



Owasco Lake Watershed Management Council

Memorial City Hall, Auburn, NY
October 21, 2025, 10:00-11:30 AM

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, City of Auburn-Ginny Kent, Niles- Joan Jayne, Scipio-Nancy Hart, Fleming-Karen VanLiew, Town of Moravia-Terry Palmer, Lansing- Joseph Wetmore. Ex officio members: John West (online), Carole Sutkus, Jesse Lloyd, Gabriel Yerdon (online), Daniel Welch, Rick Smith and Stella Woodward (GAR) Michelle Wunderlich(online), Ryan Staychock(online)
- B. Approval of the Agenda: Motion to approve the agenda made by Ginny Hart, seconded by Nancy Hart. Vote was unanimous. Motion carried.
- C. Approval of Minutes from September 16, 2025, Board Meeting as distributed via email. Motion to approve the minutes made by Ed Wagner, seconded by Nancy Hart. 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/visual of Dr. Effler’s presentation please visit <https://www.olwmc.org/news>
Watershed Rules and Regulations
 - Partnering agencies, including the Cayuga County Planning and Health Departments and the Central New York Regional Planning and Development Board (CNYRPDB) are collaborating with OLWMC staff to produce a more refined and easier to interpret regulatory watershed map.
 - Over the summer of 2025, OLWMC staff worked with the NYS Legislative Bill Drafting Commission to amend NYS Public Health Law, in relation to enacting the ‘Drinking Water Protection Act’ and improving the process of updating WRR with NYS agency requirements and time limits.

Recognition, Awareness, Education and Outreach Projects Updates

- The OLWMC staff article published in Auburnpub on October 16, 2025 features a collaborative project for site cleanup in the Town of Locke, whereby work was completed by Momentum Environmental, LLC on September 25, 2025. Several media approaches were used to promote the work, including though Life in the Finger Lakes magazine and an

October 15, 2025, radio interview with Finger Lakes Daily News.

- OWLA used the OLWMC's watershed educational model for youth education at a Cayuga Museum event on October 13, 2025.
- On October 22, 2025, OLWMC staff and colleagues plan to meet with the NYS Senate Majority Leader, Andrea Stewart-Cousins' external relations leadership team at Senator May's office in Syracuse, NY. The group will discuss how to help Owasco Lake protection efforts while considering the 2026 budget process and legislation.
- OLWMC staff are working with a Cornell University graduate student and Senior Media Relations Specialist on a farmer recognition initiative, which will act as his capstone. Accordingly, Sunnyside Farms will host a farm tour of their facilities on October 22, 2025.

Nine Element Watershed Plan (9EP)

Project Update:

- The 9E Coordination Committee has nearly finalized its 2022-2025 progress report, which now includes watershed agricultural best management practice (BMP) statistics.
 - The next meeting will be held on October 29, 2025. The committee plans to approve of the final 2022-2025 progress report and develop a 2026 work plan for planning grants and implementation projects.

Watershed Lake and Tributary Monitoring

Project Update:

- On September 19, 2025, the Owasco Lake water quality monitoring buoy was pulled from the lake early this year, due to vandalism.
- The Cayuga County Planning Department uploaded Owasco Lake tributary monitoring data based on NYS's recent water quality data solicitation.
 - On October 8, 2025, they submitted the total phosphorus data from the 2023 and 2024 OWLA Tributary Sampling Project. The total phosphorus data was the only data that met all the requirements for data submittal.
- SUNY ESF provided for an October 4, 2025, water sampling event to gain a snapshot of water chemistry in the region, spanning the Finger Lakes to Mohawk Valley to Lake Ontario. Thirty Samples were collected from Owasco Lake tributaries. ESF students will analyze total alkalinity, total suspended solids, algal counts, calcium, some nutrients (nitrate, phosphate, sulfate). Additionally, a few samples will characterize microbiology.

NYS-awarded Drinking Water Source Protection Program (DWSP2)

Municipal Codes and Ordinances

No Project Updates

Harmful Algal Blooms (HABs) Identification and Programming

Project Update:

As of October 17, 2025, 96 HABs have been reported on Owasco Lake for 2025, 10 of which are current. The remainder were archived.

Land Holdings

Fillmore Nature Preserve Project Update:

Stewardship activities took place at the Fillmore Nature Preserve over the week of October 13, 2025. Trails were maintained and cleared, and additional trail markers were installed.

Venice Property Acquisition Review:

- During its March 18, 2025, meeting, according to Resolution 01-2025, the OLWMC agreed to accept from TNC the transfer of a 72-acre parcel in Venice for the purposes of ownership and long-term stewardship.
 - The Galbato Law Firm supported the property closing, having tracked down the original abstract to summarize the title's history.
 - The 99-megawatt Agricola wind project in Scipio and Venice, by Liberty Renewables, is adjacent to the Venice property the OLWMC plans to acquire. More info is available here <https://www.liberty-renewables.com/projects/agricola-wind/>
- The OLWMC closed on the Venice property acquisition on July 23, 2025. A property tax exemption was filed with the Town of Venice. Staff and project partners have developed property boundary signage and are scheduling posting the perimeter of the property with TNC's assistance.
- TNC's \$10,000 stewardship grant was delivered, and the associated check was deposited into the OLWMC checking account. This grant is a new budgetary line item and will be used to cover project costs, including property closing, boundary signage and liability insurance.

Venice Property Acquisition Update:

Boundary posting signage was designed and produced. Boundary posting and stewardship training is planned with TNC for either November 12 or 13, 2025.

Potential OLWMC Acquisitions Review:

TNC has expressed interest in having the OLWMC own an additional property poised for long term stewardship and preservation within the Owasco Lake watershed, a 100-acre mixed farmland parcel in the Town of Groton. TNC will present the remaining acquisition opportunity to the OLWMC Board of Directors.

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.
- The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) and The Nature Conservancy announced the State's addition of 92 acres to Owasco Flats Wildlife

Management Area (WMA) in the town of Moravia, Cayuga County. The acquisition more than doubles the size of the WMA and offers new and enhanced public recreation opportunities.

Organizational Bylaws Update:

The OLWMC Members reviewed the final draft of proposed updated OLWMC Bylaws. The OLWMC has commissioned legal counsel to review the final draft of the updated bylaws. A board resolution for bylaws adoption will be crafted when the final draft is in order.

Grant Projects and Funding

NFWF SOGL Project Review:

- Due to the NYSDEC's latency regarding project permitting, implementation of the OLWMC's Owasco Inlet streambank stabilization project will get underway during the permit window and construction season of 2026.

Relevant NYS Programming Updates:

- The OLWMC has made required updates to maintain pre-qualification status within the NYS Statewide Financial System vendor portal in preparedness for future grant proposal(s) submissions.
- NYS Round 30 Agricultural Nonpoint Source Abatement and Control Program Project grants were awarded. Associated projects are intended to support the New York State Agricultural Environmental Management (AEM) Program by funding the implementation of agricultural Best Management Practices (BMPs) to protect natural resources while maintaining the economic viability of New York State's diverse agricultural community.
 - \$720,898 was awarded to the Cayuga County Soil and Water Conservation District to work with 11 farms in the Cayuga Lake Watershed (EPF). This project will:
 - Plant 6,385 acres of cover crops and implement 25 acres of wood mulching over 5 years to increase soil water retention through an increase of organic matter and carbon supply and slow the potential for soil erosion and surface runoff into waterways.
 - Prevent an estimated 28,000 tons of soil from entering Owasco Lake, Cayuga Lake, and Seneca River Watersheds.
 - \$812,520 was awarded to the Tompkins County Soil and Water Conservation District to work with two farms in the Owasco Lake Watershed (EPF). This project will:
 - Capture and contain nutrient-rich silage leachate flows from bunk silos
 - Implement practices to effectively manage silage leachate and reduce nutrient loading
 - Reuse collected silage leachate for irrigation on pasture fields and establish riparian forest buffers

Newly Delineated Wetlands within the Owasco Lake Watershed Review:

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.

Owasco Lake Impairment Listing Review:

The week of January 13, 2025, the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) notified the NYSDEC that it is now required to designate Owasco Lake as an impaired water body due to HABs. Read more here: <https://www.epa.gov/tmdl/epas-addition-96-waterbodypollutant-combinations-new-york-2020-2022-303d-list>

Proposed Ambient Water Quality Guidance Values for Phosphorus Review:

The OLWMC was a signatory on a joint response to the public comment period for the NYSDEC's proposed ambient water quality guidance values for phosphorus. The response requested that NYS take a more aggressive approach towards reducing guidance values for NYS lakes by creating a framework for developing phosphorus standards.

Municipal Projects and Funding Opportunities Review:

The Village of Moravia has bonded over \$15.5 million for the renovation of its wastewater treatment plant, and the cost of the project is now approximately double previous estimates. The Village has a 20-year 0% loan from the state Environmental Facilities Corporation. Approximately

\$14.2 million will be paid by the New York State Department of Corrections and Community Supervision; most of the water treated by the plant comes from Cayuga Correctional Facility. The project is poised to receive another \$5.3 million in grants through the Federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, the Development Innovation Lab and the NYSDEC's Water Quality Improvement Project Program. The project's deadline is November 2026. The NYSDEC believes the improvements will reduce nutrient loading to the Owasco Inlet, which contributes approximately 50% of all the water that discharges into the lake.

NYS Relevant Bills Review:

Harmful algal bloom monitoring and prevention act (S8356/A8867): Reintroduced under the 2025 legislative session, under new print, NYS Senate bill S1833 Enacts the 'Harmful Algal Bloom Monitoring and Prevention Act.' On June 10, 2025 Senate Bill S1833, which enacts the "harmful algal bloom monitoring and prevention act," was been passed by the New York State Senate, delivered to the NYS Assembly, and referred to the Environmental Conservation Committee.

Drinking Water Protection Act (A9069): Enacts the drinking water protection act, relating to the adoption and enforcement of watershed rules and regulations for the purpose of protecting water quality. The purpose of the bill is to strengthen protections for public drinking water supplies by modernizing the framework for watershed rules and regulations, ensuring timely updates, and equipping the NYS Department of Health and water suppliers with clearer tools for prevention, enforcement, and accountability.

Municipality Buy-In 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.

F. Board of Directors/Municipality Representatives Feedback: None Heard.

G. Hunting property permissions-Fillmore Nature Preserve– Adam reported on the liability protections provided by the NYS law and our own property policy limits with a total aggregate coverage of \$3 million. He also reported TNC use a web-based application system for limiting hunting permits on their properties. TNC limits the number of hunters who must agree to a set of rules regarding comportment, in addition permission is granted based on a variety of individual characteristics including experience in hunting. Upon selection, hunters receive exclusive leases provided they comply with the specified regulations. Adam suggested developing a contract for stewardship that identifies rules and experience with hunting. Ed Wagner discussed the reason to provide an exclusive lease is in lieu of stewardship to maintain the area trails. This year it took 3 people 16 hours with a bush hog and chain saws to clear the trails. If OLWMC allowed 2-3 people a lease, the Town of Owasco will allow the people to borrow equipment to maintain (bush hog, chain saw) the area. People selected should know the property and how to operate the proper equipment. Some interested parties have expressed a willingness to start an organization of volunteers to maintain trails. If we do not have select people with exclusive rights, we will have others hunting without restrictions, despite posting. It is recommended to post signage during hunting season that there is hunting underway and visitors should wear orange for safety and stay on the trails. Ed suggested a trial for a year to see how it goes. Ed Wagner made a motion to approve ‘hold harmless forms’ with rules and regulation and select 2-3 individuals who will be granted exclusive rights to hunting in exchange for year around trail maintenance. DEC will be notified of these individuals who have hunting rights. Motion seconded by Ginny Kent. Vote unanimous. Motion carried.

H. Treasurer’s Audit and Finance Report for September 2025 Financials– Joan Jayne reported as of September 30, 2025, Total Checking and Savings \$485,830.90, Total Current Assets \$489,981.15, Total Liabilities and Equity \$543,412.73. Motion to approve the finance report made by Terry Palmer, seconded by Ginny Kent. Vote was unanimous. Motion carried.

i. Ed Wagner reported a CD matured and rolled over in June. We have cash in checking around \$100,000. A CD will mature every 3 months to ensure an adequate cash flow.

ii. Have asked for a 5% increase in contribution from the Towns across the Board. Some towns have responded with a 10% increase.

iii. The 2026 budget preparation in underway.

I. Lake Level Report – John West, current lake level is 711.25 feet elevation. Levels are lower due to lower rainfall and the target of 710 ft by end of December is ideal. The season is winding down.

J. Global Aquatic Research (GAR) foam research and the relationship between algal blooms and toxic chemicals (PFAS) – Rick Smith and Stella Woodard presented on their research project. For an audio and visual of this excellent presentation please visit <https://www.olwmc.org/news>

K. NYSDEC Finger Lakes Watershed Program Update – Gabriel Yerdon - unable to report due to an unstable internet.

L. Owasco Watershed Lake Association Update – Carol Sutkus reported OWLA participated in an oil drum storage clean-up in Groton partnering with OLWMC- funding was from local businesses and an individual; article on lake water foam was written by Nancy Hart; stream water sampling is completed for the year. An article appeared in the local newspaper on work done with Soil and Water on ditch remediation on the East side of the lake.

M. Cornell Cooperative Extension Update – Ryan Staychock -unable to report due to an unstable internet.

- N. Watershed Inspection Monthly Report – Jesse Lloyd-for and audio and visual report of Jesse's presentation, please visit <https://www.olwmc.org/news>
- O. Communications-For the November meeting: Shawn Cochrane will discuss the Village of Moravia's upgrade to the wastewater treatment plant, goals for next year and 2026 budget will also be discussed.
- P. Issues of Concern: Nancy Hart reported the Cayuga Lake Watershed Intermunicipal Organization (CWIO) meeting tomorrow night 5 PM at Bolton point.
- Q. Next Meeting: Tuesday November 18, 2025. At 10 am.
- R. Adjourn: Motion to adjourn made by Joan Jayne at 11:23 am, seconded by Ed Wagner. Vote was unanimous. Motion carried. Meeting adjourned at 11:23 am.

Respectfully submitted,

Vivian Cunningham

