



## Owasco Lake Watershed Management Council (OLWMC)

July 21, 2020, 10:00am – Director’s Summary

- The Owasco Lake Watershed Inspection and Protection Division (OLWIPD) remains operational and active for watershed surveillance activities under the advisement of the Watershed Inspection Committee (WIC). The OLWIPD gave a watershed update presentation to Auburn City Council on July 16<sup>th</sup> that included a summary of the 2019 annual inspection report and noteworthy program updates. Updates on several OLWIPD recognition and outreach initiatives include:
  1. the composition and delivery of a recognition article spotlighting Jim Sierzenga, a local crop farmer who demonstrates watershed stewardship and positive strides in BMPs, and who has been an active participant in the watershed rules and regulations revision process.
    - The finished article appeared in the June Cayuga County Water Quality Management Agency (WQMA) newsletter as well as a new editorial column offered to the OLWID through Auburnpub. I was informed Partners for Healthy Watersheds will also share the article with their network. The OLWIPD looks forward to spotlighting other residents within the watershed community who are advancing land use practices that can help protect water quality from nonpoint source pollution.
  2. the completed design and forthcoming production of ‘Lake Friendly Lawn’ signage to be distributed to those watershed residents who take the ‘Tier One Pledge’ on the OLWMC website to refrain from the widespread use of chemicals and fertilizers for lawn care.
    - The pledge is considered the first of a multi-tiered pledge initiative. The Tier Two Pledge for ‘Lake Friendly Living’ will tie into broader pledge criteria developed by watershed organizations for other Finger Lakes and supports consistent messaging throughout the Finger Lakes Region.
  3. the procurement and installation of ‘No Dumping, Drains to Lake’ Storm Drain Medallions in collaboration with participating watershed municipalities.
    - The OLWIPD has been inventorying storm drains throughout the watershed to prioritize those to receive medallions.
- The watershed rules and regulations steering committee and working group, under the advisement of the City of Auburn legal team have collectively finalized revisions of the regulatory document. The current phase is City of Auburn and Town of Owasco final review

before the document can be finalized and delivered to NYS agencies for their review. The City and Town plan to hold the joint public meeting as soon as it can be arranged.

1. New requirements for farm planning according to the proposed WRR will require resources and capacity for planning support for farmers. The development of Certified Nutrient Management Plans (CNMPs) may be limited by the number of local professionals credentialed to offer services. A communal farm planning strategy is attractive, offering the benefits of both collaboration and efficiency. Over the course of this last month, I coordinated with the Agriculture Team Leader of the County Conservation District (BCCD, Bradford PA), Nathan Dewing, who has been instrumental in implementing a communal strategy for farm planning within his community. We look forward to learned more about the successes and challenges associated with communal planning forums, and guidance on the needs of program development, at our September 15, 2020 OLWMC public board meeting.
- Over the course of the last month, the OLWMC was awarded:
    1. \$1,500 grant from the Emerson Foundation for the purchase of a physical water quality model, an educational tool to be used for outreach at forthcoming watershed events (e.g., Conservation Field Days) and within a classroom setting.
    2. \$4,950 for the purchase of a Portaboard© trailer associated with a proposal for Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) education submitted through the Finger Lake Partnership for Regional Invasive Species Management (PRISM) and intended to help reduce the continued spread of AIS within Owasco Lake. The Portaboard© will offer portable AIS signage that will offer flexibility for its usage at events and lake access locations. There exists signage at Emerson Park, but lake-wide boat launches and access locations coverage is lacking. Improved coverage with signage at all lake access locations prioritizes public awareness and education on prevention measures for reducing the spread of invasive species that have been shown to utterly transform the lake condition and drive harmful algal blooms (HABs).
  - I was informed the OLWMC will receive a response from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation in August regarding a potential award for the Five Star and Urban Waters Restoration Program project proposal submitted earlier this year for monitoring the connective corridor of Hidden Brook in the Town of Owasco.
  - The OLWMC project partners, Crystal Creek Organics, an engineering consulting group that currently operates a pilot project for using advanced technologies for chemical removal of phosphorus from manure produced at a local farm, was approved with their funding source, New York State Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA), to continue on to Phase Two of their project.
  - 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. We recognize the first step to advance this initiative through biocontrol (e.g., beetles, top down approach) or insecticide (bottom up approach) will require Hemlock tree and HWA inventories. We are working on advancing collective training opportunities with instruction from the Cornell Hemlock

Hunters. OWLA is reaching out to watershed property owners near identified Hemlock stands to start the inventory process and make progress on enlisting voluntary support. Charlotte Malmborg of the Hemlock Hunters will educate our group on this topic at our August 18<sup>th</sup> board meeting, and collectively, OWLA and the OLWMC are looking for volunteers to help with inventory reports and participate in field training in the summer and fall of 2020. Please contact OWLA president, Dana Hall, for more information about the training opportunity.

- In partnership with Cayuga County Planning, City of Auburn, OWLA, and under advisement of Dr. Halfman of HWS, we have inventoried watershed tributary locations for the installation of level sensors. The externally funded pilot project will use level sensors to offer greater spatial information to monitor stream dynamics under a wide range of conditions, indicating locations that tend to surge following storm events that might be targets for restoration efforts. Furthermore, locations chosen for this project align with those selected as part of the Soil and Water Assessment Tool (SWAT) model development for the Nine Element Watershed Plan; flows and loads estimated from tributary levels measurements and concurrent nutrient sample collections can be used to calibrate and fine-tune the SWAT model in years to come. In June, we were informed the Cayuga County Highway Department supports the project and will help with level sensor installations. Information on the project will be posted at each installation location.
- Assembly bill A08349/S05612 passed in the NYS Assembly earlier this year, has gone through committee, and is on the Senate calendar. We are watching the progress of this bill closely, and if the bill does not (or did not) pass, the OLWMC will continue with the locally endorsed submission of our watershed tributary reclassification petition to attempt to gain the permitting protections we seek.
- The OLWMC continues to work closely with The Nature Conservancy (TNC) to evaluate lands targeted for acquisition (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). Further, the OLWMC is offering support to TNC for a feasibility study for replacing septic systems in Indian Cove on the east shore Owasco Lake. TNC is administering a poll throughout the Finger Lakes to gain a better understanding of the public perception of water quality within the Finger Lakes region.
- Cayuga County' Soil and Water Conservation District is planning to present to the OLWMC on 2019 project outcomes and project outlooks for 2020 at the next physical Council meeting, perhaps as early as August 18th.
- 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 Sennett, 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.

*Summary Prepared by Adam Effler, 07/16/2020*