



## Owasco Lake Watershed Management Council (OLWMC)

October 20th, 2020, 10:00am – Director’s Summary

### 1. HABs reporting

As of October 16th, 2020 at 10:00am, according to NYHABs, the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation’s (NYSDEC’s) Harmful Algal Bloom (HAB) reporting system, there were 52 HAB reports archived for Owasco Lake more than two weeks old, but reported this year, and 1 HAB report within the last two weeks. The HABs surveillance program is winding down for 2020.

### 2. Regulations

#### ○ Watershed Rules and Regulations

The current phase on the Watershed Rules and Regulations revision project is a final review via a joint meeting by City of Auburn and Town of Owasco before the updated regulatory recommendations can be finalized and delivered to NYS agencies for their review and consideration for approval. In collaboration with the Cayuga County Planning Department, the City and Town have scheduled the meeting for October 29<sup>th</sup> at 5pm to be held in Auburn City Hall Council Chambers. Unfortunately, due to pandemic meeting restrictions, this meeting will need to be closed to in-person participation by the general public, however, the meeting will be streamed live via the Zoom web teleconference platform, and members of the public that would like to participate in the meeting may do so via teleconference. Please note that the Agriculture and Lakeshore Property Owner Stakeholder Groups, as well as other interested agencies and stakeholders, are being notified of the meeting via email and invited to participate remotely via the teleconference option.

#### ○ 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 implementation of preventive measures.

Directors were requested to bring these documents to their municipalities to start the discussion and public process for the adoption of new ordinances. Feedback from municipal level discussions for adopting new sediment and erosion control ordinances is welcomed.

- New York State Tributary Regulations

NY Assembly Bill: A08349 passed in the NYS Assembly earlier this year, has gone through committee, and the bill passed the NYS Senate (NY Senate Bill: S05612) on July 21st. It was returned to, and passed with, the Assembly. Finally, the Governor will have to sign it for it to become law. We are watching the progress of this bill closely and have been strong advocates of the process through engagement with local and regional government representatives. With this bill signed into law, the OLWMC will have achieved the tributary permitting protections originally sought through petitioning for watershed tributary reclassification, but instead gained through regulatory protections advanced at the state level. Once signed into law, widespread Class C watershed streams will require the same protections (through project permitting) as streams with higher classifications. If this new law comes to pass, 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 very 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 developing an agenda and meeting schedule for forthcoming partner meetings that host and 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 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. During the wet weather of September 29<sup>th</sup>, the OLWIPD offered support to the NYSDEC Finger Lakes Hub with flow observations for tributaries. This guidance helped the Finger Lake's Hub team determine whether sampling was warranted due to higher flows.

- Recognition efforts

The OLWIPD's September recognition article, published September 25<sup>th</sup>, 2020 with the Citizen, spotlighted the efforts of Camp Casowasco, a local youth camp, that voluntarily took actions to improve land conditions that were poised to deteriorate downstream water quality. These actions including bank and soils stabilization efforts downstream of a failed dam structure as well as downstream velocity controls. Camp staff expressed the spiritual connection between camp visitors, Owasco Lake, and the surrounding lands. Please find the full article here: [https://auburnpub.com/lifestyles/camp-casowasco-connecting-spiritual-experiences-with-lake-protection/article\\_ad6ce0d7-708c-547c-8188-](https://auburnpub.com/lifestyles/camp-casowasco-connecting-spiritual-experiences-with-lake-protection/article_ad6ce0d7-708c-547c-8188-)

[fde8d41f45c8.html](#). The article was also featured in the September WQMA newsletter for which the OLWIPD providing assistance with editing and organization.

o Signage

- The Owasco Lake Watershed Management Council's OLWIPD is working closely with the Owasco Watershed Lake Association (OWLA) to rollout a variety of signage projects in the near term. The organizations are cost-sharing 'lake friendly living signs' and 'no dumping-drains to lake' storm drain medallions to be placed in Villages Groton and Moravia and the Hamlet of Locke. The OLWIPD has inventoried storm drains throughout the watershed to prioritize those to receive medallions and has communicated with municipal/highway officials for approvals for installations; most of the storm drain medallions will be installed with the assistance of volunteers in partnership with both OWLA and local Boy Scouts Troop 11. On October 6, local Boy Scout Troop 11 volunteered and supported the OLWIPD with the installation of storm drain 'do not dump' medallions in Moravia. An October 7<sup>th</sup> Citizen article featured this effort, highlighting volunteerism in support of water quality protection.
- In support of our collaborative 'lake-friendly living' initiative, project partners are finalizing permissions with highway superintendents (i.e., at town/village/hamlet, Cayuga County, and NYS levels) for the attachment of signage to existing and future tributary signage. In partnership, OWLA plans to distribute associated "lake friendly living" themed literature to the public in watershed as soon as possible.

o 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 used along with consistent messaging growing 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 have 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. The City of Auburn brought their resolution to adopt the pledge to their October 15<sup>th</sup> Council meeting where it carried unanimously. Thus far, I received reports from the Towns of Niles and Owasco and the Village of Moravia that all passed resolutions taking the pledge for those lands within the watershed for which they maintain ownership. They 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.

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.*

○ Recognition Articles

The OLWIPD's October feature article spotlights observations and research to-date related to the occurrence of 'Lake Foam' on Owasco Lake.

4. Tributary Level Sensors Installation Project

OLWMC partners are moving forward with the installation of tributary level sensors throughout the watershed. The partnering group, Hyfi, is finalizing securing permits and deployment schedules. They have permission to deploy sensors with Cayuga County Highway Department at five sites, the Town of Groton at 1 site, and at several locations within the Owasco Flats. Hyfi, while continuing to pursue permission for installation at three sites in Sempronius, Town of Owasco, and Tompkins County, has reached out to NYSDOT Region 3's permit specialist. NYSDOT 3 has offered Hyfi a list of questions and concerns to address as well as an initial permit application. They have reviewed their requirements and drafted responses to their inquiries; NYSDOT has indicated the need for a separate permit app for each of the 10 sites. The level sensors are in the final stages of testing, and the deployment team is eager to begin installations. Hyfi has been hard at work deploying sensors in Michigan and Ohio, building field experience and fine-tuning equipment and procedures close to home. Our timeline for deployment in New York has moved into the October/November timeframe.

5. Lakeshore Pickup Day

Julie Lockhart of OWLA is coordinating this year's nearshore garbage pickup day. This event is being promoted through OWLA membership, is sponsored by the OLWMC and will have

implementation support by the OLWIPD. The scheduled date is Saturday, November 7 with a "rain/snow date" of November 14. This is when the lake level is poised to be lower for better shoreline accessibility. The event will take place on the north end of the lake at Emerson Park and immediate vicinity, and also on the south end around the Flats. OWLA will provide garbage bags, and Baker Hughes will supply gloves. Some townships have agreed to take the garbage collected free of charge.

6. Advancements in Watershed Phosphorus Removal

Crystal Creek Organics is a consulting engineering firm that has been conducting a full-scale test of its phosphorous removal technology at Spruce Haven Farm in Union Springs, New York. The demonstration is being funded by NYSERDA, and involves the processing of 400,000 gallons of manure digester effluent. The process “mineralizes” the soluble phosphorous, converting it into a compound that is not readily available to plants, and into a large particle size that makes it less mobile in the fields once. Recently, Crystal Creek was one of 20 Finalists Selected for Round Two of the \$3 Million Grow-NY Global Food and Agriculture Business Competition. More Than 260 Startups from 27 Countries Applied to Compete in Innovative Mentoring Program. The Food and Agriculture Industry Competition is Funded through Upstate Revitalization Initiatives – CNY Rising, Finger Lakes Forward and Southern Tier Soaring – Regional Comprehensive Strategies Aimed at Revitalizing Communities and Growing the Economy. More information can be found here: <https://www.grow-ny.com/governor-cuomo-announces-20-finalists-selected-for-round-two-of-the-3-million-grow-ny-global-food-and-agriculture-business-competition/>

7. Funding Programs, OLWMC Budget, and Finances

- The OLWMC is planning to propose for a Regional Conservation Partners Program to obtain Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) funding through United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) 2018 Farm Bill. We are proposing to make whole certain NYS conservation funding categories to continue advancing capacity for restoration and water quality protection efforts within the watershed, especially concerning buffering of watershed streams and ditches. OLWMC represented municipalities were requested to estimate annual funding expenditures on ditch maintenance as part of their highway budgets, to add as in-kind match and a commitment for the federal grant proposal.
- The OLWMC finance committee met on October 6<sup>th</sup> to draft a proposed OLWMC budget for 2021. The draft budget was delivered to the board for the October meeting for any discussion and/or requests for revision so the budget can be finalized for approval this year.
- The OLWMC is currently undergoing its annual audit, required under organizational bylaws. This process increases transparency with the NYS Comptrollers Authorities Budget Office and maintains OLWMC eligibility for Federal and State grant opportunities. The OLWMC requires annual updates for IRS 990 and Char 500 to maintain pre-qualified status with state and federal grant programs.
- Having successfully built organizational credit over the course of 2019-2020, the OLWMC was approved for a line of credit increase from \$1000 to \$5000 dollars.

## 8. 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) mitigation to help protect Hemlock trees within the Owasco Lake Watershed. The first step to ultimately advance this initiative through biocontrol (e.g., beetles, top down approach) or insecticide (bottom up approach) will require Hemlock tree and HWA inventories. Our group was field-trained August 12th by CCE's 'Hemlock Hunters' and has been enrolled with the Cornell University Hemlock Initiative and its Hemlock Hunters organization. The Owasco Hemlock Hunters Team will take on the important task of surveying, as completely as time, energy, land owner permission, and weather permit, the health of Hemlocks in the ravines of the Owasco Lake Watershed. Inventorying of the HWA is led by OWLA and will start with a focus on ravine areas in the southwest Owasco Lake Watershed.
- On Wed October 7, Caroline (Carri) Marschner of the Cornell Hemlock Hunters was the guest speaker at the monthly OWLA public forum. The gorges/ravines the Cornell experts suggest the team focuses on exist in three Towns: Scipio, Moravia, and Niles. To inform and gain the support of the respective Municipal Council members, OWLA leadership attended the Niles monthly board meeting on Thursday Oct 8 and plans to attend the Moravia meeting on Wed October 21. After gaining support from the respective Town Councils, OWLA plans to proceed to contact as many of the towns' property owners as possible to get their permission to access their land.
- Fillmore Glen Park is underway with an extensive treatment of the hemlocks throughout the gorge. Yellow pesticide applicator signs were placed as recently as October 8, 2020 and lined almost the entire length of the North Rim Trail. The trees receiving treatment are older trees and have been marked with silver tags at the base. Park Supervisor, John Burns, verified the efforts and he said the other local state parks (e.g., Buttermilk, Treman, Taughannock) are all underway with phased treatments and have received a grant to assist with funding. They are limited to 1500" of tree diameter per application round. Mr. Burns said the conditions and assessments are very positive as they proceed with treatments; he believes the park has managed to treat ahead of more destructive infestation. During its October 12<sup>th</sup>, 2020 visitation of the Park grounds, the OLWIPD did not find any sign of the HWA infestations.
- According to the September 20th announcement of awards for the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI), the Onondaga County Soil and Water Conservation District received their requested \$50,000 for HWA treatment in the Skaneateles watershed.

## 9. Spring willow planting

The OLWMC and OWLA are planning 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.

## 10. Land Acquisition

- Based on a press release dated October 5<sup>th</sup>, the Finger Lakes Land Trust announced it purchased 38 acres in the town of Moravia, Cayuga County. Located in the Owasco Flats,

the property contains 785 feet of frontage along the Owasco Inlet and is adjacent to the Owasco Flats Wildlife Management Area (OFWMA). The following is from their press release:

*“The property is primarily comprised of agricultural fields and is in close proximity to other conservation lands owned by Cayuga County and the City of Auburn. When funds become available, the Land Trust will partner with the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC) to transfer ownership of the parcel.*

*An important area ecologically, the flats are part of the National Audubon Society-designated Greater Summerhill Important Bird Area (IBA), and visitors often find Bald Eagles soaring overhead. Protection of lands in this area also safeguards the water quality of Owasco Lake by filtering runoff to the inlet.*

*The Land Trust intends to partner with the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service to conduct wetland restoration activities on the land prior to conveyance to NYSDEC. Conversion of pasture lands to wetlands will enhance the water filtration capacity of the inlet and create excellent habitat for birds and other wildlife.*

*This is the Land Trust’s fifth land protection project at the Owasco Flats. The area is popular for both paddling and birdwatching. Information about visiting the flats can be found at [www.gofingerlakes.org](http://www.gofingerlakes.org), a resource created by the Land Trust to encourage people to get outdoors.*

*By working cooperatively with landowners and local communities, the Finger Lakes Land Trust has protected nearly 25,000 acres of the region’s undeveloped lakeshore, rugged gorges, rolling forest, and scenic farmland. The Land Trust owns and manages a network of 35 nature preserves that are open to the public and holds perpetual conservation easements on 150 properties that remain in private ownership.*

*The Land Trust focuses on protecting critical habitat for fish and wildlife, conserving lands that are important for water quality, connecting existing conservation lands, and keeping prime farmland in agriculture. The organization also provides programs to educate local governments, landowners, and local residents about conservation and the region’s unique natural resources. Additional information about the Finger Lakes Land Trust may be found at [www.fllt.org](http://www.fllt.org).”*

- The OLWMC will evaluate lands targeted for acquisition by with 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). The OLWMC, TNC, and the City of Auburn are developing common source water protection signage for lands acquired by both TNC and

the City. Additionally, the OLWMC maintains support to TNC for a feasibility study for replacing septic systems in Indian Cove on the east shore Owasco Lake.

11. Cayuga County Soil and Water Conservation District Implementation Updates

Cayuga County' Soil and Water Conservation District is planning to present to the OLWMC on 2019 and 2020 project outcomes to-date as well as project outlooks at the upcoming November 17<sup>th</sup>, 2020 OLWMC board meeting.

12. Support to the Canandaigua Lake Watershed Management Council

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.

13. 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, and Genoa; I continue to encourage the Board of Directors to reach out to representatives from these towns to elicit municipality buy-in.
- The Town of Scipio plans to bring the question 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.

**Summary Prepared by Adam Effler, submitted October, 16<sup>th</sup> 2020**