



# Owasco Lake Watershed Management Council

January 21, 2025, 10:00-11:30 AM  
Auburn Memorial City Hall Chambers

## Meeting of the Directors

**Owasco** – Ed Wagner, **Cayuga County** – Aileen McNabb -Coleman, **City of Auburn** – Ginny Kent, **Niles** – Joan Jayne, **Locke** – Thane Benson, **Scipio** – Nancy Hart, **Fleming** – Karen VanLiew, **Town of Moravia** – Terry Palmer, **Village of Moravia** –Chris Fulton, **Village of Groton** – Theodore Skibinski, **Summerhill** – Charlie Ripley, **Sennett** – Tom Blair, **Dryden** – Anne Clark, **Lansing** – Joseph Wetmore  
**Executive Director**- Adam Effler

### Presiding: Dr. Adam Effler

- A. Board of Directors – Roll call: Owasco-Ed Wagner, Cayuga County-Aileen McNabb-Coleman, City of Auburn-Ginny Kent, Niles-Joan Jayne, Town of Moravia-Terry Palmer, Summerhill-Charlie Ripley, Lansing-Joseph Wetmore (online). Ex Officio: John West (online), Carol Sutkus, Jesse Lloyd, Michele Wunderlich (online), Ryan Staychock (online).
- B. Approval of the Agenda: Motion to approve made by Joan Jayne. Seconded by Terry Palmer. Vote was unanimous, motion carried.
- C. Approval of Minutes from December 17, 2024, Board Meeting as distributed via email. Motion to approve made by Ed Wagner. Motion seconded by Ginny Kent. Vote was unanimous, motion carried.
- D. Public to be Heard: None heard.
- E. Director's Summary – Adam Effler (distributed for review prior to meeting). For an audio/video of this presentation please visit: <https://www.olwmc.org/news>

### Staff, Recognition, Awareness, Education and Outreach Project Updates

- Staff will give a talk regarding the OLWMC's operations and initiatives at the SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry's 'Spring 2025 Water Science and Policy Seminar Series.'
- Staff are engaging with the Cato-Meridian Elementary School's Lego League Robotics team, designing a remote operated vehicle (ROV) to reduce plastic pollution in lakes, rivers, and oceans.
- 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 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

### Owasco Lake Tributary Monitoring Project Update:

- 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 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.

GAR included Owasco, Seneca, Keuka, and Skaneateles Lakes within their Water Resources Institute grant submission. If they are awarded funding, they will be sampling in 2025, whereby one sampling trip to each lake is proposed, 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.

- 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 Update:

- In December 2024, on behalf of the Town of Lansing, OLWMC staff reviewed and provided feedback regarding the Southern Cayuga Lake Intermunicipal Water Commission's draft DWSP2 for Bolton Point, leveraging experience with developing both the City of Auburn's and Town of Owasco's DWSP2s. Staff will engage with the Commission on January 23, 2025 to discuss suggestions that were made.

### Harmful Algal Blooms (HABs) Identification and Programming:

#### Update:

NYSDEC's Harmful Algal Bloom (HAB) 2024 Notification Season Summary (in their words):

*During 2024, 218 waterbodies statewide were listed as "Confirmed HABs" on the NY HAB System (NYHABS). Over 2,100 HAB reports were submitted to DEC and confirmed by staff. The reports ranged from a single observation to widespread blooms that were persistent throughout the season. A summary of HABs reported during 2024 is available in the archive section of the Harmful Algal Blooms webpage. Historical HABs data reported to the DEC dating back to 2012*

*is provided on Open NY, which gives public access to digital data (Search the "Data NY" portal for "Harmful Algal Blooms"). One can view historical water quality monitoring data, including HABs information, at the Division of Water's DOW Monitoring Portal. Both Open NY and the Monitoring Portal will be updated with 2024 HABs data over the coming months.*

#### Land Holdings

##### Fillmore Nature Preserve Project Update:

- On December 19, 2024, additional signage was installed to better inform visitors that the proposed boardwalk is not installed in the wetland area.
- According to feedback from the Emerson Foundation, their Grants Committee found the OLWMC's grant final report useful and welcome future grant applications.

##### 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.

##### Additional Partner Land Acquisitions/Targets Update:

The FLLT offered to provide support to conserve the Camp Casowasco property. Depending on the owner's interests and goals, in partnership, the FLLT and OLWMC could help broker an easement or acquisition deal to help protect the parcel, and possibly, restore the building space.

#### Federal and NYS Grant Projects and Funding

##### National Fish and Wildlife Foundation 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

#### Newly Delineated Wetlands within Owasco Lake Watershed the

NYSDEC released the new wetland data on January 13, 2025. The regulations implement new statutory requirements under the State's Freshwater Wetlands Act that will safeguard an estimated one million additional acres of wetland habitat. There are 11,910.59 acres (18.6 sq miles) of new delineated wetlands within the Owasco Lake watershed. Combined with the pre-existing National Wetlands Inventory data, there are 13,261.22 acres (20.7 sq miles) of wetlands in the Owasco Lake watershed.

#### Proposed Ambient Water Quality Guidance Values for Phosphorus (in their words)

DEC Interim Commissioner Sean Mahar has announced the [release of draft water quality guidance values](#) to regulate phosphorus in New York State surface waters. Excess phosphorus can contribute to harmful algal blooms (HABs), lower dissolved oxygen levels, increased turbidity, and excessive growth of algae and aquatic plants. The draft guidance values are supplemented by draft updates to DEC's phosphorus permitting strategy and establish a process for prioritizing and reducing phosphorus loads from wastewater treatment plants.

#### Request for Immediate Rulemaking for On-site Treatment and Disposal of Landfill Leachate

A request letter was signed and delivered to Sean Mahar, Acting Commissioner, NYSDEC to urge the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) to immediately initiate the rulemaking process to establish new regulations under 6 NYCRR Parts 360 & 363 regarding the effective management, treatment, and disposal of landfill leachate.

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.'

Duck's unlimited awarded OLWMC \$250,000 for wetland management for Owasco Flats.

### 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.

#### The Nature Conservancy's 2025 Climate Resiliency Grant Program Update:

- Staff are considering an OLWMC grant application to support education expansion for the watershed municipalities regarding emergency response practices and advancing erosion and sediment controls for construction activities.
- The OLWMC applied for a Certificate of Good standing with the NYS Department of State,

according to requirements for this grant request for proposals.

Reported that we are revising our corporate bylaws with the assistance of the City of Auburn.

- F. Review of 2024 OLWMC Objectives and revision for 2025-Board of Directors/Municipality: Dr. Effler reviewed, discussed and updated the 2025 Objective with the Board of Directors

A line-by-line discussion of the objectives ensued.

1. Community Participation-No substantive change.
2. Community Outreach-continue to coordinate with other watershed organizations suggested by Joseph Wetmore.
3. Continue to look for funding opportunities. No substantive change.
4. Programmatic opportunities to advance resource protection. No substantive change.
5. Work with Towns' and Villages' relevant departments to improve water resource practices. No substantive change.
6. Support coordination and implementation of 9E plan-some verbiage change. No substantive change.
7. Participate in HABS monitoring and mitigation program. No substantive change.
8. Watershed inspection requirements and rules and regulations. No substantive change.
9. Support oversight, growth, and guidance for the OLWIPD. No substantive change.
10. Continue supporting monitoring the lake and watershed to assess water quality. No substantive change.
11. Preserve ecosystem functions that protect water quality through stewardship. No substantive change.

No objectives added nor substantial changes were made.

- G. Representatives Feedback: Ginny Kent has a question about NYS regulation guidance for phosphorus regulation. Clarified both point and non- point sources and up for consideration for regulation guidance.

- H. Treasurer's Audit and Finance Report

- i. December 2024 Financials Approval – Joan Jayne reported as of December 31, 2024, Total Current Savings -\$359,734.74: and Total Liabilities and Equity \$420,862.03. Motion to approve made by Terry Palmer. Motion seconded by Ginny Kent. Vote was unanimous, motion carried.
- ii. Adam Effler clarified the net income may increase as the interest from the CDs is included. Documents are being prepared for the annual audit and the proforma budget. We have also initiated new drone insurance for watershed inspection.

- I. Lake Level Report – John West reported the current lake elevation at 709.84 ft. He will continue to monitor and update as changes occur.
- J. NYSDEC FL Hub Update – Tony Prestigiacomo left a memo that NYS DEC PFAS regulations are available online and some updates have been included in Director's report. Adam will send an email with updates.
- K. Owasco Watershed Lake Association Update – Carol Sutkus reported on the progress toward the Bob Brower symposium 3/8/2025. They are working on a new OWLA website that should be completed in a few months.
- L. Cornell Cooperative Extension Update – Ryan Staychock reported a winter shop meeting with Dr. Murray is being offered this week 1/25/25; Managing your farm woodlot on 1/30/25; A number of 4H programs for youth are planned including a youth tractor safety training program on 2/2/25- contact the Cooperative Extension for more information.
- M. Watershed Inspection Monthly Report – Jesse Lloyd. For and audio/video of the watershed inspection monthly report, please visit <https://www.olwmc.org/news>
- N. Communications: Adam reported on upcoming presentations: in February an Owasco inlet project consultant; CC planning department concerning the plans for Owasco Flats, and The Nature Conservancy on

proposals for the transfer of land. Terry Palmer asked for an update on liaising with City of Auburn on employment of OLWMC employees-Ginny Kent reported meetings have occurred and the process is ongoing.

- O. Issues of Concern: None heard
- P. Next Meeting: February 18, 2025, at 10:00 AM.
- Q. Adjourn: Motion to adjourn made by Joan Jayne. Motion seconded by Charlie Ripley. Vote was unanimous, motion carried.

Meeting adjourned at 11:22 AM

Respectfully submitted,

Vivian Cunningham