



## Owasco Lake Watershed Management Council (OLWMC)

January 19th, 2021, 10:00am – Director’s Summary

### 1. HABs reporting

Harmful Algal Blooms (HABs) reporting provided by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC) for 2020 ended in the last week of October, 2020. According to NYHABs, the NYSDEC’s HAB reporting system, the system’s web link will be unavailable until the 2021 monitoring season begins in May.

### 2. Regulations

- Watershed Rules and Regulations

On October 29<sup>th</sup>, based on the final review of the updated Watershed Rules and Regulations via a joint meeting by City of Auburn and Town of Owasco, after a robust 3-year public process, the regulatory document carried without further review and will be delivered to NYS agencies for their review and consideration for approval and adoption. Tompkins County Water Resource Board approved the resolution to endorse the updated WRR transmittal via the Legislature. A great many additional letters of support are being written by local business owners, real estate agencies, and water consumers and delivered to the governor’s office as well as NYS representatives.

- New Municipal-level Regulations Revisited

In September, 2020 OLWMC Directors were provided prepared sediment and erosion control ordinance regulation documents intended to advance stability controls for construction and development activities within their municipality. The intent of these regulations is to protect downstream water quality by reducing land disturbances during construction through the requirement for the implementation of preventive measures. Directors were requested to bring these documents to their municipalities to initiate the discussion and public process for the adoption of new ordinances for their respective municipalities. Feedback from municipal level discussions for adopting new sediment and erosion control ordinances is welcomed.

### 3. Watershed Inspection and Protection Division

- NYSDEC Partnership

The Watershed Inspection and Protection Division (OLWIPD) remains active in the field identifying both land and water perturbations that are in need of restoration measures, as well as recent land use improvements and restoration projects to be recognized. The OLWIPD, NYDEC Region 7, Cayuga County Soil and Water Conservation District (CCSWCD) and Cayuga County Department of Health (DOH) staff will be meeting more frequently. These partnering groups have scheduled our now twice-annual regulatory meeting with NYSDEC Region 7 for this winter. It will be held January 21<sup>st</sup>. They also expect another meeting in late June or so to compliment what become our new routine of winter and early summer meetings to ensure good communications and coordination. Broadly, the NYSDEC Region 7 is responsible for regulatory enforcement of permitted facilities within the Owasco Lake Watershed, and the OLWIPD acts as a local enforcement arm according to local watershed rules and regulations.

- Education and Outreach

- The OLWIPD is working on developing watershed information packets for new landowners. These new homeowner packets will include a new resident guidance packet with a 5-page summary of the existing watershed rules and regulations, a brochure to promote better understanding of stormwater, and a magnet with pertinent watershed contact numbers. These outreach materials are planned for distribution to watershed residents in a variety of ways.
- A resident of Martin Point's Home Owner Association (HOA) has offered their concerns over lawn chemical usage at Martin Point and potential associated effects on Owasco Lake. The OLWIPD is coordinating a meeting with the HOA president and Martin Point's certified applicator to review their residential lawn chemical application protocol. Outcomes from this meeting will be presented to the HOA board this winter, and the board may consider modifying protocols for reducing or eliminating unnecessary chemical applications that might pose a threat to water quality of adjacent Owasco Lake.

- Recognition efforts and behavioral science training

- OLWMC staff continue to work with the Australian behavioral science consultant Evidn to learn how to best promote voluntary improvements in land use practices by watershed residents. Staff will be extending monthly recognition feature articles with the Citizen to spotlight and recognize watershed residents making strides in conservation practices and watershed protection in 2021.
- The OLWIPD's December recognition article, submitted December 11<sup>th</sup>, written by Dr. Walt Aikman and with editorial support by the OLWIPD, spotlighted the advancement of the wetland restoration and enhancement project undertaken by the Town of Owasco behind its Department of Public Works.
- The OLWMC/OLWIPD have scheduled their semi-monthly watershed recognition articles with the Citizen for 2021.
- The February article will spotlight the Hyfi level sensors project.

- Signage
  - The (OLWMC) is working closely with the Owasco Watershed Lake Association (OWLA) to rollout a variety of signage projects in the near term. The purpose of these signage projects is to increase awareness and promote conservation practices to better protect the lake. The organizations are cost-sharing ‘no dumping-drains to lake’ storm drain medallions and ‘lake friendly living’ signs.
    - Medallions were installed in the Villages of Moravia and Groton and the Hamlet of Locke.
    - Lake Friendly Living signs are intended to encourage watershed residents to take the LFL pledge on the OLWMC’s webpage. Lake Friendly Living is rapidly growing as a Finger Lakes Regional initiative. In support of our collaborative LFL initiative, project partners have finalized permissions for attaching LFL signage to many of the existing tributary identification signage within the watershed. The Towns of Moravia, Owasco, and Fleming have agreed to attach program signage to their entering municipality signage. We continue to work towards gaining permissions and/or required permits for the advancement of tributary identification and LFL signage throughout the watershed.
  - The OLWMC, TNC, and the City of Auburn are discussing developing common source water protection signage for lands acquired by both TNC and the City.

OLWMC Lake Friendly Living Pledge

*The OLWMC Lake Friendly Living Pledge is fully fledged and operational on the OLWMC website- We ask watershed residents make a difference throughout the watershed by taking the pledge to advance a variety of land and water stewardship practices. This pledge opportunity aligns with a standard style 'Lake Friendly Living' logo and consistent messaging used throughout the Finger Lakes Region. Those who take the pledge, and are interested in helping promote this messaging through signage, are being delivered 'lake friendly living' lawn signage. We requested the City of Auburn and watershed towns and villages resolve to endorse and take the pledge on behalf of their municipalities. Template resolutions were provided to all OLWMC represented municipalities to support that effort. On the morning of December 30<sup>th</sup>, 2020, at their monthly board meeting, the Town of Fleming passed their resolution to endorse/take the Lake Friendly Living pledge. They are considering their approach for attaching program signage to entering municipality signage. To date, resolutions from municipalities to endorse and/or take the LFL pledge from the City of Auburn, the Towns of Fleming, Moravia, Niles, and Owasco, and the Village of Moravia, as well as the Cayuga County Water Quality Management Agency, have all demonstrated public support for that program. Their resolutions are posted on the OLWMC website. For those who have passed pledge resolutions and have yet to do so, please discuss with your municipal board and/or Highway superintendents your approach for the attachment of program signage. OLWIPD staff is available to assist with securing the signage.*

The pledge:

*I know my choices can affect water quality for Owasco Lake. I pledge to incorporate 'Lake Friendly Living' practices to reduce my impacts on Owasco Lake. I will adopt these practices that help reduce pollutants and minimize runoff into Owasco Lake:*

- (1) I pledge to refrain from using excessive lawn fertilizers and chemicals to help prevent Harmful Algal Blooms (HABs).*
- (2) I will only use limited phosphorus-free fertilizers (as governed by NYS law), applied properly.*
- (3) I will maintain my septic system.*
- (4) I will reduce hazardous wastes and dispose of them properly.*
- (5) I will dispose of prescription drugs properly; I will not flush them.*
- (6) I will maintain my vehicles, water-crafts, and other recreational vehicles to reduce fluid leaks as well as the spread of aquatic invasive species.*
- (7) I will use water wisely.*
- (8) I will not dispose of leaf litter or lawn clippings in waterways or ditches.*
- (9) I will strive to work towards practicing recommended Best Management Practices (BMPs) for land use activities within the Owasco Lake Watershed.*

#### 4. Tributary Level Sensors Installation Project

The OLWMC and its partners are installing tributary level sensors throughout the watershed. These sensors will be useful for monitoring storm surges and future model calibrations for lake loading estimates. They present a relatively inexpensive, and temporally and spatially robust, alternative to USGS gauge stations. The partnering group, Hyfi, is finalizing securing permits for remaining installation locations. For the case of New York State Department of Transportation (NYSDOT) sites, the NYSDOT has indicated the need for a separate permit app for each site and required the OLWMC increase insurance coverage to meet the needs of the DOT permits. Progress on the installation of watershed tributary level sensors in partnership with Hyfi, included onsite training at locations in the Owasco Flats; on November 12, 2020, the initial sensors were installed. Subsequently, a formal subcontract was signed for the OLWMC to conduct the remaining installations. Thereby, the OLWIPD will be responsible for installing the remaining sensors. A great many level sensor installations are expected throughout the Owasco Lake Watershed. The grant subcontract is projected to generate thousands of dollars in revenue for the OLWMC in the near term, and has generated \$800 thus far. Six tributary sensors have been installed within the watershed thus far; five were installed along the inlet and within the Owasco Flats, and one was installed along Veness Brook. They are all currently reporting data and have captured recent storm event activity. We are working with our partners to best utilize these data for decision making and watershed management.

#### 5. Funding Programs, OLWMC Budget, and Finances

- \$10,000 was awarded by the French and Metcalf Foundation to the OLWMC for a proposal request for funding future vehicle expenses for the OLWIPD associated with watershed surveillance activities.
- The NYS Environmental Facilities Corporation (EFC) Green Innovative Grants Program (GIGP) announced a 2021 request for proposals (RFP) for submission through their consolidated funding application (CFA) program, due February 12th. We are considering suitable projects to compete for funding and the green Stormwater Infrastructure category might offer tree planting and raingarden installation funding to help curb the flooding and erosive effects of stormwater in some of the more flood prone Owasco Lake Watershed municipalities, namely Locke and the Moravia. I encourage those interested in project funding to communicate their interest with me so we can plan to develop a suitable proposal.
- The OLWMC is advancing its role in coordinating land acquisition and land holdings efforts throughout the watershed, particularly for promoting ecological functions and conservation within the Owasco Flats. The OLWMC will evaluate lands targeted for acquisition and land holding opportunities (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). Recently, there have been more detailed discussions about what would be required in terms of capacity for the OLWMC to offer land holding/stewardship services directly. If the OLWMC moves in the direction to create a land holding division, it will need to budget/cover upfront costs for an additional staff member dedicated to grants/contracting/closeouts/monitoring, umbrella insurance, and potential legal services. Cayuga County staff, legislative representatives, and leaders from the Finger Lakes Land Trust are working with the OLWMC to discuss the possibility of funding riparian buffer easements through existing Natural Resource Conservation Service funding programs. Further the NYS Conservation Program recently announced Conservation Partnership Program Grants that might fund such an initiative.
- The Great Lakes Restoration Initiative Soil and Nutrient Reduction Program (GLRISNRP) category is likely to be funded by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) in 2021, and the OLWMC will once again plan to submit an innovative phosphorus reduction proposal under that category.
- The OLWMC submitted a proposal for a Regional Conservation Partners Program (RCPP) grant to obtain Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) funding through United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) 2018 Farm Bill. This proposal, in partnership with the Cayuga County Soil and Water Conservation District (CCSWCD) and OWLA, requests federal dollars to advance watershed farm planning. The overarching goal is to better fund the CCSWCD's well-established AEM framework for credentialed conservation farm planning. The project is poised to advance the capacity of project partners to implement critical conservation practices in the watershed, reduce the burden on local producers associated with new regulatory requirements, and help protect Owasco Lake. Senator Schumer's office is preparing a

letter of endorsement for this project to share directly with their contacts at NRCS. We have asked Congressman Katko's office to do the same.

#### 6. Hemlock Trees and the Hemlock Woolly Adelgid

Members of OWLA, staff from Cornell Cooperative Extension (CCE), and other partners are working collaboratively with the OLWMC to coordinate Hemlock Woolly Adelgid (HWA) inventorying to be better positioned for insect mitigation funding to help protect Hemlock trees within the Owasco Lake Watershed. Inventorying of the HWA is led by OWLA and started with a focus on ravine areas in the southwest Owasco Lake Watershed. The first onsite survey was held Friday the 13<sup>th</sup> of November, and many additional surveys have followed. OWLA and the OLWMC will partner on submitting an insect mitigation funding proposal under the appropriate program funding.

#### 7. Spring willow planting

The OLWMC and OWLA are planning a community willow planting projects along watershed riparian corridors for spring 2021. Both groups will continue to develop the logistics for coordinating these efforts over the next several months. We are attempting to align project planning for riparian buffer installations along Veness Brook with a similar planting effort within The Nature Conservancy's (TNC's) acquired property along the Owasco Inlet. Based on early project planning efforts, TNC decided to develop a conservation and restoration plan for the entire property to be better prepared for partner-led restoration opportunities there.

#### 8. Support for the CLWIO

The Cayuga Lake Watershed Intermunicipal Organization (CLWIO), like the OLWMC, is designed to bring municipalities together within the watershed to preserve and protect our waters. The CLWIO is reviewing its organizational structure. This review is being conducted to gain insight on how the CLWIO can best achieve its goals. The CLWIO is working with the Consensus Building Institute (CBI) to help with the organizational review. Part of this work involves talking to stakeholders in the watershed. The CLWIO is conducting an interview program to gain insights and recommendations to advance the effectiveness of their organization. OLWMC is offering guidance based on its experience with the IO structure.

#### 9. Buy-In

- We were informed on January 15<sup>th</sup> that the Town of Scipio officially appointed Ms. Vivian Cunningham as their representative on the OLWMC board of directors. 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 Venice, Sempronius, Groton, and Genoa; we 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, 01/15/21**