



Owasco Lake Watershed Management Council (OLWMC)

October 18, 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:**

The technical workgroup has met seven times thus far. During its most recent October 5, 2022 meeting, the technical workgroup discussed the programs and funding opportunities available for watershed nutrient management. The purpose of this meeting was to lay groundwork for the forthcoming discussion of the nutrient management provision of the proposed updated WRR. The discussion highlighted the need for increased capacity at the Soil & Water Conservation Districts. Further details are outlined within the NYSDOH's project update report (10.18.2022 Monthly Owasco WRR Update for OLWMC- Nutrient Management #1) delivered to the OLWMC Board of Directors, Ex Officio Partners, and engaged members of the public prior to the October 18, 2022 OLWMC public board meeting. The revised overall timeline for the project, described within the NYSDOH update, is as follows:

- |                                   |                              |
|-----------------------------------|------------------------------|
| • Follow up meeting on Pesticides | October 18, 2022 (virtual)   |
| • Nutrient Management             | November 4, 2022 (in person) |
| • Variances                       | November (virtual)           |
| • Legal meetings                  | November/December (virtual)  |
| • Conclusion/Wrap Up              | December/January (virtual)   |

\*Overall Process Timeline:

- State Interagency Workgroup meets with Owasco Technical Committee – June 2022
- New Workgroup will meet approx. 6 times - June to Oct 2022
- NYSDOH publishes proposed amendments to WRRs- Nov 2022
- Three-month public comment period- Feb 2023
- NYSDOH submits response to comments- Mar 2023
- NYSDOH publishes amendments to WRRs - May/June 2023

\*Will likely have to be updated based on revised meeting schedule

**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.

**Nine Element Watershed Plan (9E) 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.

**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. At the last meeting, the committee discussed implementation steps and expressed support desired from consultants and NYSDEC/NYSDOH to help maintain momentum.

#### Project Update:

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 NYHABs notification page is 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 leads the volunteer HABs surveillance program for Owasco Lake.
- Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (a.k.a. drones) have been used for HABs monitoring on Skaneateles Lake, and are poised for use on Owasco Lake. This fall, a sampling team from BloomOptix is collecting Owasco Lake water samples for HABs and will scout for blooms using drone sensors.

##### Project Update:

This year, as of October 14, 2022, there were eight HAB reports on NYHABs that had been reported in the previous two weeks and 12 archived reports more than two weeks old. Observations of HABs are increasing throughout the eastern Finger Lakes Region and associated cyanotoxin levels in Owasco Lake's raw water are elevated from previous years.

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

- The OLWMC's October staff feature article with the Citizen newspaper spotlights the Cayuga County Soil and Water Conservation District's installation of Water and Sediment Control Basins (WASCOBs) on an Owasco Lake watershed farm located on Mobbs Road in Fleming, NY. This project was funded in part by the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative's Conservation Kick grant program, launched in 2020 by the Great Lakes Commission to offset the cost of BMPs in the Great Lakes Basin that encompasses the Finger Lakes Region. The grant was awarded to the Owasco Lake Watershed Management Council (OLWMC) that will serve to purchase water quality credits (i.e., in the form of completed

conservation project installations) from the watershed farm. The City of Auburn invested the required cost share for the grant award to be administered through the OLWMC, demonstrating the city's commitment towards supporting conservation advancements for local agriculture.

- Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) awareness (and mitigation) project partners have recently discussed providing 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.

## **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, was designed and produced.

### Project Update:

- Project partners are working with real estate attorneys to finalize required documentation to close on the property transfer. The group continues to target closing in the fall of 2022.
- Partners have finalized language for a public release concerning the property transfer.
- Required posted signage for the property, which identifies the allowance for respectful public access, has been produced.
- Property signage will be installed with the help of TNC, following closing.

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

#### Project Review:

- OLWMC staff continue to provide assistance with OWLA's tributary monitoring program designed to support calibration of the 9E Plan SWAT watershed model.

#### Project Update:

- Lake and watershed monitoring partners convened on October 3, 2022 to discuss monitoring plans for 2023, outlining responsibilities, expectations and funding.
- Partners are preparing a comprehensive budget for submission to Cayuga County that will include a new Owasco Lake monitoring role for the Finger Lakes Institute, Hobart William Smith Colleges.

### **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.
- The Owasco Watershed Lake Association's (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:

- Project partners are discussing planning and funding options for the continued operation and maintenance of the watershed watercourse level sensors, in the context of the overall lake and watershed monitoring program for 2023.

## Programs, Funding, and Related Opportunities

- **12/23/22 – Clean Watersheds Needs Survey is Important for Future Funding**  
(<https://efc.ny.gov/>)
  - 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 Soil and Water Conservation District, as well as the City of Auburn Municipal Utilities, are preparing a collective response to the needs survey.
- **Webinar on State and Federal Funding, Financing, and Resources for Municipal Infrastructure**  
(<https://syracuseuniversity.zoom.us/meeting/register/tJUvde6vrjsrE9KvqYhZoRHo43xnbZ4gldBu>)
  - Syracuse University's Environmental Finance Center (SU-EFC) is hosting a virtual webinar on Wednesday, October 26, 1:00 to 3:00 p.m., for those interested in learning more about funding and financing for safe and clean water management, renewable energy, and other community investments. Presenters will include representatives from DEC, NYS Department of Health, Environmental Facilities Corporation, NYS Homes and Community Renewal, and US Department of Agriculture, Rural Development.
- **Great Lakes Watershed (Owasco Lake is included in this greater watershed), Public Comment Period is Open for Draft Great Lakes Action Agenda- deadline 11/11/22**
  - NYSDEC released the draft *New York's Great Lakes Action Agenda 2022-2030*, a multi-year action plan to guide restoration and conservation, and foster sustainable, resilient, communities in New York's Great Lakes region. The Action Agenda advances a wide range of efforts to safeguard water quality, improve habitats for fish and wildlife, manage invasive species, promote sustainability, and enhance community resilience to climate change in a region that spans more than 40 percent of New York State's land area and includes Lake Erie, the Niagara River, Lake Ontario, the St. Lawrence River, and respective watersheds. The draft Action

Agenda is available on DEC's website. Submit comments to [greatlakes@dec.ny.gov](mailto:greatlakes@dec.ny.gov) by November 11, 2022. DEC's Great Lakes Program will host a webinar on Tuesday, Oct. 25, at 3 p.m.

- **Understanding and Managing Floodplains for Healthy Watersheds and Resilient Communities** (<https://seagrant.sunysb.edu/articles/t/register-now-fall-2022-local-government-training-workshops-coastal-community-development-program-news>)
  - Understanding and Managing Floodplains for Healthy Watersheds and Resilient Communities local government training workshops. This workshop is geared towards planning, zoning and municipal boards, supervisors, mayors, code enforcement officers, conservation advisory boards, and floodplain managers, but anyone interested in learning more about floodplains, related risks and ways to maintain/enhance their watersheds. For most municipalities, the Local Government Workshop fulfills state law required training for local planning officials. Educational webinars will be provided on 1/2, 11/3, and 11/9.
  
- **10/25/22 3:00-4:00 - Understanding Conserved Lands in Your Community Using the New York Protected Areas Database** ([https://tnc.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN\\_16aph5t8S4SGJrSujBpoZw?\\_x\\_zm\\_rtaid=t3nAo2hpQd6kJtqpqZKRaw.1665603427795.357494bc4eeb15775f7c7cc5ca5bf5ce&\\_x\\_zm\\_rhtaid=780](https://tnc.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_16aph5t8S4SGJrSujBpoZw?_x_zm_rtaid=t3nAo2hpQd6kJtqpqZKRaw.1665603427795.357494bc4eeb15775f7c7cc5ca5bf5ce&_x_zm_rhtaid=780))
  - New York State contains over 5 million acres of land – about 20 percent of the state – protected for the purposes of conservation, recreation, and open space. Where is this protected land in your town? In neighboring towns? The New York Protected Areas Database (NYPAD) is a comprehensive map and database of lands in New York that are protected or designated as natural areas, conservation lands, open space, or recreational areas. It compiles the best available data about protected areas from a variety of sources. The first phase of a major update of NYPAD was released this summer. This webinar will introduce the updated NYPAD and show ways to access the maps and data. We will also discuss ways this information can inform municipal land use planning and decision-making and conservation efforts in communities.
  
- **NYS Asset Management Program to Improve Local Wastewater Systems** (<https://www.governor.ny.gov/news/governor-hochul-announces-27-municipalities-selected-participate-clean-water-infrastructure>)
  - Governor Kathy Hochul has announced 27 municipalities have been selected to participate in a program that will help develop asset management programs to evaluate, monitor, protect, and responsibly plan upgrades for wastewater infrastructure facilities. The program supports ongoing efforts to ensure the responsible stewardship of clean water infrastructure and builds upon a successful \$3 million pilot completed in 2021 administered by DEC and Environmental

Facilities Corporation (EFC). The second phase of the State's Asset Management Program will continue New York's proactive approach to managing wastewater treatment by providing engineering consultant planning services, software management systems, and technical training to local governments. Earlier this year, DEC and EFC solicited volunteer municipalities across New York State to participate in this Asset Management Program. DEC selected the 27 municipalities and EFC hired Arcadis to serve as the program advisor. An additional 10 engineering firms will work directly with the municipalities. The new *Asset Management Guide* (PDF) will be followed throughout the planning process.

### **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.

**Summary Prepared by Adam Effler, October 14, 2022**