



Owasco Lake Watershed Management Council

June 17, 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, Scipio-Nancy Hart, Fleming-Karen VanLiew, Town of Moravia-Terry Palmer, Lansing-Joseph Wetmore, Dryden-Anne Clark. Ex Officio attendance: Luke Scannell, Gabriel Yurdon, Carol Sutkus, Ryan Staychock, John West, Jesse Lloyd, Michelle Wunderlich
- B. Approval of the Agenda: Motion to approve made by Nancy Hart. Motion seconded by Joseph Wetmore. Vote was unanimous. Motion carried.
- C. Approval of Minutes from May 20, 2025, Board Meeting as previously emailed. Motion to approve made by Joseph Wetmore. Motion seconded by Ed Wagner. 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 of this presentation please visit <https://www.olwmc.org/news>
Watershed Rules and Regulations

Project Update:

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.

Staff, Recognition, Awareness, Education and Outreach Projects

Project Review:

- As available, staff will be attending municipal planning board meetings throughout the watershed for introductions and advocacy concerning erosion and sediment control planning for construction activities.

- Staff presented a OLWMC status update and the OLWIPD 2024 report at Auburn City Council the evening of May 8, 2025.
- The City of Auburn's annual mayoral proclamation endorsed the OLWMC's 'Lake Friendly Living' initiative and pledge programming.
- In collaboration with OWLA, this year's Lake Friendly Living (LFL) Awareness Day was held on Saturday, May 17, 2025, from 10am - 1pm at Emerson Park where volunteers and members of the public helped grow a rain garden, experience a water monitoring demonstration and observe a water sample. Wegmans Food Markets provided the OLWMC with a market gift card, which sponsored lunch for volunteers who attended the event.

Project Updates:

- OLWMC staff have been distributing copies of the Owasco Lake Watershed Inspection and Protection Division's (OLWIPD's) 2024 Annual Report to watershed municipal offices and partner agencies. Elements of the report were delivered to the City of Auburn for inclusion within their 2024 Annual Water Report.
 - Senator May's Office is championing the NYS legislative Finger Lakes LFL commemorative resolution this year. As in years past, the resolution recognizes regional conservation, events and messaging initiatives. Senator May introduced the resolution among the NYS Senate.
 - The Auburnpub staff article published on May 30, 2025, composed by Jesse Lloyd, features the importance of land stewardship in the Finger Lakes.

Nine Element Watershed Plan (9EP)

Project Update:

The next 9E Coordination Committee meeting will be held on June 25, 2025.

Watershed Lake and Tributary Monitoring

Project Update:

- The water quality monitoring buoy is deployed on Owasco Lake.
- The FLOWPA plan for 2026 is due in mid-July, 2025.
- As part of the WRI grant, GAR will be visiting four lakes to take additional samples: Keuka, Skaneateles, Seneca, and Owasco. They will only sample from each lake once, and will take samples from the surface, surface microlayer (top 1mm of the water column), and foam if it is observed. The goal is to look at how PFAS partition between these phases, which is believed to play a large role in their fate and transport in the lake. In Canandaigua, GAR developed a foam reporting tool that volunteers have been using since 2019 to submit foam sightings, which has been useful in helping them to determine the different stages of foam formation/fate, its seasonality, and the correct time to sample. Lake associations and volunteers are poised to use this foam reporting tool to assist with identification and sampling efforts in 2025; GAR will be expanding this tool for use on the other four lakes, including Owasco. GAR is looking to collect email addresses of volunteers to report in September 2025 when foam is spotted on Owasco Lake, and when they are likely to collect foam and water samples for testing.
- Partners from SUNY ESF are composing a proposal for the Healthy Waters Center of Excellence. They propose to sample a large geographic region in Central New York (~500 samples over the area) with citizen volunteers all at one time and on the same day (planning for October 4th if the proposal is funded). They've suggested that OWLA volunteers might

participate as external partners, as a way to supplement the tributary sampling. Ideally, one volunteer per tributary would sample targeted streams, either at public accesses or on their own property. Parameters wouldn't be regulatory grade but would include conductivity, alkalinity, TSS, microbial and phytoplankton communities, microplastic abundance, nutrients, and other geochemical analytes (Ca, Mg, etc.), which are proposed to give a broad snapshot of how the watersheds are looking. This proposal would go into the education/outreach track which has a funding cap of \$30k over 1 year. The primary project objective is to train students on water quality analyses, including running the instrumentation and the data compilation and interpretation (which is where the large spatial coverage is important). The project also offers the opportunity for sampling volunteers to visit their local tributaries and gain more information about water quality. Project reports would provide information on how to get involved with water stewardship groups (e.g., OWLA).

Municipal Codes and Ordinances

- No Project Updates.

Harmful Algal Blooms (HABs) Identification and Programming:

- The NYS program has a new url: on.ny.gov/nyhabs

Project Update:

- The DEC's virtual HABs surveillance training was offered to volunteers on May 29, 2025.
- A new research initiative at SUNY ESF, supported by a \$2 million donation from Sam and Carol Nappi, aims to better understand cause of algal blooms in Skaneateles Lake. This work, led by Dr. Stephen Shaw, Chair of the Environmental Resources Engineering Department, will study both harmful and non-toxic blooms that affect water quality, recreation, and public health in the region. The project will use tools like satellite imaging for daily monitoring, nutrient tracking, and predictive modeling to assess bloom risks. By working with local partners—including government agencies and community organizations—the research team hopes to develop practical strategies to protect lake health across the Finger Lakes; lakes in Cayuga County and beyond, could apply these findings to improve drinking water quality and support recreation using data-driven approaches.

Land Holdings

- On May 19, 2025, staff partnered with the CC Planning Department to host Moravia High School students for 'Moravia Gives Back Day,' whereby students learned about terrestrial invasive species and assisted with trail maintenance activities.

Venice Property Acquisition Review:

- 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/>

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 Review:

The OLWMC Members are underway with reviewing the final draft for proposed updated OLWMC bylaws.

Grant Projects and Funding

NFWF SOGL Project Update:

- Based on the NYSDEC and USACE Jurisdictional Agreement/Framework (JAF) for reviewing the project permit application package, the NYSDEC questioned onsite knotweed management/ procedures and are requiring CCSWCD photos of the sites in their current conditions to satisfy the NYSDEC reviewer comments. Project partners have finalized the list of the species prepared for the willow plantings. The willow cuttings that SUNY ESF will be providing will be from the families of **Salix eriocephala** (native to North America and **Salix purpurea**, considered naturalized, being introduced to North America primarily for basket weaving, but has become a natural complement to many of our Northern ecosystems). Also, a few **Salix caprea hybrid** (North American hybrid pussy willow variety, male sterile, so no seeds produced) will be used. These are individual family members (or crosses such as a S. erio X S. erio). Some purpurea varieties may produce pollen but are generally not known to pollinate under field conditions. This limits any spreading in the environment to vegetative. Many NYS watersheds have existing S. erio, and S. pur members present, as well as S. Caprea (pussy willows) and S. cinerea (gray willow) (also "naturalized" in our ecosystems).

- The site implementation/stabilization order for 2025 construction is as follows: 5B Site first, then Site 6. The project team is starting with those two sites to ensure making best use of the willow available. CCSWCD is communicating with the NYS Department of Transportation regarding site access off of Rt 38 to sites 4 and 5A. Landowner Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) for sites access have been drafted, but finalized design elements are required before those MOUs can be signed.

Relevant NYS Programming:

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](https://www.epa.gov/tmdl/epas-addition-96-waterbodypollutant-combinations-new-york-2020-2022-303d-list)

Proposed Ambient Water Quality Guidance Values for Phosphorus Project 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 Update:

- The Village of Moravia has bonded another \$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.
- DEC's Water Quality Improvement Program (WQIP) grants are available, which now can fund road salt reduction plans. These plans can be funded in the "nonpoint, non-agricultural" category. These grants are part of the CFA and therefore are open to applications now. The actions in those plans can then be funded by WQIP grants in future rounds. One of the most meaningful things to be done at the municipal level is to adopt road salting best management practices to reduce use of road salt, while maintaining safe roads.

Green Resiliency Grants Now Open (NYS Announcement in their words):

New York State Environmental Facilities Corporation is now accepting applications for the next round of Green Resiliency Grants. Governor Kathy Hochul made \$60 million available for vital stormwater management and resilient infrastructure projects in flood-prone communities across New York State. The program advances Governor Hochul's comprehensive clean water and resiliency agenda to protect New Yorkers from extreme weather, while making these projects more affordable to minimize the financial impact on local ratepayers. **Applications are due by 5:00 pm on August 15, 2025.** For questions, email Green Resiliency Grants or contact EFC's Community Assistance Teams.

NYS Relevant Bills Review:

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): Reintroduced under the 2025 legislative session, under new print, NYS Senate bill S1833 Enacts the 'Harmful Algal Bloom Monitoring and Prevention Act.'

Finger Lakes Commission (S7628): Legislators are discontinuing this bill with plans to prepare more comprehensive language for inclusion under the 'watershed steward act.'

Protection for C streams (S1725/A4601): This bill has passed both houses over the last couple of years, only to be vetoed by the governor. Legislators are not pursuing this bill in the 2025

legislative session.

NYS Relevant Bills Update:

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.

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. Land Management at the Fillmore Nature Preserve: Adam discussed the current policy for land management of OLWC properties. The Directors discussed need to further delineate this process and add additional policies to manage leasing hunting rights, maintaining property trails and maintain a safe environment for the public. Nancy Hart made a motion the Council continue with the process to explore leasing hunting rights on our managed properties, Motion seconded by Terry Palmer. Vote was unanimous. Motion carried.
- H. Treasurer's Audit and Finance Report
 - i. May 2025 Financials Approval – Ed Wagner reported the financials as of May 31, 2024- Total Checking and Savings \$332,777.94.19: Total Liabilities and Equity \$393,024.53. Motion to approve made by Ed Wagner. Motion seconded by Nancy Hart. Vote was unanimous. Motion carried.
 - ii. Ed Wagner reported the checking account is getting low (\$39,000). We are expecting a large insurance bill shortly. The City of Auburn will be submitting their annual contribution in July. He suggested dividing up the contribution into 2 parcels, adding \$75,000 to the checking account and the remainder of the funds go to the purchase of a CD to generate revenue.
- I. Lake Level Report – John West-current lake elevation is 712.66 ft. John discussed it has been difficult to manage water releases due to the constant rain and wet weather. He discussed some mechanical problems with the main gate which impacts controlling the lake level. This issue is being repaired, and they are using alternate gates to maintain control.
- J. NYS's Updated Stormwater Design Manual – Luke Scannell for an audio/video of this presentation please visit <https://www.olwmc.org/news>
- A. NYSDEC FL Hub Update – no representation available.
- B. Owasco Watershed Lake Association Update – Nancy Hart reported tomorrow OWLA is sponsoring "Business after 5" at the Owasco Yacht Club 5-6:30. Tickets may be obtained at the Auburn Chamber of Commerce. OWLA's new website is operational. Karma-TV has been filming on Lake Friendly Living. They are looking forward to seeing that on You-tube.
- C. Cornell Cooperative Extension Update – Ryan Staychock-no official report today.
- D. Watershed Inspection Monthly Report – Jesse Lloyd: For an audio/video presentation please visit <https://www.olwmc.org/news>
- E. Communications: Nancy Hart reported the Scipio Salt shed is one gone and new construction of a salt shed is due to be finished within the month. Grant funding for the project has not yet arrived.
- F. Issues of Concern: None heard.

- G. Next meeting will be on Tuesday July 15, 2025, at 10:00 AM in Memorial City Hall, Auburn, NY and via Zoom.
- H. Adjourn: Motion to adjourn made by Ed Wagner. Motion seconded by Joseph Wetmore. Vote was unanimous. Motion carried. Meeting adjourned at 11:31 AM.

Respectfully submitted,

Vivian Cunningham

