



## Owasco Lake Watershed Management Council (OLWMC)

September 20, 2022- Director's Summary

### **Regulatory and Planning and Projects Updates**

#### Watershed Rules and Regulations Update:

##### 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 six times thus far. During its most recent August 2, 2022 meeting, the technical workgroup worked efficiently to revise the Sediment Generation & Control provision of the proposed regulations. Further details are outlined within the NYSDOH's project update report (9.20.2022 Monthly Owasco WRR Update for OLWMC- Sediment Generation & Control) delivered to the OLWMC Board of Directors, Ex Officio Partners, and engaged members of the public prior to the September 20, 2022 OLWMC public board meeting. The overall timeline for the project, described within the NYSDOH update, is as follows:

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

### 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) Update:

The Owasco Lake Watershed Nine Element Plan is now complete and approved by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC). 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.

#### Project Update:

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.

### **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.

### Project Update:

This year, as of September 16, 2022, there were seven HAB reports on NYHABs that had been reported in the previous two weeks and four archived reports more than two weeks old. Observations of HABs are increasing throughout the eastern Finger Lakes Region. 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 summer-fall, a sampling team from BloomOptix is collecting Owasco Lake water samples for HABs and will scout for blooms using drone sensors.

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

- The OLWMC's September staff feature article with the Citizen newspaper spotlights innovative technologies being used in the Finger Lakes Region to monitor HABs using UAV spectral imagery coupled with water sample collections.
- NYS commissioners and local farmers were featured in an August 30, 2022 article spotlighting NYS funding programs aimed at supporting farmers towards ensuring climate resiliency for the future.
- Recent local and NYS articles have featured the completion of the Owasco 9E Watershed Plan.
- The Dryden Town Board was given an OLWMC introductory presentation and welcome at their September 15, 2022 board meeting.

### **Hyfi Watercourse Level Sensors**

#### Project Review:

- OLWMC staff maintain 15 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 OLWMC is supporting field sampling and sample delivery efforts for OWLA's monitoring program.

### Project Update:

- A Hyfi sensor for a targeted SWAT model monitoring location was installed on Long Point Road.
- The two-year pilot project grant period is officially complete. Project partners are discussing funding options for continuing the operation and maintenance of the watershed watercourse level sensors moving forward.

### **Land Holding**

#### Project Review:

- The OLWMC is nearing the final transfer of a land preserve from The Nature Conservancy (TNC) that will advance the 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). 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.
- 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.
- A property liability insurance policy has been selected to cover the OLWMC's new exposure.
- 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 articulated in Resolution No. 02-22 approved at the July 19, 2022 OLWMC board meeting.
- 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.
- In early August, 2022 the NYSDEC approved the transfer of the Filmore Road property to the OLWMC.

### Project Update:

- The property transfer closing will be scheduled for the fall of 2022.
- Partners are developing language for a public release concerning the transfer and preparing required posted signage for the property that identifies the allowance for respectful public access.

### Watershed Tributary Monitoring Project

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

### Grant Projects and Programs Underway

#### GLRI Conservation Kick Project:

##### Project Review:

In partnership, the Cayuga County Soil and Water Conservation District (CCSWCD) assisted a watershed farmland owner to finalize their application for the installation of a water and sediment control basin (WASCOB). The Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) Conservation Kick Program will fund the project, in part. The City of Auburn invested the required cost share for the grant award administered through the OLWMC, demonstrating the City's commitment towards supporting conservation advancements for local agriculture. Based on the Great Lakes Commission's upfront analysis, and relative to all other Conservation Kick projects planned across the Great Lakes Basin, the CCSWCD/OLWMC project will result in the greatest nutrient reduction outcomes. Project partners finalized contract details. Seneca County Soil and Water Conservation District Engineer and Auburn Director of Municipal Utilities reviewed and approved the final WASCOB design. CCSWCD is scheduled to install the on-farm WASCOB in fall, 2022.

#### Currently Available Grant Programs:

- Municipal applications for zero-emission vehicle (ZEV) rebates and infrastructure grants are being accepted until September 30<sup>th</sup>. The programs help municipalities purchase or lease zero-emission vehicles for fleet use and to install public electric vehicle charging and hydrogen fuel filling stations.
- A reforestation request for proposals is available through the Arbor Day Foundation for large scale (i.e., 5,000+ trees) planting projects.

### 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, September 16, 2022**