



Owasco Lake Watershed Management Council (OLWMC)

September 21st, 2021, 10:00am – Director’s Summary

Harmful Algal Blooms (HABs)

- 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.’
 - At the City of Auburn drinking water intake, on August 18th, 2021 cyanotoxins were measured above 5 ppm, the highest level ever observed in the raw, untreated, water. The City of Auburn and Town of Owasco are actively running their carbon treatment systems for toxins removal.
 - The OLWMC’s August recognition article in the Citizen, led by Ms. Ally Berry, spotlighted best management practices (BMPs) of large dairy farms based on recent tour provided by Partners for Healthy Watersheds. That article was forwarded for inclusion in the Cayuga County Water Quality Management Agency’s (WQMA’s) monthly newsletter. Our September article features information about HABs drivers, related protective efforts, and reporting.

Watershed Response, Projects, and Programming

- Owasco Lake watershed response by the Owasco Lake Watershed Inspection and Protection Division (OLWIPD) has been active over the last month due to calls to the field related to storm surges and flooding in August.
- This fall, Watershed Inspectors will again assist the Tompkins County Soil and Water Conservation District (TCSWCD) with sediment sock installations along exposed ditches in Tompkins County.
- On August 25th, 2021 the Cayuga County Parks Commission approved moving forward with a collaborative rain garden installation project at Emerson Park planned for October 24, 2021. The planting event is poised to attract community involvement and volunteerism for beautifying Emerson Park and will demonstrate a recommended practice for lake protection. We will be promoting this event as we get closer.
- On September 27, 2021 a public meeting will be held to provide an update on the process to incorporate the EPA Nine Key Elements into the Owasco Lake Watershed Management and Waterfront Revitalization Plan. The public will be able to review and comment on the Watershed Management Recommendations.

- The OLWMC offers partnership and support for the City of Auburn’s NYS-awarded Drinking Water Source Protection Program (DWSP2). The working group is identifying objectives and the evaluation of 9 Element Watershed Plan project cost estimates to prepare for grant proposals, according to a NYS approved plan.
- Based on the recommendations of the Cayuga County WQMA Nutrient and Sediment Working Group, Watershed Inspectors will be approaching watershed golf courses to distribute Audubon International program factsheets and to encourage golf courses to get certified and advance sustainable management of their grounds.
- OLWMC staff and project partners finalized project-specific signage to be installed along a roadside ditch on Hicks Road, Scipio that is intended to spotlight the installation of concrete sediment traps installed by the Cayuga County Soil and Water Conservation District (CCSWCD) and funded by NYS and the Owasco Watershed Lake Association (OWLA). Sediment traps are used to minimize erosion and nutrient transport, ultimately improving Owasco Lake water quality. We will be working with the Scipio Town Highway Department to install the sign.
- In October, 2021 OLWMC staff will be moving to a new location on West Lake Road, adjacent to the Fleming Fire House. We are grateful for the provision of office furniture and supplies from both the City of Auburn and the Town of Owasco. According to the original Three Party Agreement between the City of Auburn, Town of Owasco, and Cayuga County for the development of the OLWMC, Cayuga County committed to providing office space to program staff. We are working with the county on meeting staff office space costs for 2022.
- On behalf of the OLWMC, I signed a letter of support urging Governor Hochul to prioritize protecting drinking water from emerging contaminants. The letter includes a request for the Governor to sign A.126A/S.1759A, which will jump-start testing for 40 toxic chemicals and inform the public about what’s in their water.

Grants and Programs

- In partnership, the Cayuga County Soil and Water Conservation District (CCSWCD) is assisting a watershed farmer in finalizing their application for the installation of a conservation practice according to the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) Conservation Kick Program. OLWMC staff have helped guide progress for this project, and the City of Auburn has invested the required cost share for the grant award. Project funding will meet the implementation costs of installing a water and sediment control basin (WASCOB) on a selected watershed producer’s property.
- We will resubmit a project proposal through the Natural Resource Conservation Service’s (NRCS’s) Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) to drive federal funding towards our efforts to advance watershed farm planning for improved soil health and conservation. Representatives from the American Water Works Association (AWWA) will offer proposal support again.
- A recent bi-partisan Senate infrastructure bill is proposed to offer \$1 billion to the GLRI over the next five years, targeting efforts to clean up toxic hot spots, address invasive species reduce nonpoint source pollution, and restore fish and wildlife habitat and species.

- Crystal Creek Organics is currently a finalist in Grow New York, seeking funds to advance their agricultural technology that processes de-watered cow manure to create a storable soil amendment product.

Watershed Rules and Regulations Update Project

- The Cayuga County Board of Health delivered a response letter to the New State Department of Health (NYS DOH) Bureau of Water Supply Protection following that bureau's letter indicating the formation of a four-agency review panel for the WRR. In their letter the Cayuga County Board of Health urged the completion of the updated regulatory process for the benefit of public safety.
- During their September 9th monthly meetings, the City of Auburn City Council and Town of Owasco Board passed resolutions in response to the NYS DOH bureau's letter. Both municipalities are asking Governor Hochul to work with the state agencies to allow local municipal participation in the state four-agency review and setting a timeline with milestones to support the update community consensus Owasco Lake Watershed Rules and Regulations.
- On September 13th, at their monthly board meeting, the Town of Fleming Board approved of their independent resolution and support letter for the updated community consensus watershed rules and regulations.

Buy-In

- 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.

Prepared by Adam Effler, September 17, 2021