September 25, 2024, the perennial garden installed around the perimeter of the public access lot was overseeded to improve establishment and limit the competition of nuisance weeds. Preserve signage was also installed.
- Construction of the kiosk and boot brush station took place, starting October 15 and was completed on October 17, 2024.
- The grant final report was submitted on October 21, 2024.
- The grand opening was held November 7, 2024 with promotional support provided by CC Chamber of Commerce, CC Water Quality Management Agency (WQMA), and the Citizen Newspaper.

Fillmore Nature Preserve Project Update:

On December 10, 2024 additional signage was installed to better guide visitors to the trail system.

Other Potential OLWMC Acquisitions Review:

- On June 14, 2023, the NYSDEC announced that New York State, in partnership with The Nature Conservancy, permanently protected two environmentally sensitive parcels of open space in Cayuga County. A 203-acre addition to Fillmore Glen State Park in Moravia and 72 acres of forested wetlands in Venice were preserved. Both projects were funded through the State Department of Environmental Conservation's Water Quality Improvement Project program to protect the water quality in Owasco Lake Watershed.
- TNC has expressed interest in having the OLWMC own and steward two properties poised for preservation within the Owasco Lake watershed. TNC will present these acquisitions to the OLWMC Board for ownership and stewardship consideration. The acquisitions include:
 - 72-acre parcel in Venice, dense wetland

- 100-acre parcel in Groton, mixed farmland

Additional Partner Land Acquisitions/Targets Review:

- Under 2023 Round 19 of the Water Quality Improvement Projects (WQIP) Grant, the Fingers Lakes Land Trust, Inc. (FLLT) received \$1,240,000 for Land Acquisition to Protect Owasco Lake. FLLT will work with landowners and partners in the Owasco Lake watershed to permanently protect approximately 500 acres through direct acquisition and the use of perpetual conservation easements. The program will focus on conservation and stewardship efforts to protect Owasco Lake. The proposed program grant will provide FLLT an opportunity to create a new nature preserve on the Sucker Brook wetland, one the largest remaining natural wetlands in the region and conserve additional lands throughout the Owasco Lake Watershed.

Federal and NYS Grant Projects and Funding

NFWF SOGL Project Review:

- A National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) Sustain Our Great Lakes (SOGL) funding proposal was developed in partnership with CCSWCD and EA Engineering, targeting stream restoration along the Owasco Inlet. Proposed project partners also included the Cayuga County Planning Department, the Owasco Watershed Lake Association (OWLA), and SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry. Based on a successful pre-proposal the OLWMC submitted a full project proposal for Owasco Inlet streambank restoration project sites between Booth Hill Road and Cat Path Road in the Town of Locke. Landowners who reside along the targeted reaches have expressed concern about severe streambank erosion in those areas.
 - Total Amount Requested: \$299,640.00
 - Matching Contributions Proposed: \$100,360.00
- The OLWMC was awarded \$457,839.92 from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) Sustain Our Great Lakes (SOGL) program for the *Owasco Lake Watershed Critical Streams Restoration Project*.
- In February, 2024 CCSWCD delivered mailers to the landowners who have adjacent properties along our targeted reach of the Owasco Inlet, and CCSWCD gained early approvals for four out of five sites.
- EA Engineering and CCSWCD conducted a March 25, 2024 field trip to record baseline conditions, channel types, and to evaluate parcel access. CCSWCD and EA staff spoke with adjacent landowners and discussed survey needs for project modeling and design.
- EA Engineering held a field visit on April 9, 2024 (Task 2) when they collected site data, conducted a drone flyover, and identified plant/aquatic species as observed. The project team identified a laboratory to run project soil samples.
- EA Engineering, navigated the environmental permitting process and design, in preparation for project implementation during the 2025 field season. They completed drafts of the NEPA, ESA, and NHPA compliance forms and submitted them to the NFWF.
- EA Engineering developed a computer-aided design (CAD) model for the project. Additionally, they started utilizing a hydrologic model to estimate flow conditions that will

inform their project designs. The one-dimensional model utilizes geometry and flow inputs (i.e., using historic USGS gauge data) and will output velocities and water surface elevations. This information is helping the engineering firm recommend materials and placements to the Cayuga County Soil and Water Conservation District (CCSWCD), which is contracted for project implementation.

- The project team met on August 9, 2024 to review preliminary design recommendations. EA Engineering screened the stabilization alternatives for Sites 1-6. Each site has stationed cross-sections where the channel velocities and shear stresses were calculated for the 2-year and 100-year flow events.
- Of the alternatives where the permissible shear stress/velocity is within an acceptable range, CCSWCD informed the designers of which bioengineering alternatives they would like EA Engineering to focus on incorporating into the design. In response, CCSWCD shared a variety of nature-based stabilization techniques that they recommend and are comfortable using for streambank stabilization projects.
- The project team received regulatory approvals from the US Fish and Wildlife Service to submit for project reimbursements and, ultimately, get underway with construction.
- An additional project update report was submitted, as required, to the NFWF on November 11, 2024.

NFWF SOGL Project Update:

- The existing conditions and 30% design set are complete and were submitted to CCSWCD and OLWMC staff in October 2024 for review. The digital elevation model and HEC-RAS modeling and verification were submitted during 30% design phase.
- Additional surveying work was completed by CCSWCD on November 8, 2024, as required to work towards the 60% engineering design set. The 60% design set, that includes new features based on feedback from the CCSWCD, is underway and expected for review on December 20, 2024.
- EA Engineering is developing the required NYSDEC and US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) project permit application package, which includes the Nationwide Permit 13, 27 and 401 water quality certifications.

NYS Funding Update:

- A OLWMC letter of support was prepared and delivered for Finger Lakes PRISM's proposal to continue to administer the Finger Lakes PRISM program, an approximate four-year contract with NYSDEC.
- On December 11, 2024 the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) released for public review and comment draft eligibility guidelines to implement funding under the Clean Water, Clean Air and Green Jobs Environmental Bond Act of 2022 (Bond Act).
- The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) announced \$15 million is now available through the new Community Reforestation (CoRe) Grant Program to expand, restore, and create urban forested natural areas. The funding helps fulfill the 2024

State of the State “25 Million Trees Initiative” launched by Governor Hochul to recognize the importance of trees and forests for climate resiliency and community health. The State of the State commitment included a \$15 million appropriation for competitive grants supporting resilient reforestation.

NYS Recognition and Relevant Bills

Project Review:

- NYS Senator Rachel May and Assemblymember Anna Kelles honored the Lake Friendly Living Coalition through the presentation of a NYS proclamation commemorating the Finger Lakes’ Community Celebration of Lake Friendly Living in May, 2024.
- On the morning of June 14, 2024 participants were invited to Ventosa Vineyards, Geneva, to join those from across the region who care deeply about the health of the Finger Lakes and to make connections and learn about proposed NYS legislation aimed at mitigating environmental threats therein. The legislators shared information about the following proposed bills they are cosponsoring to address Harmful Algal Blooms, the discharge of per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) into our waterways, and other conservation efforts:
 - The **New York Open Water Data Act (Senate 239E/Assembly 3299A)** would enable better water governance statewide by asking water-related agencies to come together to create a common set of water data standards for the state and a public-facing interface where such data can be shared, viewed, and used by interested parties.
 - The **Harmful Algal Bloom (HABs) Monitoring and Prevention Act (Senate 8356/Assembly 8867A)** would develop and maintain a comprehensive state ‘clearinghouse’ to bring together existing and new available statewide cross-sectional and longitudinal data and information on harmful algal blooms, potential and known causes, best practice interventions, expertise, and funding resources. These data and the subsequent report would enable the state to effectively and efficiently administer a grant program supporting data-driven best practices in prevention and mitigation of harmful algal blooms.
 - The **PFAS Discharge Disclosure Act (Senate 227B/Assembly 3296)** would require those proposing to discharge pollutants into New York’s waterways disclose whether their existing or proposed discharges contain PFAS.
 - The **Biosolids Spreading Ban (Assembly Bill A8317)** would prohibit the sale or land application of biosolids from wastewater treatment facilities unless such biosolids are treated and tested to not exceed the maximum contaminant levels established in the public health law.

Project Update:

NYS Senator Rachel May and Assemblymember Anna Kelles provided an update on the status of legislative bills during the Cayuga Lake Watershed Intermunicipal meeting held the evening of November 20, 2024.

Finger Lakes Watershed Steward act (S7627/A8073): This bill will be redrafted to address the watershed rules and regulations issues for Owasco Lake Watershed.

PFAS disclosure act (S227/A3296): The US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has determined that there exists no safe level of PFAS, and legislators are proceeding with legislation to require a clear and concise procedure for testing of PFAS in wastewater discharges. This will require operators with a SPDES permit to disclose measured PFAS levels with the public.

Harmful algal bloom monitoring and prevention act (S8356/A8867): This bill is under revision and awaiting multi-agency feedback

Finger Lakes Commission (S7628): Legislators are discontinuing this bill with plans to prepare more comprehensive language for inclusion under the ‘watershed steward act.’

Protection for C streams (S1725/A4601): This bill has passed both houses over the last couple of years, only to be vetoed by the governor. Legislators are not pursuing this bill in the 2025 legislative session.

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, and Skaneateles.

Monthly Summary Prepared by Adam Effler, December 13, 2024