



Owasco Lake Watershed Management Council (OLWMC)

November 15, 2022- Director's Summary

**Watershed Rules and Regulations**

Project Review:

The Watershed Rules and Regulations (WRR) Workgroup is 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.

Project Update:

Since the last OLWMC meeting, the state-local workgroup met once to discuss the nutrient management provision of Owasco's proposed regulations. This was the second meeting on this topic. The meeting's focus was on NYS-provided alternatives to community consensus regulations proposed for watershed nutrient management. Further details are outlined within the NYSDOH's project update report (11.15.2022 Monthly Owasco WRR Update for OLWMC) delivered to the OLWMC Board of Directors, Ex Officio Partners, and engaged members of the public prior to the November 15, 2022 OLWMC public board meeting.

Revised Meeting Schedule:

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State Agency Legal Meetings for Pesticide, Nutrient Management & Variances	November and December 2022 (if necessary)
Follow up with State-Local Workgroup	December 2022

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### Revised Overall Project Timeline:

- State Interagency Workgroup meets with Owasco Technical Committee – June 2022
- Series of State-Local Workgroup meeting - June to Jan 2023
- DOH publishes proposed amendments to WRRs- Mar 2023
- Three-month public comment period- Jun 2023
- DOH submits response to comments- Aug 2023
- DOH publishes amendments to WRRs - Sep/Oct 2023

### NYS Tributary Legislation Project Review

An OLWMC endorsed, NYS environmental conservation law ([A6652/S4162](#)) would protect up to 41,000 miles of New York streams. Class "C" waterways, which are regularly used by people for boating, fishing, and other activities. The new law would offer permit-based protections that are currently provided to waterways with higher classifications. That is, if passed, the law will require the need for permit for certain stream access and project(s) scenarios. The bill passed both NYS houses and will need to be signed into law.

### Municipal Codes and Ordinances Update

The Village of Moravia has 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.

### Nine Element (9E) Watershed Plan 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 into the Plan. 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 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](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 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 that will drive watershed protection and remediation projects. The OLWMC will provide a coordination role for future projects and programming according to the recommendations of the 9E Watershed Plan.

## **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) have convened 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. Project consultants provided recommendations to Auburn City Council on July 14, 2022. At recent meetings, the DWSP2 committee reviewed and edited the draft plan. The NYSDEC and NYS Department of Health (DOH) are also reviewing the plan and will provide comments. Barring any changes based on agency feedback, the plan can be finalized. At that point, Auburn City Council will be asked to endorse the plan and name the implementation team. During the last meeting, the committee discussed implementation steps and expressed support desired from consultants and NYSDEC/NYSDOH to help maintain momentum.
- The Town of Owasco’s application for the DWSP2 was received and reviewed by NYS agencies. A program award to the Town of Owasco from NYS would piggyback on the City of Auburn’s plan and extend resources to target continued and more detailed planning, facilitated by the NYS-funded consultants, to coordinate and propose specific projects. The proposed projects and programming would represent the broad recommendations of the overall watershed-based plan.

## **Harmful Algal Blooms (HABs) Identification and Reporting**

### **Project Review:**

- The NYSDEC’s (New York State Department of Environmental Conservation’s) NYHABs notification page remains available for the 2022 monitoring season. Regarding HABs, the NYSDEC encourages the community to “know it, report it, and avoid it.”
- The Owasco Watershed Lake Association (OWLA) leads the volunteer HABs surveillance program for Owasco Lake.

### **Project Update:**

This year, as of November 10, 2022, there was one HAB report on NYHABs that had been reported in the previous two weeks and 24 archived reports more than two weeks old. On an annual basis, observations of HABs are increasing throughout the eastern Finger Lakes Region, and associated cyanotoxin levels in Owasco Lake’s raw water have been elevated from previous years.

## **Recognition, Awareness, Education and Outreach Projects Update**

### **Project Review:**

Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) awareness (and mitigation) project partners decide to provide for new visibility of the OLWMC’s ‘Clean, Drain, Dry’ portable billboard currently positioned at the Emerson Park boat launch. In 2023, staff are planning to target improved visibility at the south end of the watershed by positioning the billboard on a Cayuga County owned pull-off along Route

38. The billboard was relocated from the Emerson Park Boat launch back to its winter location adjacent to the Cayuga County Parks and Trails building.

#### Project Update:

- The OLWMC's November staff feature article with the Citizen newspaper spotlights the completion and approval of the 9E Watershed Plan, the parties involved with developing the Plan, and the OLWMC's associated role towards coordinating Plan implementation.
- The Town of Dryden Conservation Board is considering its recommendation to the Dryden Town Board for the Town to resolve to take the Lake Friendly Living Pledge at the municipal level.
- On October 24, 2022 the Owasco Watershed Lake Association (OWLA) and OLWMC staff collaborated on fall maintenance of the Emerson Park raingarden.
- On November 29<sup>th</sup>, 2022 the OWLA plans to use the OLWMC's educational watershed model for youth education at Seymour Library.

#### Land Holding

#### Project Review:

- The OLWMC is nearing the final transfer of a land preserve from The Nature Conservancy (TNC) that will advance its position as a land conservation steward for properties within the watershed. TNC acquired the property in the summer of 2021 using funds from the NYS Water Quality Improvement Program for the purpose of protecting Owasco Lake water quality. The property consists of 164 acres located near 6053 Filmore Road in Sempronius (with a small portion in Summerhill). The Cayuga County tax map numbers are 212.00-1-51.2 and 51.2 (Sempronius property), and 223.00-1-1.822 (Summerhill property).
- The OLWMC developed a land protection and management policy, adopted from TNC's plan, to ensure the OLWMC meets project responsibilities. The OLWMC's Land Protection and Management Policy for the new property references the OLWMC's proposed 'Land Stewardship' standard policy adopted from the 'Land Trust Alliance Standards and Practices.' The policies were adopted by the OLWMC at its June 21, 2022 public board meeting.
- As part of a successful transfer of ownership of the property, TNC will offer \$15,000 of upfront land stewardship dollars to help the OLWMC get started with funding needs (e.g., insurances) to own and maintain the land preserve.
- A property liability insurance policy has been selected to cover the OLWMC's new exposure.
- The Notice of NYSDEC Grant Agreement has been provided to OLWMC. The OLWMC has agreed to follow the stewardship and management protocols approved by the DEC, as indicated in its adapted management protocols for the property.
- OLWMC's Board of Directors has agreed to own and manage the Filmore Road property for the purposes of water quality protection and passive recreation. The OLWMC's commitment to these terms is detailed in Resolution No. 02-22 approved at the July 19, 2022 OLWMC board meeting.
- In early August, 2022 the NYSDEC approved the transfer of the Filmore Road property to the OLWMC.
- Property signage, required for posting requirements and also identifies the allowance for respectful public access, was designed and produced.

- Partners have finalized language for a public release statement following completion of the property transfer.

#### Project Update:

- Concerning the property transfer of the Fillmore Nature Preserve from TNC to the OLWMC, project partners are working with real estate attorneys to finalize required documentation to close. The group continues to target closing in November of 2022.
- Property signage will be installed with the help of TNC, following closing. The associated field trip will also accommodate TNC's insights and recommendations on effective property inspection protocols to meet the OLWMC's annual property inspection commitment.

### **Watershed Lake and Tributary Monitoring**

#### Project Update:

- Projected for 2023, NYSDEC is pairing down its funding of the Citizens Statewide Lake Assessment Program (CSLAP) in the Finger Lakes Region by nearly half. Local lake stewards will be responsible for covering the costs and sampling for any additional samples.
- Lake and watershed monitoring partners prepared a comprehensive budget for review by the Cayuga County Planning Department that includes costs for 1) a new Owasco Lake monitoring role by the Finger Lakes Institute, Hobart William Smith Colleges, 2) laboratory analysis for watershed tributary samples collected by OWLA, and 3) the continuation of watercourse level monitoring using Hyfi sensors.
  - Monitoring partners will convene November 18, 2022 to further discuss the details of monitoring plans for 2023, outlining responsibilities, expectations and funding.

### **Hyfi Watercourse Level Sensors**

#### Project Review:

- OLWMC staff maintain 16 watercourse level sensors 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. The sensors are used for guiding flood and asset management, as well as for level monitoring. Hyfi has completed their development of correlation and regression analysis for the relationships between the watercourse level sensors and conventional USGS stream gauging. A highly significant relationship between long-term datasets supports the continued use and funding of the more spatially robust watershed sensors.
- OWLA's 2022 sediment and nutrient sampling program, which has elements of both routine and storm event sampling, aligns with watercourse level sensor locations. The project can provide invaluable lake loading information for continued calibration of the SWAT model.
- The two-year pilot project grant period is officially complete.

### Project Update:

- Hyfi’s project dashboard was updated and is linked within the OLWMC website. The new landing page was created for the purposes of improved navigation and data access.
- The Cayuga County Planning Department is drawing upon their remaining 2022 FLOWPA funding balance to cover the continued operation and maintenance costs of the Hyfi watercourse level sensors through the remainder of 2022. Cayuga County is evaluating continued funding for the project in the context of the overall lake and watershed monitoring programming for 2023.

### **Programs, Funding, and Related Opportunities**

#### Project Review:

- Water quality funding from federal and state governments depends partly on feedback from local governments on their anticipated needs. The NYS Environmental Facilities Corporation (EFC) has extended the deadline for municipalities to submit their Clean Watersheds Needs Survey to December 23, 2022. Local governments are asked to submit documentation about their anticipated water quality infrastructure project needs. This documentation may include information that municipalities already have available to show estimated costs for needed infrastructure repairs and upgrades.
  - Staff from the Cayuga County Departments of Health and Planning and the Cayuga County Soil and Water Conservation District (CCSWCD), as well as City of Auburn Municipal Utilities, are preparing a collective response to the needs survey.

#### Project Update:

- The CCSWCD completed their installation of Water and Sediment Control Basins on a watershed farm, funded by a collaborative Great Lakes Commission Conservation Kick grant and associated cost share provided by the City of Auburn. The CCSWCD also completed hydroseeding an adjacent section of ditch along Mobbs Road. The CCSWCD was recently awarded two NYS Agricultural Nonpoint Source grants that will help fund an on-farm nutrient storage liner cover and flare.
- The OLWMC endorsed, via a letter of support, a Finger Lakes Institute and Finger Lakes Partnership for Regional Invasive Species Management (PRISM) grant proposal to the USDA Forest Service that would fund the treatment of hemlock forests for hemlock woolly adelgid (HWA) in Finger Lakes region Watkins Glen, Fillmore Glen, Buttermilk Falls, and Robert H. Treman State Parks. This proposed project would also provide education and outreach about the project, and about the negative impacts HWA can have on the important natural resources that make up these state parks.

### **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, Skaneateles, and Lansing.