



Owasco Lake Watershed Management Council (OLWMC)

August 17th, 2021, 10:00am – Director’s Summary

- Harmful Algal Blooms (HABs) have been observed on Owasco Lake, the first observed bloom of the year documented on August 5th, 2021. Please visit NYHABS, the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation’s (NYSDEC’s) online tracking and notification website, for mapping and information related to HABs conditions for Owasco Lake. The NYSDEC encourages those recreating on NYS lakes to ‘Know it, Avoid it, Report it.’
 - The City of Auburn tested their Powder Activated Carbon (PAC) system, and monitored the raw water daily for indication of algae. They also have reviewed their Emergency Action Plan and are ready to begin full scale laboratory testing in accordance with Department of Health requirements when necessary. The first set of samples for cyanotoxin testing were planned for delivery on Monday August 16th. The PAC has been on Since Friday, August 6th, and they continue to monitor the raw water and adjust the carbon system accordingly.
- On August 2nd, the New York State Department of Health (NYSDOH) shared that upper management drafted their response to inquiries about the proposed updated community consensus Owasco Lake Watershed Rules and Regulations (WRR). Their response is as follows:

‘The NYS Department of Health appreciates your support for comprehensive water quality protections in the Owasco Lake watershed. As the agency responsible for promulgating watershed rules and regulations for drinking water supplies throughout the State, NYSDOH is committed to a science-based drinking water protection approach that builds consensus amongst the state authorities. As such, we’ve convened a four-agency workgroup including NYSDOH, the Department of Environmental Conservation, the Department of Agriculture and Markets, and the Department of State. This workgroup’s charge is to evaluate the proposed amendments to Owasco’s Watershed Rules and Regulations, informed by previous and ongoing studies and implementation of state- and federally-funded water quality improvement and drinking water protection programs.

The workgroup’s review and analysis comes at a good time as a large amount of new information is being generated in this watershed. The timeline of the workgroup’s activities will be merged with progress on the 9-Element Plan being developed for Owasco Lake, the Drinking Water Source Protection Plan being initiated for the City of Auburn, and other ongoing program implementation activities coordinated by the Department of Agriculture and Markets and the Department of Environmental Conservation. The culmination of these activities will result in science-based recommendations from the workgroup to NYSDOH on the proposed watershed rules and regulations.

NYSDOH is pleased to coordinate across state agencies on this evaluation and we look forward to developing recommendations that address the proposed rules revisions in a manner that protects the Lake Owasco watershed for many years to come. If you have any additional questions, please do not hesitate to contact the Bureau of Water Supply Protection at (518) 402-7650 or bpwsp@health.ny.gov.

- Assemblymember, Sarah Clark, of the Owasco Watershed neighboring 135 Assembly District, is yet another elected official who has committed to preparing a letter of endorsement for the adoption of the updated WRR.
- The OLWMC is administering, on behalf of the City of Auburn, the Conservation Kick Great Lakes Commission grant program that is structured to provide funding in the form of water quality credits to producers seeking to install conservation practices. The city granted 50 percent of the funding required for this conservation program. Project partner, the Cayuga County Soil and Water Conservation District (CCSWCD), is working with a targeted producer to get application materials together and to review preliminary project designs. Project funding will meet the implementation costs of installing a water and sediment control basin (WASCOB) on a selected watershed producer's property.
- The New York State Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA) has approved the OLWMC to participate in the New York State Clean Energy Internship Program. We are attempting to select an intern whose primary responsibility will be to advance and facilitate Climate Smart Communities accreditation and certification for the Town of Owasco and program accreditation and registration for other watershed municipalities.
- The Owasco Lake Watershed Inspection and Protection Division (OLWIPD) is assisting with promoting Cornell University's ProDairy Dairy Acceleration Program (DAP) by providing program information to eligible dairy producers within the Owasco Lake Watershed.
- Cayuga County's Ashland farm, a large dairy operating in the Cayuga Lake watershed, has agreed to pay more than \$100,000 in penalties and adhere to a strict state monitoring plan under terms of a consent order reached with the state last month, following an illicit manure discharge to Great Gully Brook.
- On July 20th, Partners for Healthy Watersheds offered tours of large dairy farms within the Owasco and Cayuga Lake Watersheds for the purpose of conveying the practices that those farms implement according to regulations, and to help protect agricultural impacts on watershed water quality, by reducing sediment and nutrient transport to lakes.
- The OLWMC is working with the Cayuga County Office of Procurement on the advancement of LED flares, rather than incendiary flares, throughout the watershed. Accordingly, the Cayuga County Sheriff's Department is trialing the newer technology, and if the officers are happy with their utility, future procurement efforts will continue to target the LED version.
- The OLWMC's aquatic invasive species (AIS) awareness and 'Clean, Drain, Dry' portable billboard remains positioned directly adjacent to the Emerson Park boat launch.
- 14 Hyfi water level sensors are installed throughout the watershed. This is considered a pilot project, and the OLWMC has been troubleshooting software and service coverage

issues. There have been five sensor swaps over the past month for improved coverage. The data produced appears to track well with conventional USGS level monitoring, offering a promising alternative with a greater spatial footprint. A link to the landing page for data and time series tributary level graphs can be accessed on the OLWMC website.

- The following are Owasco Watershed Lake Association (OWLA) collaborative projects:
 - There are several signage projects ongoing within the Owasco Lake Watershed. Lake Friendly Living (LFL) signage was installed with support by municipal highway departments, according to the pledge program. OWLA and the OLWMC shared costs for program signs. We will also share costs on project specific signage, the first being a sediment trap installation by CCSWCD along a roadside ditch in Scipio.
 - OWLA is finalizing its approach among partners for their 2021 volunteer-based tributary monitoring program to benefit modeling work associated with 9 Element Watershed Plan for the Owasco Lake watershed. OLWMC staff is offering support through assistance with sample collection, the provision and use of the OLWIPD's water quality monitoring sonde, and sample transport for accredited laboratory analyses.
 - The OLWMC and OWLA are planning a collaborative project with Cayuga County (CC) Parks and Trails for the implementation of a community volunteer-based rain garden at Emerson Park. The OLWMC and OWLA plan to cost share materials for this project, and CC Parks and Trails plan to offer tools and site preparation in-kind. Parks and Trails will bring our collaborative project proposal to the Cayuga County Legislature on the week of August 22nd
- The OLWMC is positioning itself to own and hold lands within the watershed for the purposes of resource protection and preservation via land acquisition gifts from The Nature Conservancy (TNC). OLWMC staff will be touring potential property targets, scheduling around landowner availability.
- OLWMC staff are evaluating new office space to unify staff, provide adequate space for staff and equipment needs, and while maintaining accessibility and visibility within the watershed. According to the Three Party Agreement between the City of Auburn, Town of Owasco, and Cayuga County, Cayuga County is committed to providing office space to program staff, and we are working with the county on meeting those needs in 2022 according to a budget proposal submitted August 10th, 2021.
- The OLWMC draft annual 2020 audit was approved by the board last month. We requested finalization by our independent auditor, and the results will be posted on the OLWMC's website and PARIS reporting system with the NYS Authorities Budget Office.
- 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, Genoa, Dryden, Skaneateles, and Lansing; 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, August 13, 2021